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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 16 November 2005

Mercredi 16 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 November 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 novembre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WATERLOO-WELLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Our Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan is comprised of some of the top transportation priorities of our municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington.

Upgrading Highway 6 from Mount Forest to Fergus is a crucial part of that plan. According to the Wellington Advertiser, that part of Highway 6 has recently been nominated as one of the Municipal Roads Coalition's worst roads in Ontario. If the minister ever travelled through my riding, he would find that the condition of this road is deplorable. When will he take action to give final approval to the building of a safer, modern Highway 6?

The action plan also calls for a new four-lane Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph. I used that highway on Sunday afternoon, and I continue to hear from constituents who believe that congestion on it makes it a very dangerous route. As the minister stalls and sputters on the immediate need for a new Highway 7, his indecision stifles economic development and represents a huge safety issue for people travelling in and through Waterloo-Wellington.

Another key project of our action plan is the region of Waterloo's light rail transit initiative. I encourage the government to support this to the greatest extent possible. As recently written in a Kitchener-Waterloo Record editorial, "All the evidence points toward the need for better public transit services in the future, particularly in large urban areas, which is what Waterloo region is rapidly becoming."

We are now past the mid-term point of the McGuinty Liberal government. I have been advocating for these transportation projects since the very day after the 2003 election. My constituents have waited long enough for this government—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Members' statements.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN WATERLOO REGION

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I'm pleased to rise today and highlight some of the leading-edge

research and innovation taking place both in my riding and throughout Waterloo region. The past few weeks have certainly been exciting and have reaffirmed the role the region plays in the future of the province.

My community boasts a number of outstanding research facilities, including the Centre for International Governance Innovation, or CIGI, as it's known. Since 2001, CIGI has been working to create a Canadian-based research institute of international significance on the issue of international governance.

During the weekend of October 21 to 24, CIGI hosted its first major international conference in Waterloo region. This year's theme was international governance innovation. I was honoured to attend and to introduce the Premier at the gala—he attended it in his role as Minister of Research and Innovation—as well as accompany him on a tour of another outstanding facility in Waterloo region, the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics.

Following the conference, on October 28 the government reaffirmed the value of research in our region by investing over \$6 million for 35 local projects at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. This allocation under the Ontario research fund was part of a \$48-million investment to support 312 projects across Ontario.

Already the newly created Ministry of Research and Innovation has illustrated this government's commitment to strengthening Ontario as a leading economy and society. I believe that Waterloo region serves as a perfect example of how an area's economic advantage and culture of innovation can be fostered by supporting its research infrastructure.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased today to recognize World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Day. COPD is a disease that affects the lungs, making it difficult to breathe.

COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in Canada, and approximately 15% of all smokers will develop it in their lifetime. It is also a disease that affects particularly women, and COPD kills more women each year than breast cancer. Due to the irreversible nature of tobacco-induced lung damage, COPD is the only common cause of death that continues to rise in North America.

In addition to the human toll, tobacco-related diseases such as COPD cost the Ontario economy more than \$1.7

billion in health care and account for close to one million hospital days each year.

It is important that screening for COPD be encouraged among those with a history of smoking, especially women over the age of 40, as they are particularly vulnerable. Prevention is key to dealing with COPD and it is important to educate people about the harmful effects of tobacco.

Our party takes COPD seriously. We need to continue to invest in order to ensure that Ontario scores well in making sure we prevent COPD.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I rise today to congratulate our government on its recent announcements that deliver on our commitment to publicly funded health care in Ontario.

Only a publicly funded health care system can add six new tests to the newborn screening program. Once the expansion of this program is completed, Ontario will test for 27 rare medical conditions.

Only a publicly funded health care system can expand primary care, especially in communities where individuals face linguistic, geographic or socio-economic barriers.

As part of its recent announcement, our government is supporting several new CHCs, or community health centres, including one in Malvern, and eight new CHC satellite locations in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods identified in the city of Toronto's Strong Neighbourhoods report.

Only a publicly funded health care system can create and support a province-wide wait times information Web site so that Ontarians can know the wait times for specific procedures in their community. This Web site will enable patients and their primary care providers to access potentially faster service if it is available. By the end of next year, a single province-wide information system will be available in about 50 hospitals representing 80% of the total volume of key services.

Unfortunately, these investments and priority programs will not be available if we follow the opposition's plan to cut \$2.4 billion from the health care budget and allow more private sector involvement in the health care system.

Through our government's recent announcements, and those to come in the coming months, we are demonstrating our commitment to publicly funded, publicly owned and publicly controlled health care in Ontario.

CAMPBELLFORD CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Last week, the town of Campbellford was hit with the terrible news that its largest employer, the World's Finest Chocolate factory, was closing and moving jobs to the United States.

The shutdown of manufacturing is scheduled for March 31 of next year and will affect 125 full-time employees, many of them single moms. This is a devastating blow to Campbellford and the municipality of Trent Hills, and the provincial government should be moving quickly to provide assistance.

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As of today, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is nowhere to be seen. The owner of the factory is committed to making every effort to secure a new owner-operator, and the government should be providing all assistance possible to aid that cause.

We know Ontario has lost 42,000 manufacturing jobs over the past year. We don't want the jobs in Campbellford to be just another addition to this alarming statistic. The chocolate factory is a first-rate facility with a trained and dedicated workforce.

Alternatives to closure are out there. I urge the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to get engaged now and help save these jobs.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just to correct the statement—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): You can only correct your own statement.

PARAMEDIC SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): First of all, I want to rise today about a situation that's happening up in Hearst and Kapuskasing that I think the Minister of Health and the Premier should know about. We're going to be in the position soon this spring, if nothing changes, of losing paramedic services in the communities of Hearst and Kapuskasing.

Let me explain. We currently have full coverage in both communities. The district service board, the area service board of Cochrane, has been wanting the government to move on this particular initiative of making sure that when ambulances were downloaded to municipalities, 50-cent dollars went with that service to ensure that full services are offered across the district: 50% from the province and 50% from the municipalities, as collected by the DSSAB.

What has happened over a period of time is that that 50-cent dollar is no longer a 50-cent dollar. I understand from talking to Steve Trinier and Dave Landers from the DSSAB that where they're at is that less than 40-cent dollars are now coming from the provincial government as a result of inflation. As costs have increased for ambulance services because of heat, gas, hydro, wages and all that, the DSSABs find themselves paying a larger and larger burden of the cost of delivering ambulance services. As a result of that, the district service board will be meeting tomorrow night to decide the fate of ambulance services in the communities of Hearst and Kapuskasing.

I'm here in this Legislature today to say to the Minister of Health, the Premier, if he were here—I know he's doing important business at this point—and the

Acting Premier that we need to make sure the government stays on course of what they promised in the last election: to make sure that 50-cent dollars are delivered to the DSSABs so that the ambulance service stays in place.

If the decision tomorrow night is in the negative, it would mean that the communities of Hearst and Kapuskasing would lose coverage when it comes to ambulance services, and the citizens of those communities would enjoy much less service than anywhere else. As their local representative, I want—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I found it ironic when I read that the official opposition has added to their Web site a meter supposedly marking the money that average Ontarians pay out of pocket for the great services this government provides. The meter includes gas prices, which are not determined by the province. Perhaps snow removal costs will be figured in over the coming months as well.

Why ironic? The main reason this government has had to secure more funds is to manage the incredible debt load it inherited from the opposition when they were in power.

The role of the government is to provide services and sustainability to the people it represents, while ensuring that future considerations are accounted for. The last Tory government managed to eliminate, weaken and download services provided by the government while creating a ballooning deficit that has burdened this province and hampered its ability to plan for the future.

I am proud to be part of a government that, unlike its predecessor, puts the interests of Ontarians first. This means cutting a \$5.6-billion deficit down to just \$1.4 billion, it means reduced wait times in key areas of health care, it means more money for students, and less labour strife. The list goes on.

Every service cut by the Tories has blossomed under the McGuinty Liberals. With this government, Ontarians know that every dollar paid in taxes goes right back to them through improved health care, education and economic opportunities. In fact, I would like to see a meter that tracks quality of life for average Ontarians. I can guarantee that such a meter would show a meteoric rise over the last two years.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On Wednesday of last week, I had the pleasure and honour of attending two affordable housing ground-breaking ceremonies in my riding of Brant: one in the city of Brantford and the other in the town of Paris, inside of Brant. I commend the province and its commitment to get back into the affordable housing business after almost a decade-long hiatus. I would also like to thank the McGuinty govern-

ment for its commitment to provide over \$300 million of affordable housing in this province.

My riding of Brant is reaping the direct benefits from this commitment. In Brantford, the province has committed over \$800,000 in partnership with the federal government to help support a \$7.5-million construction project which will create 27 new affordable housing units, while in Paris, over \$600,000 has been committed to help build 24 apartments in a project worth \$2.4 million.

But more important than the details and the figures of these projects is the government's commitment to people. There are some who simply say that this is not the responsibility of the province, but I would say that it is always our responsibility to assist those in need and to help provide an improved quality of life for every resident of Ontario. This is exactly what these announcements accomplish for those residents of Brant who are in need of this program and affordable housing.

My congratulations are offered to all of the partners: the private partners and the municipal partners, particularly the municipal staff of both Brantford and Brant who came up with these creative ways to provide our citizens with the housing they so desperately need and that has been absent for 10 years.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I rise today to commemorate World COPD Day: chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder. This is currently the fourth leading cause of death in Canada. As a doctor, I can attest to the fact that this is a devastating lung disease that includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. People with this condition have difficulty performing even simple tasks like walking up stairs, because they struggle for every breath.

Every day in Ontario, 115 people are actually diagnosed with this condition and admitted to hospital. In fact, COPD is ranked the fifth major cause of hospitalization: higher than schizophrenia, diabetes, and lung and throat cancer. Currently, there are an estimated 270,000 diagnosed patients in Ontario, and it's estimated that an equal number remain undiagnosed.

Yet the face of COPD is changing. It is no longer the face only of an elderly man, but also of a middle-aged woman. I'd like to acknowledge patients diagnosed with COPD who very graciously volunteered their time to join us in the gallery today.

Today, the Lung Association is active and has just released a national report card on COPD which still shows, unfortunately, a dismal public awareness of this disease, despite its significant challenges. Further details on this report card will be outlined today at a reception hosted by the Lung Association from 5 to 7 p.m., and I would encourage all of my colleagues to join us, because when you can't breathe, nothing else matters.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

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

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 58, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities and non-profit organizations / *Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues et le Code de la route pour reconnaître les activités de financement des organismes de bienfaisance légitimes et organismes sans but lucratif, the title of which is amended to read “An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of registered charities / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues et le Code de la route pour reconnaître les activités de financement des organismes de bienfaisance enregistrés.”*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Ms. Churley: I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: Your committee recommends that Bill 137, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit, be not reported.

The Speaker: Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Ms. Churley: I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 153, An Act in memory of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey to amend the Highway Traffic Act / *Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à la mémoire de Jay Lawrence et Bart Mackey.*

The Speaker: Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 16, 2005, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 16, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say “aye.”

All opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, 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: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Baird, John R.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Bentley, Christopher	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jackson, Cameron	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Runciman, Robert W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Chudleigh, Ted	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	O'Toole, John	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 60; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CLINICAL SIMULATION EQUIPMENT FOR NURSES

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Earlier this morning I had the privi-

age of participating in an announcement at the medical sciences building at the University of Toronto, not far from this Legislature. We announced another important step in the ongoing process we have undertaken to improve the quality of patient care in this province.

Allow me to share this good news with you, Mr. Speaker, and with my colleagues. I was at the University of Toronto, and the honourable member from Toronto–Danforth and the honourable member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, were both there, at the announcement that our government is investing \$10 million in new clinical simulation equipment for Ontario's nursing schools.

As many members of this chamber will recall, there was a time when the province of Ontario was not a great place in which to be a nurse. Our province suffered from a nursing shortage. There was inadequate recruitment and retention of nurses, and those nurses who did work here were forced to endure poor working conditions and a government that treated them with a lack of respect. We're changing that.

This government recognizes that nurses are valuable professionals and a vital part of our health care system. We have set out to fix the problems confronting Ontario's nurses, and we have made significant progress. Today's announcement represents one more part of this effort. And as we make this a better health care system for nurses, we are, of course, making it a better health care system for patients.

The \$10 million we announced today to enable nursing schools to buy clinical simulation equipment builds on last year's investment of \$10 million, bringing the total to \$20 million. This investment will provide nursing students with opportunities for hands-on practice in simulated situations at state-of-the-art facilities throughout the province: clinical simulators designed to replicate the symptoms and behaviour of real patients and to react to treatment just as a real patient would. This sophisticated equipment will enable nursing students to receive training that is unparalleled; training that will, without question, make them more effective when they begin their clinical work.

Last year's \$10-million first wave of investment went to 17 nursing schools. Today, we invested in 12 schools of nursing: at Ryerson University, the Humber Institute of Technology, the University of Windsor, McMaster University, Mohawk College, Sheridan College, Collège Boréal, Cambrian College, St. Lawrence College, Trent University, Brock University and Georgian College.

Each school will receive between \$355,000 and \$1.8 million. A further \$2.9 million will be invested to create clinical centres of excellence in areas including northern nursing education, rural nursing education and aboriginal nursing education.

This investment is one more part of our government's comprehensive nursing strategy, which aims to improve employment opportunities and enhance working conditions for nurses and nursing students throughout this great and vast province.

We have made remarkable progress in other areas as well. We have already created more than 3,000 new nursing jobs. We're working toward a goal of 70% of Ontario nurses working full-time, and we're well on our way to reaching that goal. According to the College of Nurses, we have already advanced from 51% two years ago to 59% in 2005. And we've provided nearly \$100 million to hospitals and long-term-care homes for the purchase of patient and resident lifting equipment, including 11,000 bed lifts last year alone.

I could go on; don't try me. I'm just kidding. My real message is this: We know that nurses are the heart of our health care system, combining experience, knowledge, skill and compassion, and that's how this government will treat them. More nurses mean more patients receiving the care they need, and better trained nurses mean better patient care. We're making the necessary investments to ensure that this is the reality. The winners, of course, are the people of Ontario.

MINERAL EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am delighted to rise in the House today to inform members that Ontario's mineral sector is enjoying a boom the likes of which we have not seen since the 1980s, and our status as the world leader in mineral exploration and development is secure.

Three new mines have opened in the last two years, and the ascent of exploration spending to more than \$300 million has made Ontario the leading jurisdiction in Canada and a major player in the world.

In 2004, the value of mining shares trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange was over US\$140 billion, and Ontario's mineral production was valued at \$7.2 billion, almost one third of Canada's mining wealth. Commodity prices are at record highs, and opportunities to grow and prosper abound.

As a result, the industry is looking for sustainable ways to maximize value. For example, Inco Ltd. recently made a bid to purchase Falconbridge in an effort to strengthen its competitive position globally. Clearly, we are watching with interest as this transaction and others in the mining industry unfold.

Our government is keenly aware of this sector's tremendous potential, and we are working with our stakeholders in the mining industry to ensure that Ontario remains a global leader. This includes investing \$15 million over three years to undertake geological mapping to help unlock the mineral potential in parts of the far north. It also includes the work of the Ontario Mineral Industry Cluster Council, which is gathering insights and views of stakeholders and identifying opportunities to enhance competitiveness, innovation and investment in Ontario's mineral sector. Our government is also assisting producers by investing in research into deep mining capabilities which will help extend the life of existing mines.

Gold remains the primary target for exploration in the province, but there is greater diversity of metals being sought, including platinum/palladium and diamonds. Considerable diamond exploration activity is taking place across the province, particularly in the James Bay lowland, Wawa, and Timmins-Kirkland Lake areas.

In fact, I am very pleased to report that there has been great progress in the realization of Ontario's first diamond mine, the Victor mine, located 90 kilometres west of the community of Attawapiskat on the coast of James Bay. De Beers Canada recently announced that they have received environmental approval for the Victor mine and are now in the permitting stage. In addition, the Attawapiskat First Nation, together with De Beers, announced the signing of an impact benefit agreement. De Beers anticipates that when the Victor mine goes into production in 2008, it expects to produce six million carats of diamonds during its lifespan. The diamond mine would employ about 600 people during construction and 375 during production. De Beers also anticipates that during its lifespan, this project could create a \$6.7-billion ripple effect through the provincial economy.

I am sure that I speak for all members in this House when I commend De Beers and the Attawapiskat First Nation for creating a tremendous economic opportunity for the Attawapiskat community and its people based on a relationship of mutual trust. This relationship exemplifies the power of co-operation. It is my sincere hope that other opportunities for aboriginal communities to benefit from mineral development can be realized as well.

The economic benefits of mineral production are taking root throughout the entire province, but particularly in northern Ontario. Our government will continue to work diligently to promote mineral development in Ontario. We will continue promoting the sustainability of the mining sector in Ontario. And we will continue building on our status as a world leader in mineral exploration and development.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

1410

CLINICAL SIMULATION EQUIPMENT FOR NURSES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I support the initiative undertaken today in order that we can better prepare our nurses for work on the front line. In fact, I'm very pleased that this government continues to build upon the initiatives that we undertook when we set up the nursing task force in 1998 to address the concerns of the nursing profession. At that time, we committed to creating 12,000 new positions, which we did. We committed to investing in education for nurses, which we did. We supported nurse scientists to conduct research, which we did. We created 106 nurse practitioner positions and provided funding for an aggressive retention and recruitment strategy, which we now see is bearing fruit.

However, I do take exception with the commitment that has been made by this government regarding their pledge to hire 8,000 new nurses, because we know that despite the fact that this government continues to indicate that they have now increased the number of new nursing positions to 3,000, that indeed does not coincide with reality. In fact, we learned during the health estimates that many of those positions are part-time and three- to six-month contract positions. Also, in talking to the representatives of the nursing profession, they continue to tell us that the real numbers are closer to 1,000 new positions.

We also know that this government actually set aside \$91 million to fire 757 nurses last year. So on the one hand, they say they are going to hire 8,000 more; on the other hand, they hand out \$91 million in order to fire 757 nurses. I think it's important to keep this in mind. In fact, last month RNAO said that the number of RNs working in Ontario is not even keeping pace with the province's population growth. CIHI's 2004 report, *Workforce Trends of Registered Nurses in Canada*, revealed that Ontario's RN workforce increased by only 1.1% in 2003-04, from 85,000 to 86,000, while the province's population grew by 1.2% over the same period. The reality is that the growth in our workforce is not keeping pace, so this government is not living up to the promises it made to the people of Ontario.

MINERAL EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I remember just a few short years ago when Ontario was rated the number one place in the world to invest in mining, under the PC government.

I had the pleasure of touring the new Falconbridge Nickel Rim mine with our leader, John Tory, last year. There is tremendous investment going on there—over \$400 million in capital investment and \$900 million in benefits—without government handouts, and with tremendous benefits for the south as well, I might add, when you see all the equipment that's going into that mine. I had the pleasure of touring the Copper Cliff Inco mine as well.

I'm very pleased that the new De Beers diamond mine in Attawapiskat is moving along and is going to be a huge benefit to the aboriginal community there. But I cannot help but think that a large part of the reason why that mine has been successful is the past PC government. I'm sure De Beers was taking advantage of the remote mines 10-year tax exemption and the reduced tax rate to encourage mining development in the remotest parts of the province that was put in by the PC government. There's a whole list of other very good initiatives that were put in by our government at the time, like reducing the mining tax rate by 50%, providing a reduction of corporate income tax rates for resource companies—it's too long a list for me to go through the whole of it—and

\$29 million for Operation Treasure Hunt, a geoscience initiative to ensure high-quality geological data availability.

I opened the Lac des Iles North American Palladium mine, north of Thunder Bay, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and I'm unhappy to see, in recent press clippings, that North American Palladium has laid off 60 people because of the energy policies of this government. I also note that the mining industry is concerned with your Bill 11 and the size of buffers around parks and how that will affect mining claims and the mining industry. I hope you'll look at that.

CLINICAL SIMULATION EQUIPMENT FOR NURSES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Speaking of nurses, the Ontario Nurses' Association president was at Queen's Park this morning to participate in a press conference concerning Ontario health care workers. Linda Haslam-Stroud expressed her serious concerns regarding the situation facing Ontario nurses. She left no doubt in anyone's mind that front-line nurses have not seen any significant improvement in their workplaces under this Liberal government. I want to quote directly from what Ms. Haslam-Stroud said this morning:

"I want to speak today about the impact of not enough nurses on patient care, on the health and safety of nurses who provide that care and on keeping our nurses in the profession.

"Every day nurses in Ontario face difficult conditions in their workplace: too few qualified front-line staff caring for sicker patients, with fewer resources. This is happening in our hospitals, in our nursing homes and in the community....

"We all know that the current government came to power in this province promising to hire 8,000 new nurses.

"While the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has made a series of one-time funding announcements for nurses, and the government says it has hired more nurses, our nurses have not seen any significant improvements on the front lines in our workplaces.

"Neither the patients nor the nurses in nursing homes, emergency rooms, home care and public health units have seen more nurses to help them with excessive workloads.

"The government says it has created more than 3,000 full-time nursing positions. But a closer look reveals that 1,000 of these are three-month temporary contract positions in hospitals.... too few nurses and poor working conditions are burning out our profession and putting quality patient care in jeopardy.

"We as nurses cannot triage or reassess patients in the emergency department in accordance with the standards and more importantly in accordance with our patients' needs.

"We do not have enough staff to appropriately plan our patients' discharges so that they receive the follow-up in the community that they require and deserve.

"Public health nurses are striving each and every day to provide preventive care to the community. This includes our preparation for the upcoming flu pandemic. Our nurses tell me that they are not even able to provide minimal care for mandatory programs in public health, never mind trying to be proactive in assisting with prevention of disease.

"Our long-term-care nurses are left trying to coordinate and plan care for over 100 residents at a time....

"Ontario's lack of nurses not only means stressed-out, burned-out nurses, it means that when Ontarians need quality care, it is being compromised.

"In a province like Ontario, it's a disgrace that the nurse-to-patient ratio has fallen to the second lowest in the entire country."

When she was asked at the press conference how many new, full-time nurses she thought had been created by the Liberal government, the president of ONA said the following, and I quote:

"We believe that there's probably less than 1,000 new positions that have been created, and that's not net, because we also have the layoffs taking place in the hospital sector."

I believe the comments that were made by the president today tell the real story of nurses in Ontario, and it's time this government started dealing with those challenges.

MINERAL EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Well, well: The Liberal government is standing up trying to take credit for the Victor mine and De Beers up in Attawapiskat. I've got to say, that's a little bit beyond the pale. If there has been an impact benefit agreement signed between the community of Attawapiskat and De Beers, this government should take no credit. All the credit has to be given to the local community and Chief Mike Carpenter and his band council, along with those who negotiated very painfully over the last five years to come to an IBA.

For the government to stand up in this House today and say, "Oh, look at us. Look what we've done for the community of Attawapiskat in getting a diamond mine," I remind you that the diamonds were there for thousands of years before the Liberals ever became a government. I remind you that the mine was found a long time ago. I remind you that the Conservatives were in power when they started doing some exploration. In fact, New Democrats were there, and here we are today. If any credit is given, it has to be given to Attawapiskat.

To my friend the Minister of Mines, if you want to do something useful, talk to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to provide the funding necessary to provide training dollars for the community of

Attawapiskat to give the local people an opportunity to train for the jobs that will be created at that mine site. As it is now, the danger is that we will start a mine, which is a good thing, but the local community will not benefit to the degree that it should. Finally, what we need is a provincial government that's engaged, that says to the community of Attawapiskat, "We are prepared to put in dollars to do training so that your local citizens can benefit from the jobs of the Victor project."

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VISITORS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very happy to present to the members of this House today some tremendous guests who are here visiting from Italy. We have the mayor of Alcamo, Giacomo Scala; a councillor from that same town, Fabrizio Riolo; and accompanying them from Windsor are Joe Vesco, Isidoro Faraci and Mario Mannina. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That, of course, is not a point of order, but welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): My question is for the Acting Premier. In principle, do you support the idea that an advertising firm with close ties to the government should receive a \$6.2-million increase in government business in one year?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I would look forward to perhaps a little more information coming from the honourable member in his supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: I thought I provided a pretty clear question. But in any event, the year you came to office, the company that created your Liberal "I won't raise your taxes" ads during the last election campaign did \$99,900 worth of work for your government. According to the public accounts you tabled this year, that very same Liberal-friendly advertising firm won contracts totalling an incredible \$6,319,000 during your first full year in office. That's an increase of over \$6.2 million to a firm whose chief creative officer has publicly fawned over one Dalton McGuinty. Acting Premier, what is your explanation for a Liberal-friendly advertising firm getting a \$6.2-million increase in Liberal government business in just one year?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: The Minister of Government Services will respond to that.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I make the assumption that all the rules were followed here. I make the assumption that we have a

process in place where advertising agencies are selected to be on what's called the vendor-of-record list. It is a transparent process that evaluates them on the basis of objective analysis, and advertising agencies are then required to compete for the business. I just make the assumption that this agency competed fairly and equitably and was selected on the basis of merit. That is exactly what I think the public would expect, and that's exactly what I suspect took place here. If you have any evidence to the contrary, I'd certainly like to hear it.

Mr. Runciman: Assumptions can be dangerous. Let me see now: A Liberal-friendly advertising firm gets large Liberal government contracts. Now, where have we heard that before?

To the minister: You can immediately dispel the very bad impression this \$6.3-million contract to a Liberal-friendly firm leaves, especially in the post-Gomery era. Will you now agree to respect hard-earned tax dollars, as you promised during the campaign, and immediately release all tenders received for the advertising business, release all records associated with the \$6.3 million of work that was done by this Liberal-friendly ad firm, and release all detailed contracts won by this firm since the public accounts were tabled? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, although I'm not sure which firm he's referring to, I gather that the firm has been on the vendor-of-record list for some considerable period of time, under the previous government and under our government. It's an agency that, I gather, earned the right to be on that vendor-of-record list. There is a process in place that ensures there is a fair and equitable selection of these agencies. This agency, I gather, followed that, and I'm sure the member would not want to imply anything other than that. As I say, this is an agency that was on the same list that you had before. It went through a process for selection that was fair and transparent, and the facts will show that. I think this agency has earned the right to do this business.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On May 26 of this year, almost six months ago, the opposition submitted a freedom-of-information request for your schedule from January 1, 2004, forward. It has now been six months and that request has yet to be fulfilled. Minister, as you know, under the freedom of information act, those are to be processed within 30 days. You said at committee that you had nothing to hide. If this is so, why six months of delay in releasing something as simple as your personal schedule?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm sure they followed the process to request the freedom-of-information request. That request didn't come to me. A minister is not supposed to interfere in a freedom-of-information request, so I haven't done it. They should keep following the process and they will get the information they need.

Mr. Hudak: Minister, unfortunately that is not the only example of some kind of obstruction at the Ministry of Transportation. On June 15 of this year we submitted another FOI request for a copy of your cellphone bills and telephone bills belonging to you and your ministerial staff. This letter also included a request for e-mails from the minister's office to the Chalmers Group or its affiliated companies. The Chalmers Group is of course your company, which is supposedly held in a blind trust. It is now five months later, Minister. We have not yet received the response to our simple requests.

Minister, we ask you to dislodge whatever obstruction is taking place and ask you to very kindly facilitate this request and respond immediately.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I can answer this question, even though they asked before. If they have followed the proper process to request further information, they should follow the same process to follow up if they haven't received the information. I cannot interfere. I do not interfere in these affairs so I have no information on it.

Mr. Hudak: Well, the usual process of the Minister of Transportation appears to be stonewalling. There is an unfortunate pattern that is developing in here. As you know, Minister, you've been under investigation by the Integrity Commissioner for some five months. Your own Premier has publicly admonished you for serious lapses in judgment. There is an unfortunate coincidence regarding a \$200,000 fundraiser with limousine drivers and subsequent legislation brought before the assembly to benefit the same.

Minister, I ask that you begin to clear the air and the cloud surrounding your conduct. Will you end the obstruction immediately and kindly release those FOIs that are five months and six months overdue?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Big talk about integrity in this Legislature from Conservatives, who have members running for the federal party who are actually showing signs but are still being paid by the Ontario taxpayers. That's the question they are raising here? I have said I have never, ever raised—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I have never interfered in anything. They have requested their request and they should continue to do that.

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SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Acting Premier: Students, parents and teachers want to know when we're going to see a real plan for school safety from the McGuinty government. Two years ago, your own Human Rights Commissioner called on the McGuinty government to fully fund alternative programs for all suspended and expelled students, instead of throwing those kids on to the streets where they really get into trouble. He called on you to restore youth outreach workers and guidance counsellors fired from Toronto schools, because they are the most effective at rooting

out and preventing bullying. Two years later, the McGuinty government has done nothing. Acting Premier, when are we going to see some real action from the McGuinty government against bullying in our schools?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm very happy to have the opportunity to remind the honourable member—perhaps he was not made aware that the minister, this very morning, has launched our government's bullying prevention program. This is the first time—

Interjection.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Yes, he has. This is the first time in the history of the province that the government will be responsible for establishing a province-wide program, working with school boards, to identify the causes of bullying and how bullying can be prevented in our schools. I believe that the minister has been acting very responsibly. He is working with school boards to identify what the issues are and how they can be mitigated so that the incidences of bullying are reduced in our schools.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Something the NDP did not do.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Absolutely.

Mr. Hampton: Your so-called plan this morning amounts to \$1,500 a high school. That's it. You can't even buy a pop machine for \$1,500.

Here's the reality: The Human Rights Commissioner called on you to do something two years ago. Since then, you've dithered, you've delayed on changes to the so-called Safe Schools Act and you've dithered and delayed on an anti-bullying plan. For two years, parents have waited for a comprehensive plan, one that gives principals the resources and tools to identify and work with problem kids and one which would allow them to put the outreach workers and the guidance counsellors back into the schools where they can do some good preventive work.

I say again: Don't tell us about \$1,500 per high school. When are we going to see a real plan? When are we going to see the outreach workers and the guidance counsellors back in the high schools where they can do the job?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm happy that I have this opportunity to correct the information that's been presented by the honourable member, because in fact the announcement today represents a \$23-million investment to reduce the rate of bullying and to change attitudes around bullying. It includes \$1 million to the Kids Help Phone line. We're expanding that service to a 24-hour service across the province. We are establishing a provincial registry of bullying prevention programs so that schools can learn best practices from each other. There will be up to \$2,000 available to every school for staff training and resources to create an in-house safe school team. In addition to that, there is a \$1-million grant made available for high-challenged schools with additional challenges. Those are the accurate dollars that

are being made available with the minister's announcement today to prevent bullying in our schools.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, you neglected to point out that it's \$23-million spread over three years, which works out to about \$7 million a year. Divide by the number of high schools and this won't even replace the pop machine. That's the McGuinty government's plan. You've had two years. Two years ago the Human Rights Commissioner said there was a serious problem here. Two years ago, the Human Rights Commissioner identified many of the elements that needed to be put in place to address it.

What do we get today? Fifteen hundred dollars per high school. That won't even hire one week's worth of contract work, never mind the outreach workers and the guidance counsellors who are supposed to be there to do the effective job.

Minister, it may have been a photo op today, but it's not a plan. When are we going to see the plan? When are we going to see the resources? When are we going to see the outreach—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: It most definitely is a plan, and in my previous response I identified the various areas where we are prepared to invest and support local schools for bullying prevention programs.

I would also remind the honourable member that this government has directed an additional \$355 million to school boards to assist them in the hiring of specialized teachers, which would include guidance counsellors.

Finally, I would like to remind the honourable member that when I was a school board trustee and you were the government, you cut funds to schools and we had to make cuts in the very areas that today you are saying are so important. I suggest that the honourable member might just reflect on his own record, look at what we're doing and recognize that there are going to be some additional resources to prevent bullying in our schools.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. On Monday I asked you to order Ontario Power Generation to roll out a rebate to hard-pressed electricity consumers and businesses. In response to my question, you stated that there was no room to rebate the summer bonus bucks that OPG pocketed over this record-breaking summer. Minister, is that still your position today?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question yet again. Of the \$181 million, 5% is the investment income retained at Ontario Power Generation Inc., and the remainder goes to pay down the stranded debt. Over and above that, OPG has both regulated and unregulated assets. On the unregulated assets, any dollars that are made over 4.7 cents as a revenue ceiling go back to the consumers in Ontario. Consumers such as small businesses and homeowners

receive a portion, and 15% to 20% of the \$847 million is rebated to the industrial sector.

Mr. Hampton: We've had a chance to go through the regulations again, and once again you're confused on the facts. Ontario Power Generation receives significant revenues from unregulated assets like coal generation and natural gas generation solely because of the summer's record-breaking heat and record-breaking electricity prices. These are summer bonus bucks that the McGuinty government can use to provide relief for ordinary families, businesses and industries that are getting hammered on their hydro bills. Will you order OPG to roll out a rebate and return the summer bonus bucks to the people and the industries that need it?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I will state again: On the unregulated assets, anything above the 4.7-cent-a-kilowatt threshold will be rebated to the consumers. Currently, that's estimated at over \$800 million, and 15% to 20% of that portion goes to large industrial consumers. The rest goes back to small businesses and regular consumers.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the reality, Minister: Ordinary people in communities like Dryden, in my constituency, could use those summer bonus bucks that the McGuinty government is pocketing and do a lot more with them. Since the McGuinty government came to office and implemented your policy of driving electricity rates through the roof, the community of Dryden has lost 420 forestry jobs, including 40 announced this week at Weyerhaeuser's pulp and paper mill. The people in Dryden and the people like them paying the price for your hydro rate hikes across Ontario could use those summer bonus bucks that OPG collected in order to put people back to work, in order to save pretty important industries.

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The fact of the matter is, there's a whole lot of money that OPG collected this summer that could be returned to industries, to businesses and consumers. The only thing stopping them is that the McGuinty government doesn't have the political will or desire to do it—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: To the member, maybe I could just use this quote: "Industrial energy price subsidization can be attractive in theory, but tricky in practice.... I think it far better to work with industry to lower its energy costs through greater efficiency, not through a scheme of subsidized rates." Public Power, page 251.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Acting Premier. Here is what the Minister of Education admitted yesterday in estimates committee: that he authorized the transfer of \$80 million to school boards for which his ministry issued no guidelines of accountability; that those funds will be paid out to teacher unions and the unions for school boards support workers; and that those unions would make payments to their members

through a process that is left totally up to them. He also admitted that he had no control over the qualifying or approval process for those payments. Finally, he admitted there was only one reason for that \$80-million payment, and that was to entice teacher and support worker unions to sign four-year contracts.

Were you and your cabinet colleagues aware that there was no accountability for that \$80 million, and will you today commit that there will be a full accounting for every one of those tax dollars spent?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I would remind the honourable member that when transfers from the province of Ontario are made to school boards, they are disbursed by school boards. School boards are subject to audits that are published in newspapers. So I would suggest that school boards are very accountable for how they spend their money. To suggest that dollars are transferred and there's no accounting for it would not be accurate, in my opinion.

Mr. Klees: I'm going to ask the Acting Premier to read Hansard of yesterday's estimates committee, because she's wrong. The fact of the matter is, the minister admitted that not only do school boards not know, because it's strictly the unions who will have control over this money; he also confirmed that if they don't transfer all the money to their members, they get to keep the balance and spend it as they will. For \$80 million, not one new textbook; not one new position for an autistic child; not one new service in the education field.

Minister, will you commit today to an external audit of that 80 million of taxpayers' dollars that effectively has become a slush fund in the school boards of this province? Will you make that commitment to an external audit of the \$80 million?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Again, it's very unfortunate that the pattern of the opposition is to continue to bash teachers. There would appear to be no trust in the expertise of the professionals that we have in our schools who have given so generously of themselves. They've spent their own money on supplies. They certainly did that under your government. What I am prepared to say to the honourable member is that the funds that have been transferred to school boards will be audited.

NURSES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. This morning, you visited a school of nursing and held a photo op with some dummies. Now, according to the Canadian Press, the Ontario Nurses' Association, after watching this performance, suggested, "You are the dummy." They say that instead of holding photo ops with dummies, you should keep your promise to hire more nurses. In fact, the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, Linda Haslam-Stroud, says, "The nurses on the front line have not seen any significant improvements in our workplace life." Minister, when is the McGuinty government going to hire the 8,000 new nurses you promised?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In a place where you can't say "rascal," I'll be careful about how I respond to the honourable member. I do want to say that a note was passed to me in the Legislature that Linda Haslam-Stroud, the president of ONA, with whom I have a good working relationship and meet very regularly, called my office to indicate that the CP story is an erroneous one.

On the issue of our investment in clinical simulation equipment, I think it's very disheartening that a nursing union, the Ontario Federation of Labour, would seek to criticize one element of an investment in overall nursing strategy for their own purposes. It's obvious the clinical simulation equipment is a very good idea as it relates to enhancing the quality of the education process for our nursing students, who will soon be on the front lines delivering important care to Ontarians.

Mr. Hampton: Well, the nurses want to know about new nurses.

Imagine this situation, Minister: You're hit by a car. You rush to the emergency room. Your leg is broken. You're bleeding. You need help. The admitting clerk at the ER says, "You have a choice: a nurse or one of George Smitherman's dummies." I don't know about you, Minister, but I pick the nurse.

Linda Haslam-Stroud, the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, says that "less than 1,000 new (nursing) positions ... have been created, and that's not net, because we also have the layoffs taking place in the hospital sector." So I ask the question again: When is the McGuinty government going to keep its promise to hire the 8,000 new additional nurses?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: With your five-year record in government, which included the overall net loss of thousands of registered nurses in this province, you, sir, are a bit of a piece of work, as has been well identified in the estimates process. From correspondence from my ministry to the health critic of that honourable member's party, he knows and she knows that through our investments in long-term care, home care, public health, community-based mental health and hospitals, we have created and funded more than 3,052 new nursing positions in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I just want to remind members that we need to be careful with our language. In both the supplementary and the response, we were getting very close to the edge. So as we go forward, let's remember that this is a place where all members deserve respect.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. In May of this year, you announced ReNew Ontario, a five-year, \$30-billion plan for infrastructure investment. ReNew Ontario is a welcome and ambitious plan. It does not merely focus on the present, but realizes the importance of planning for the future of the province.

With that in mind, ReNew Ontario takes a strategic approach to planning for the growth of the province and ensuring that the government is concentrating its investments in areas Ontarians have said are their priorities, namely, health care, education and economic prosperity. This government clearly understands that investing in health is a particular priority for Ontarians, and has major investments in health care totalling over \$5 billion over the next five years.

Minister, can you please give us the details of these announcements and how this will help better the lives and health care for the people of Hamilton West and the province as a whole?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I want to thank the member from Hamilton West for the question. By the year 2010, Ontario and its partners will invest more than \$5 billion to modernize health care facilities, to reduce wait times, to provide better services in high-growth areas and to modernize our older hospitals. This investment plan is the single largest expansion of public hospitals in well over a generation.

Recently, two weeks ago, I was in Hamilton where we announced—the members were there—over \$400 million worth of expansion and redevelopment projects for St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and Hamilton Health Sciences centre.

By providing the infrastructure Ontarians need, our government is determined to ensure that the people of Ontario receive the best and the most modern health care services they want and deserve.

Ms. Marsales: May I first and foremost say thank you on behalf of Hamilton West. Ontarians in my riding will be pleased to know that this government is determined to increase the level of accessibility to health care, and has a plan for doing so.

Some of my constituents have also been inquiring as to the details of how the projects will be funded. Funding is always a major concern for many of the taxpayers of Ontario, and they would like to know their tax dollars are providing them with the best possible solution at the most efficient price. It is my understanding that, combined with the traditional style of financing, there will also be some hospital infrastructure that will be built through alternative financing and procurement.

To assist the constituents in Hamilton West and the people of Ontario, can you please help them understand how the province will use this innovative financing tool to help provide more public hospitals and other infrastructure investments in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Not only that, Speaker, but an excellent question, because our government is adopting a new, made-in-Ontario approach to infrastructure financing. It's called alternative finance procurement. We are determined to find and attract new sources of financing for Ontario's public infrastructure, to manage it in a fair, transparent and accountable manner in support of community growth and economic expansion.

Private sector financing is not just about additional investment in public services; it's about leveraging private sector investors' discipline and expertise to ensure projects are delivered on time and on budget. AFP strategies, unlike the previous government's models, do not involve privatization of public assets. Talk of privatization, in fact, would be misleading. No matter who builds or finances public infrastructure in Ontario, our government has made it clear that hospitals and schools will be publicly owned, publicly controlled and at all times publicly accountable.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I note the Minister of Education isn't here, so I'll direct the question to the Acting Premier. Minister, about two years ago, your government announced a moratorium on school closures in Ontario until 2004. At that time you said, "Short-term financial considerations have played too large a role in decisions to close schools. In fact, some of the most successful schools in the province in terms of literacy and numeracy testing results have closed."

Ontario does indeed have many outstanding rural schools where students not only learn and have a great opportunity for education, but also learn the value of being part of a small community. In my riding, the parents and friends of Hampton Junior Public School are working to keep their local school open. They point to many advantages and the results of the EQAO tests. Minister, what steps are you prepared to take to ensure that no viable school is closed on your watch?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I must say that I would like to remind the honourable member that from 1996 to 2003, Ontario boards were forced to close 503 schools. That's an average of 64 schools a year. I would say to the honourable member that the record of this government and our commitment and investment to protect small and rural schools has been significant. Also, with respect to our investments around good schools—

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Oh, it's the bad schools we're closing.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: It was the honourable member who brought into the question the results of EQAO tests, so I'm simply making our commitment to keeping good schools open at \$50 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary?

Mr. O'Toole: Minister, it's you who promised not to close rural schools, and small communities, as you know, are dependent on that. Your Good Places to Learn funding is dividing my community and potentially affecting the quality programs in three local schools that I'm speaking about. Enniskillen, Hampton Junior Public School and M.J. Hobbs offer excellent programs today.

Minister, this is really the question: This community and the board are asking you or members of staff to meet with them to resolve the problem of the best use of this

Good Places to Learn funding of \$421,000 and give the boards the respect and flexibility they need to make the decisions, not the handcuffs you've put around the grant. Will you commit today to ensure that you communicate with not just the board but the community on the allocation of the Good Places to Learn grant, how it affects the quality of education—

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

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government is very committed to working with school boards. I think we have clearly demonstrated our respect for the locally elected representatives who manage the school systems across Ontario. We have committed \$4 billion to help school boards across the province repair schools that had been neglected by the previous government, in addition to all the other resources that have been made available, particularly in rural communities, for small schools so that those community hubs can continue to be viable within those communities. I would suggest that the honourable member look at the record, look at our commitment and look at the investment of this government in protecting education right across the province. Large schools, small schools, rural schools, schools in your community: we are prepared to work with boards to ensure that good schools continue to be viable.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Health. On October 24, Joanne Curran wrote to you on behalf of advocacy organizations which deal with eating disorders. She raised serious concerns regarding the three- to five-month waiting list for assessments at eating disorder programs, deficits facing the programs, the closure of the entire outpatient program and parts of the day treatment program at Toronto General Hospital, and the long waiting list for specialized residential care. She urged money for the ministry-funded programs so that they can at least operate at year 2000 service levels and money for in-patient services to treat the most medically compromised patients.

Minister, when will your government provide funding to deal with these serious gaps in services for those who suffer from eating disorders?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The answer is, quite shortly. I had an opportunity in the same time frame to meet with that organization. What we're seeking to do at the end of each year is take a look at what expenses we made with respect to out-of-country coverage and use all those dollars as reinvestments in our own Ontario system. We gave an indication to them at that meeting—in fact, I asked them for some advice about the best way to proceed in terms of that reinvestment.

I'm operating by memory here. I could undertake later on in the day to give the honourable member a better time frame in terms of when we're going to be able to move forward, but "very shortly" is the language that is most operable at the moment.

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Ms. Martel: What is most alarming about the whole situation is the huge increase in the number of patients being sent from Ontario out of country because they can't get the treatment here.

Sheena's Place in Toronto got information from your ministry that showed that the number of patients who were treated in the US rose from five in 2000-01 to 51 in 2004-05. The cost over the same period to send patients to the US went from \$503,000 to \$5.6 million. Most alarming was that 21 of the 51 patients who were sent to the US for treatment in 2004-05 had already been treated in the US in 2003-04.

Minister, we spent \$5.6 million to treat eating-disorder patients outside of the country last year. Will you invest that money, and more, to make sure that our young people can get the treatment they need here at home?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's always interesting in this place when people stick with their supplementary that was written, even when they got information in the answer.

I think I demonstrated by memory that I'm pretty aware of the circumstances. We're interested in being able to provide more of this service in the province. In some cases, we have service capacity that's easier to ignite, to enhance. In some cases, it does require specific training. As an example, we're working very hard to create more capacity in Ontario for gastric bypass surgery, which is another example of an area where we've been sending a lot of people out of jurisdiction. But it will take us a little bit of time working with health care organizations to enhance our capacity to do so.

I think the honourable member will be pleased that we're proceeding in a fashion which is that at the end of each year we take a look at what out-of-country dollars we've made and seek to make those appropriate investments to enhance our capacities here in Ontario.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): My question is for the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Steve Peters. We know that looking after the interests of families is a priority of this government. A case in point: Last year, this government enacted a very important initiative designated to assist working families caring for their dying family members. The family medical leave entitlement allows workers to take up to eight weeks of job-protected leave to provide care or support to a gravely ill family member. Minister, can you tell us what your ministry has done to raise awareness of this important option now available to Ontarians during a time of crisis?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the honourable member for his question, because certainly looking after the interests of families in this province is a priority for us in this government. The people of Ontario are our most precious resource. As well, we want to make sure our citizens understand that

they need to be there in times of family crisis, and it's vital that all Ontarians and all MPPs in this House promote the family medical leave.

Certainly, we have tried to do our part to make citizens aware. We've advertised in 21 different languages to make sure that that information gets out. We've printed brochures in English and French and in 10 other languages as well. The family medical leave will give families that peace of mind to know that their job is protected while they cope with tough times during a family crisis. It's essential that all Ontarians know this right.

We are a compassionate government. I think we want to demonstrate that. We want to make sure that everyone in this House and across this province is aware of this compassionate initiative.

Mr. Peterson: Minister, thank you for your answer. This valuable option now leaves workers one less thing to worry about during very difficult times. We can understand the emotional, physical and often financial toll of caring for a gravely ill family member. Knowing that one's job is protected allows a caregiver to focus on what's important during times of great emotional stress. It's evident that this government understands the importance of caring for the emotional as well as the physical health of its citizens. Minister, can you tell this House more about the family medical leave awareness campaign, and was it a success?

Hon. Mr. Peters: We need to make sure that we're continually promoting this. I would ask that every MPP in this House—it was supported in a non-partisan manner—continue to promote this.

Every Ontarian covered under the Employment Standards Act in this province is eligible for family medical leave. Our government wants to make sure that everyone is aware of that right. We recognize that the direct cost of absenteeism to high levels of caregiver stress costs over 1 billion dollars a year in Canada, and the investment that is being made to this is minimal compared to the rewards that are gained by this. We want to make sure that that message gets out. I reiterate, that's why we have brochures available in 10 languages, plus English and French. We've made sure those brochures have been sent out to doctors' offices and to medical facilities across this province, and I would ask that all MPPs in this House, if they have not already received this material, to please get in touch with our office and do their part in spreading the message on this most important government initiative.

CORN PRODUCERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: The Canadian International Trade Tribunal has indicated that the subsidization and dumping of US corn has caused injury to our domestic industry. You knew a decision was coming. You know the possible impacts. I raised this with you five weeks ago. Two questions: Where do you stand on the possibility of tariffs on US corn? Secondly, what action steps

have you taken with all sectors involved to find solutions?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I think it's a very important issue. As the member has indicated, there was a ruling announcement yesterday. This is part of a process that is underway that has been initiated by the corn producers, by the grains and oilseeds—actually, Canadian corn producers—and it's something we have been paying very close attention to, but as you would appreciate, because it is a quasi-judicial process, it's not anything this government can become involved in directly.

With respect to your comments around tariffs, our government has very serious concerns around tariffs. At the plowing match that was held in Listowel, the Premier took the opportunity to meet with representatives from the agricultural community for over an hour and made it very clear that our government is going to push the federal government to deal with the tariff issues, very strongly, at the World Trade Organization talks in Hong Kong.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary question.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Minister, with due respect, what we don't need is a narrative on process; we need leadership from the provincial government on this important cause.

I recently wrote to Premier McGuinty on this topic. As you well know, farmers have been hit hard by low commodity prices, problems at the border and unfair trade practices from competing jurisdictions. We are in a very unfortunate situation: that the lack of an effective support plan in Ontario for our corn producers puts them in a very difficult situation, and then countervailing duties may result in the closure of Casco, including Casco in Port Colborne, a major provider. Minister, we need immediate leadership. Will you develop an effective support plan to ensure that our corn producers prosper and to keep plants like Casco viable?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government has been demonstrating leadership on this file, and if you had gone to meet with the grains and oilseeds folks who were in this building yesterday, you would have heard them report that this government and this ministry have been talking with them. We have made it very clear. We are prepared to work with them on a plan. They have identified the need to work with the federal government as well. I have given them my commitment that I'm very prepared to go with them to the federal government to develop a plan that's going to assist them to deal with these issues for both the short term and the long term. That's the leadership of this government.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Last year, more than 95,000 patients went to Scarborough hospitals' emergency rooms, but the Scarborough Health Coalition says their hospitals can't keep up. They say

their community is suffering, and I want to quote them here, "from an acute shortage of anaesthesiologists, neurologists, respirologists, operating room assistants and hospital-based pediatricians." Minister, Scarborough's hospital patients are being underserved because of these shortages of health care providers. Can you tell me when Scarborough is going to receive the health care providers, the health care workers, that the people in that community need and deserve?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The short answer is: with a few more years of progress to make up for the efforts your party made while in office, which was to create this crisis of a shortage of doctors that we have. Because the sad reality is, for an honourable member who suffers from a poor memory, that it was the party that he was part of, the government that he was part of, that reduced the size of medical schools in the province of Ontario. The party that preceded us in office left that in place.

1510

I'm pleased to say that we've opened a Northern Ontario Medical School and that we have enhanced the number of medical spots; that's ongoing at other places. In addition, we have made billions of dollars of investments in health care. Scarborough hospitals have received additional new money each and every year that our party has been the government. This will continue, as we have also delivered on the long-asked-for predictable, stable, multi-year funding.

There is more work to be done in Ontario, but we are making progress, making up for the time that was squandered while these parties were in office.

Mr. Hampton: I want to remind the minister that the McGuinty government is now into its third year, and doctors aren't the only ones missing from Scarborough's health care system. The Ontario Federation of Labour released their report today, and their report says that all health care workers in Ontario are exhausted, understaffed, and under pressure. And to quote them, "Right now, workers in emergency services, hospitals, nursing homes, homes for the aged, retirement homes, public health units, mental health and home care can't," in many cases, "deliver quality care. There are just not enough of them left to do it." They are calling for an immediate moratorium on layoffs in hospitals. Will you do that, Minister? Will you ensure that there are no more layoffs in Ontario's hospitals?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm in the circumstance of reminding the honourable member of the fact that in Ontario we have community-based governance of our local hospitals. In fact, the vast majority of those who provide health care in the province of Ontario, as distinct from most other provinces, are under community-based governance. I can confirm for the honourable member that there has been significant new employment in all reaches of the health care sector. That includes the acute care hospital sector.

But accordingly, in a system that is \$33 billion large, there will be from time to time changes, alterations in

program and plan, that affect some health care providers. The honourable member's seizing of an interest in the status quo is interesting, especially given the record that his party played while in office.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Thank God we have a good economy, George.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: They, and especially the member from Trinity-Spadina, like to deny the role that they have played historically, but the reality is that while they were in office, they closed thousands of hospital beds, they fired thousands of nurses, and they shut down medical schools. That is their legacy, Mr. Speaker. We're working double time to make up for their squandering of it.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, November marks the beginning of deer hunting season, and I would like to thank you for extending the season. But recently in my riding of Huron-Bruce, there have been numerous reports of collisions, vehicles that have been hitting deer on all of our roads. Minister, what have you done to address the rising nuisance deer population?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'd like to thank the member for her concern about this. As she would know, in her riding, deer-vehicle collisions are a serious threat to human life, as they are right across this province.

Number one, we've worked in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation to get better signage and better lighting on highways where there are heavy deer populations. We're working with MTO also on fencing of main corridors where deer are crossing highways and creating a hazard. As the member has mentioned, we've also increased the harvesting opportunities for hunters in Ontario. In some wildlife management units, theoretically now it is possible to harvest up to seven deer in areas of high population.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Minister. While we're on the topic of nuisance wildlife, I know you have heard the recent reports about bears attacking people, some of which have ended in very tragic results. Moreover, I'm very certain you are aware that there have been an increasing number of sightings of bear in southern Ontario, specifically in some of the more densely populated areas. What actions are being taken to control incidents like these?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I must say I'm very proud of our government's initiative last year, the bear wise program. It has been a great success. We have a 24/7 toll-free call centre that received, last year, 14,500 calls, with our trained staff responding to over 9,000 of those calls. I think, very importantly, we've established protocol now with police forces right across this province, both the OPP and municipal police forces in bear country. We've also hired 50 technical staff to deal with this and support

the police in the high season for nuisance bear activity. We basically have 40 agreements with municipalities with regard to this. I think it's proper to note that we've got \$900,000 invested in more than 165 projects involving prevention, education and awareness in the bear wise program to make sure that people understand how we can coexist with the bears.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Last week or the week before I brought you a problem. The Ministry of the Environment had sent an order to the wrong people, to West Grey, when it should have gone to your ministry. At that point you said you didn't know anything about it, that you would look into it immediately. That was over a week ago. I would just ask you today to tell the House what you looked into and when you are going to fix this river that is full of fish.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'd like to refer that question to the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of the Environment.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I thank the member for the question and his concern. The last time we spoke about the situation in Neustadt, we talked about the fact that the Ministry of the Environment had issued a legally binding provincial order to the community to show us what steps they were taking to ensure that the sewage lagoon would not fail. As members will recall, there is a study that was paid for by our ministry that showed, last year, that within five years there was a risk of that lagoon failing. We were very clear about the need to do that. I can report that, subsequent to that, the Ministry of the Environment has stayed that provincial order so that we have an opportunity for our ministry, and those who are concerned about this issue, particularly the municipality, to come together and try to find a resolution. I know it is important for all of us that this situation not be allowed to continue. I know that when the member who asked the question was the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Murdoch: Do you think we could get a minister who's responsible to answer this question? I'll go back to the Minister of Natural Resources, who I understand is involved in rivers. If you're not doing that any more, maybe you could tell us in this House. There are fish in this river. There are peoples' lives that may be at stake if this lagoon goes into this river. It is your river; it is your river that is moving closer to the lagoons. I would like an answer from the Minister of Natural Resources, who sits in this House. I would hope you didn't mislead this House, but you said you would—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Let's just choose different words.

Mr. Murdoch: I hope you wouldn't tell something in the House that isn't true, then. All I'm asking—

The Speaker: I need you to withdraw, and then we can go on.

Mr. Murdoch: OK, I'll withdraw that and try this a better way then. The minister last week told us that he would immediately get someone to look at this problem and get back to us. That was over a week ago. Maybe the Minister of Municipal Affairs would like to get involved, but that's OK. But the minister did say that you would get back to us—that was over a week ago—and that you would do something immediately. So I'm asking the minister to answer this question. He doesn't need to shove it on to somebody else.

The Speaker: I think the question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I did it that very day. In fact, I prepared a letter, and that will be delivered to you today.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Wow, what action. That was good.

My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week, constituency week, I had an opportunity to meet with Jessica Bordeleau, a young woman in Moonbeam, Ontario, who is both developmentally and physically challenged. She is a young woman who, past her school years, is now going to a sheltered workshop. As a result of the funding envelope that that agency has, she is now able to go only on a half-time basis where she used to be full-time. The reason for that is there aren't enough dollars in the budget to allow the personal care worker to give full-time services.

My question to you is simply this: Do you undertake today in this House to review this particular case in order to see if there is money within the budget of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to increase the dollars to that agency so she can get full-time services?

1520

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question. I would like a little bit more information. There was a question in this House just a couple of weeks ago about an agency. I don't know if it's the same agency; it may be a different one. That kind of detail would be good to have if we're going to investigate, so I would like some information. We have had issues, of course, as this member knows, certainly in this area. The result of that has been a significant increase in funding.

From the sound of it, it's the area of the program where we've enhanced funding for people who age after 21, who are finished school and are in the community. We're doing our very best for each stage of life for people with developmental disabilities. I'm very happy to look at details of this particular case so that we'll know. It may well be the same agency that we spoke of a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. Bisson: It's not the same agency. It was the Association for Community Living on respite care two weeks ago in Timmins. This is the Association for Community Living, Kapuskasing. What I'm being told by both agencies is that the money that you talk about, which is new money that's supposed to go to enhance services or at least preserve services we've got, is not getting to them. What I'm being told is that the only money that they've got is the 1.5% that they got as part of their core funding increase. None of the other money has reached these agencies. What they're telling me is that they're now in a position where they're having to ration services to the people they give services to because they don't have the money to deal with the increased need.

So in this particular case, the Kapuskasing Access Better Living, this is a young woman in Moonbeam who needs to get out of the house on a full-time basis at this sheltered workshop. What the agency needs is another full-time-equivalent personal care worker. So my question is, are you prepared today to review this case, in order to give that agency the dollars they need to provide the services?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I think that this member knows that we've never refused to look at cases. We hope that we do extremely well with the limited funding that we have. I'm very happy to see this as well. I can tell this member, who has watched the investments we've made very carefully, that we have done so much in the last couple of years—nearing \$200 million of investment, and we are going to families for more funding for special services at home, for the Passport to Community Living for those who are over age 21; yes, to agencies as well, with the 1.5% increase to their base budgets. We have done as much as we possibly can. We always hope to do more. We also hope that this member will give us additional information for this particular case that he asks about.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Minister of Culture recently announced that there would be funding cuts totalling more than \$1.2 million from Ontario public library services; and

“Whereas over 69 million people visited public libraries in Ontario in 2003, with more than 100 million items circulating; and

“Whereas these cuts will impact you as a library user, resulting in delays in how often your library receives new books;

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

“That the Minister of Culture restore the cuts to funding for Ontario public library services so that our

library can continue to promote literacy in our community.”

I want to thank the Collingwood Public Library for sending that petition to me. I support it, and I've signed it.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I also affix my signature on this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to

address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I have also signed this.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a petition from the people of Canada to the federal and provincial governments of Canada on the reduction of gasoline taxes.

“Whereas the steep price of gasoline is seriously affecting the cost of living of the average Canadian and may soon have negative impacts on our provincial and national economies; and

“Whereas the taxes collected by both the provincial and federal governments average 39% of the retail price per litre and are rapidly accruing as the price of gasoline mounts; and

“Whereas these taxes collected on a litre of gasoline are being compounded through the GST being collected, not only in proportion to the base price of gasoline, but also on the PST and the federal excise tax; and

“Whereas the citizens of Canada believe that their government should be limited to the amount of taxes collected at both levels of government when gasoline was, on an average, 80 cents per litre;

“Be it resolved that the citizens of Canada demand that their national and provincial governments immediately roll back all taxes on gasoline to a rate commensurate with an average retail price of 80 cents per litre and no further taxes be added to the price of gasoline for an indefinite period until such time as the populace is broadly consulted on this issue.”

CASINO WINDSOR

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

“Whereas the province of Ontario has announced plans to spend \$400 million on renovating the Windsor casino; and

“Whereas we believe health care, education and agriculture are among the many areas that have a higher priority than gambling; and

“Whereas the \$400-million casino expenditure announced by the”—Dalton McGuinty—“government on February 15, 2005, is enough money to hire 3,600 full-time nurses or 1,480 full-time doctors for two years or eliminate the projected deficit Ontario hospitals are facing this year;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the McGuinty government not to gamble with the health of Ontario citizens. And we further urge the McGuinty government to postpone the spending of \$400 million on the Windsor casino and to invest this amount in the real priorities of

Ontario’s citizens, such as a healthy, vibrant and prosperous Ontario.”

I’m pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to my page, Alex, who’s going to take it to the table for approval.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I’m pleased to join my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, in this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet) and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

I affix my signature to this, and ask page Andrew to carry it for me.

1530

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This petition is entitled “Farmers Feed Cities Day”:

“Whereas the 60,000 farmers in Ontario are the foundation for 10.3% of provincial economic activity; and

“Whereas many citizens do not appreciate the role Ontario farmers play in putting food on their table; and

“Whereas the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is only 0.7% of the Ontario budget, despite Dalton McGuinty’s promise to make OMAF a ‘lead ministry’;

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

“Declare the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving Day as ‘Farmers Feed Cities Day.’”

I support this initiative and affix my signature.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Merlin, Chatham and Blenheim, and I too have signed the petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the price of gas is reaching unacceptably high levels; and

“Whereas the provincial government, which collects 14.7 cents per litre gas tax, and the federal government, which collects 10 cents per litre gas tax, have done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

“Whereas, since 1995, the federal government has imposed a deficit elimination tax, that being in the amount of 1.5 cents per litre, that cost taxpayers \$700 million this year; and

“Whereas the federal government imposes 7% GST on the full price of gas, including all taxes, which is an extra tax on tax that cost taxpayers \$500 million this year;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Prime Minister Paul Martin to remove these extra \$1.2 billion in federal gas taxes.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature, and I hand this petition to page Cara.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professionals and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and

technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I affix my name to this petition. I'm going to be giving it to Alexandre, our page.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

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

“Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

“Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

“That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come.”

As you know, the act to preserve the Banting homestead will be debated tomorrow morning during private members'. I've signed this petition, and I agree with it.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition, which is a shared petition, actually, with the member from Mississauga East and the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. The petition read as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I agree with the contents of this petition. I will sign it and hand it to page Adam, who is here beside me today.

AUTISM TREATMENT

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

“Whereas children with autism who have reached the age of six years are no longer being discharged from their preschool autism program; and

“Whereas these children should be getting the best special education possible in the form of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) within the school system; and

“Whereas there are approximately 700 preschool children with autism across Ontario who are required to wait indefinitely for placement in the program, and there are also countless school-age children that are not receiving the support they require in the school system; and

“Whereas this situation has an impact on the families, extended families and friends of all of these children; and

“Whereas, as stated on the Web site for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, ‘IBI can make a significant difference in the life of a child with autism. Its objective is to decrease the frequency of challenging behaviours, build social skills and promote language development’;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of IBI for all preschool children awaiting services. We also petition the Legislature of Ontario to fund an education program in the form of ABA in the school system.”

I affix my signature to this.

1540

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the business of the House for this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Is there unanimous consent? Carried.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I’m relieved, Speaker, because I move that, notwithstanding any standing order or the order of the House earlier today, the House continue to meet beyond 6 of the clock for the purpose of completing consideration of the motion for second reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until Thursday, November 17, 2005, at 10:00 a.m.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved—and I’d better read it—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker: Dispense? OK. All those in favour? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DUFFINS ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA RÉSERVE AGRICOLE DE DUFFINS-ROUGE

Mr. Ramsay moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve / Projet de loi 16, Loi concernant la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I’m very pleased to move second reading of Bill 16, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act. I’d like to notify the desk that I’ll be sharing my time with the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

I’m very proud that this government is acting on its plan to conserve Ontario’s prime agricultural land and to ensure that our communities are strong and healthy for generations to come. If passed, this legislation would ensure that lands in the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve are set aside permanently for agricultural use.

When I introduced this bill, I briefly sketched the history of the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve, and today I’d like to review that history in a little more detail. The Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve includes about 4,700 acres of prime agricultural lands in North Pickering. These lands are part of the larger area, close to 40,000 acres, that was expropriated in the 1970s for a

proposed airport. The preserved lands are high-quality farmlands. They have been recognized as prime agricultural areas and lands that qualify for restriction to agricultural or farm-related uses under the region of Durham official plan, the provincial policy statement, the Greenbelt Act and the greenbelt plan.

In 1999, the province, the regional municipality of Durham and the former town of Pickering, now the city of Pickering, agreed to measures that would enable the sale of land within the town of Pickering. The land to be sold was previously expropriated preserve land west of West Duffins Creek. With the agreement of Durham and Pickering, the province sold the land to the original landowners or tenant farmers. As a condition of the sale, the purchasers of the land had to agree to an easement under the Conservation Land Act that would protect the land for agricultural use in perpetuity.

Conservation easements are agreements that are placed on the title to a property that restrict certain uses or activities on lands. If the property is sold, the conservation easement is carried over to the new owner. The conservation easements are an important tool for ensuring that natural heritage features on agricultural lands and private property can be protected over the long term—and I emphasize to the House: over the long term.

As part of the agreement with Durham region and the province, the town of Pickering was assigned the easements on the Duffins-Rouge properties. The easements were established to protect the lands in perpetuity. As I've said before, as far as I'm concerned, "perpetuity" means forever. In fact, the price of the lands sold was based on the value of the lands maintained for agricultural purposes. The province would not have sold these lands at farmland prices unless it intended them to be retained as farmlands.

The easements on the Duffins-Rouge lands were held by the city of Pickering for six years. But in March of this year, without consulting the province, the city of Pickering removed the conservation easements from the titles of two thirds of the property sold by the province in the agricultural preserve. In April 2005, the province sent a letter from Gerry Phillips, then the Chair of Management Board, to the city of Pickering. The letter expressed concern about the city's actions. A letter was also sent to the regional municipality of Durham in May. These letters made the province's position very clear. They outlined Ontario's expectation that the city of Pickering and the region of Durham would honour their commitments to preserve the area for agriculture.

In July 2005, Minister Caplan and myself wrote another letter that asked the city council of Pickering to live up to its agreement with the Ontario Realty Corp. Pickering's response was that it could not reinstate the easements. This response does nothing to ensure the long-term protection of these important agricultural lands, protection the city had agreed to. Instead, the city of Pickering has put the protection of the Duffins-Rouge lands at risk. Many of the properties that Ontario originally sold to local farmers have in fact now been sold to land developers.

I'm pleased to say that the last two provincial governments both recognized the importance of the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve. They recognized that conserving prime agricultural land is vital if we want to ensure that Ontario farmers can continue to grow the foods we need. As a result, although these farmlands were expropriated in the early 1970s, they have continued to be used for agriculture over the past 30 years. We must ensure these lands remain agricultural in perpetuity. This legislation will provide the long-term protection these lands deserve.

This government is committed to protecting Ontario's natural heritage, preserving green space, planning intelligently for growth and contributing to a cleaner, healthier, natural environment for the people of Ontario. We have acted on this commitment. In April 2004, I was very proud to announce the transfer of more than 1,400 hectares of provincial lands for the expansion of the Rouge Park. With that transfer of land, Rouge Park became the largest natural park in an urban area in North America. Fifty square kilometres in area, home to hundreds of plant species, some of them rare, important habitat for birds and other wildlife and an area rich in historic and culture significance—all of this right on the doorstep of millions of Ontarians.

My ministry remains committed to continuing its strong support and contribution to the Rouge Park as a key partner in the Rouge Park Alliance, a voluntary partnership of governments and organizations that have worked together to create and expand Rouge Park.

Earlier this year, this government fulfilled its commitment to create a permanent and sustainable legacy for Ontarians by protecting a greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe, with the Rouge Park as a key component. By newly protecting one million acres of green space and farmland now, for a total of 1.8 million acres, we have ensured that future generations will have natural areas to enjoy close to urban and suburban centres.

As part of our commitment, the government specifically named the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve as an important new area to be protected under the greenbelt legislation. I'm pleased to say this government fulfilled its commitment and the task force's recommendation earlier this year when the Duffins-Rouge agricultural lands were included with other agricultural lands in the greenbelt.

We are determined to ensure that the Duffins-Rouge lands are protected. This bill would ensure that the lands in Pickering are part of the legacy of green space and farmland that we are conserving for generations to come.

Pickering's removal of the easements on the Duffins-Rouge lands has broader implications for the conservation community. Many members of that community are very disturbed by these events. The fact that Pickering committed to holding these easements on the Duffins-Rouge land titles and then unilaterally dropped them has shaken the foundations of conservation easements as a long-term tool for protecting lands.

The abandonment of the easements has undermined the efforts of land trusts that were reaching out to landowners. Land trusts have been promoting conservation easements as permanent protection for the duration of an easement. Pickering's actions have put into question the legal integrity and long-term validity of conservation easements.

This government believes that easements must remain a valid tool for conservation. When we committed to creating a greenbelt, we proposed using a wide array of creative solutions to protect lands from development. These included tax credits, land trusts, new park designations and conservation easements. The greenbelt task force also recommended that, to ensure agricultural viability, the province promote the use of conservation easements on agricultural lands.

That's why Bill 16 would specifically amend the Conservation Land Act to make agricultural lands eligible for protection through conservation easements. These amendments would also clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Minister of Natural Resources to ensure that the processes for amending or releasing easements are transparent and accountable. This legislation would ensure that conservation easements remain an effective and legitimate tool to protect the public's long-term interests in conserving natural areas and agricultural lands. In other words, if passed, this bill would be an important step forward in strengthening conservation easements in general.

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All the parties in this Legislature have recognized that Ontario must protect lands with conservation values. In fact, a little over a year ago, the member from Halton made a motion to establish a permanent land acquisition program to ensure the continued acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands. I am pleased to say that in August, Premier McGuinty announced the natural spaces program. This program supports the efforts of private landowners to preserve and restore natural areas on their property. As part of the program, the Ministry of Natural Resources made a \$6-million grant to the Ontario heritage trust, in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, to acquire and permanently secure significant natural heritage properties across southern Ontario. I am proud that through the natural spaces program and other government initiatives, we are improving the quality of our air and water, protecting natural areas that are home to a diverse range of native plants and animals, and keeping Ontario green and beautiful.

But acquiring natural heritage properties is only one of many ways to protect the conservation value of lands. In fact, the natural spaces program includes other measures to support private landowners. For example, working with the Ministry of Natural Resources, a stakeholder group will develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to identifying, restoring and conserving a natural heritage system across southern Ontario. This group will also support private landowners and organizations in coordinating and carrying out land stewardship activity across the south of this province.

When it comes to private land stewardship, Ontario already has a very strong tradition of citizen involvement. For decades, community-based stewardship groups and individual landowners have cleaned up streams, planted trees, stocked fish, organized bird surveys and restored habitat. An important tool for landowners and organizations seeking to protect lands worthy of conservation is property easements for conservation purposes. In fact, in his annual report this year, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario stated that he believed that property easements for conservation purposes could be utilized more broadly.

Bill 16, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005, would amend the Conservation Land Act to strengthen and clarify the use of conservation easements to conserve natural heritage and agricultural lands. In other words, this bill will support the broader use of easements and is consistent with the comments of the Environmental Commissioner.

This bill to protect the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve supports the government's plan to preserve green space and plan intelligently for growth. We want to leave our children a legacy of protected green space, agricultural land, environmental lands and recreation and resource lands in the Golden Horseshoe area. And we need to preserve our watersheds, rivers and forests to protect the water we drink and the air we breathe.

This government has already taken a number of important steps toward these goals. The Greenbelt Act is in place, and we are on the way to implementing the greenbelt plan to permanently protect 1.8 million acres of green space and agricultural lands. We have strengthened the provincial policy statement by setting clear ground rules for how Ontario communities will grow and prosper. We have developed a greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan and the proposed central Pickering development plan. We've put in place Ontario's biodiversity strategy. In August, Premier McGuinty announced the natural spaces program. On Monday, I had the pleasure of joining the Nature Conservancy of Canada in launching the Great Lakes conservation blueprint for biodiversity.

In conclusion, I want to say that the legislation I have introduced today is another important step toward ensuring healthy growth in southern Ontario and leaving our children a legacy of protected agricultural lands and green space.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Further debate?

Interjection: There's more—

The Acting Speaker: Sorry; excuse me. I didn't realize it's being shared. The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to support our government's position, and the Minister of Natural Resources, on second reading of Bill 16, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005. If passed, Bill 16 would ensure the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve is set

aside permanently for agricultural use. It would also ensure that all existing conservation easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve are held in perpetuity. It would also reinstate easements previously held and released by the city of Pickering. Also, the proposed amendments to the Conservation Land Act, if passed, would provide greater certainty about using conservation easements to provide long-term protection for natural features and agricultural land on private property.

You have heard the history of the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve, and the minister has clearly articulated that our government is committed to protecting this land for agricultural uses. We know that there are no second chances when it comes to protecting agricultural land and green space. That is why we must take the steps necessary to protect this land today. This bill is just one of the steps this government has taken to conserve green space, agricultural lands, environmental lands and recreation and resource lands in Ontario to ensure our communities are strong and healthy for generations to come. We passed the Greenbelt Act in February 2005, setting aside 1.8 million acres of environmentally sensitive lands and prime agricultural areas around the Golden Horseshoe—legislation Ontarians have embraced. We have made a choice to ensure we do not pave over large tracts of land, by striking a balance between protecting our green spaces and meeting the needs of growing communities.

This bill is in the same spirit as our overall government direction, one that seeks to conserve and protect our valuable natural resources while being mindful of our economic pressures. We have strengthened the provincial policy statement by setting clear ground rules for how Ontario communities will grow and prosper. We have developed a greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan and proposed a central Pickering development plan. We have put in place Ontario's biodiversity strategy. In August, Premier McGuinty and Minister Ramsay announced the natural spaces program. We have introduced new, comprehensive legislation that would strengthen the protection and preservation of Ontario's provincial parks and conservation reserves. In partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, we have launched the Great Lakes conservation blueprint for biodiversity.

All these initiatives, like the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005, are vital steps toward a healthy environment, quality of life and making sure Ontario is a place to be now and in the future. For example, Ontario's biodiversity strategy is intended to conserve our natural heritage and to ensure that the province's natural resources are used sustainably for all Ontarians to benefit from. Biodiversity is the variety of life at all levels. In other words, biodiversity includes every living thing and all the processes through which living things interact. We depend on biodiversity for our very survival. Natural processes clean the air we breathe, purify the water we drink and stabilize our climate. The diversity of natural life also provides enormous economic

and community benefits. Where would we be without our forestry, farming, fishing and outdoor recreation?

But we face a Catch-22: The human activity that depends on biodiversity also threatens biodiversity. Our rapidly growing population in Ontario and around the globe is contributing to the equally rapid decline of biodiversity throughout the world. We are losing the habitat that animals, birds, fish and people need to survive. More species are at risk; alarm bells are going off around the world. That is why it is so important to conserve and restore Ontario's biodiversity. Ontario's biodiversity strategy will help guide and coordinate the efforts of Ontarians who care about conserving our natural heritage, from the smallest insect to the tallest tree, and ensure that the province's natural resources are used in a sustainable way, for everyone's benefit.

It's not just an Ontario government strategy. Developing the strategy was a group effort, and implementing it will also be a group effort. The strategy sets out six strategic directions and 37 actions that will help us work together. Some of the priorities are: making Ontarians aware of the importance of biodiversity, implementing the greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe, and promoting private land stewardship. We want to encourage more citizens to become directly involved in conserving and restoring biodiversity across Ontario.

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Just on that note, I had the privilege on May 24, 2005, to participate with John Cary, the president of Trees Ontario, on a 10-acre piece of property near Sault Ste. Marie. Two individuals, Sue Barber and Aubrey Falls, had agreed to participate in a program that would see 21,000 trees planted on this piece of property. I want to commend these two individuals for stepping forward and being part of a program that will benefit people in our region and throughout the province. This is the type of program on which we need to work more closely with private landowners to ensure this is fostered.

Many people and organizations are already working to protect biodiversity in this province, and the Ontario Biodiversity Council is leading and coordinating the implementation of the strategy. The council is made up of representatives of the partner organizations that worked together to develop the strategy. We will achieve our goals to conserve biodiversity if all citizens and all sectors of society engage in protecting what sustains us. Ontario's biodiversity strategy is a fresh starting point to launch us on working together to protect our national heritage for ourselves today and for the generations that will follow us tomorrow.

Similarly, Ontario's natural spaces program is intended to help conserve and protect Ontario's rich natural heritage: our wetlands, woodlands, savannahs, tall grass prairies, Carolinian forests and even old-growth stands of trees. The program fulfills one of the commitments in Ontario's biodiversity strategy. We have an obligation to protect and preserve our natural heritage, just as previous generations did for us. Natural spaces is a program to help preserve and protect natural spaces across southern

Ontario by engaging property owners in taking care of the land and conserving our natural areas. With most of southern Ontario's land privately owned, we can't do it without their help.

The program includes a \$2-million grant to the Trees Ontario Foundation to support increased reforestation, and tax incentive programs for owners of managed forests and conservation lands. It also includes a \$6-million grant to the Ontario Heritage Trust for acquiring and securing significant natural heritage properties.

Through the program, we are increasing our partnerships with key environmental organizations. An alliance of organizations is working with MNR to help develop the tools and incentives and the on-ground activities that will make the program a success.

As well as taking action to help private landowners conserve their lands, our government has introduced new legislation for parks and protected areas. The last time the Provincial Parks Act was reviewed, 50 years ago, there were only eight provincial parks. Now we have 319 provincial parks, as well as 280 conservation reserves and 10 wilderness areas. They cover an area of about 9.2 million hectares—larger than the entire province of Nova Scotia. This world-class system provides places for more than 10 million visitors a year to enjoy the outdoors. Parks and protected areas have become increasingly more important to the health, vitality and economic prosperity of Ontario.

We also have a better idea of what we should be protecting and how we should be going about it. The changes to the parks system led us to conduct a far-reaching and extensive review and public consultation on our parks legislation. If passed, the new Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act would strengthen the protection and preservation of Ontario's provincial parks and conservation reserves. For the first time, it would make ecological integrity a first priority. It is important to protect these special places and keep them healthy for future generations to benefit from. Strengthening ecological integrity is a key part of the initiative, and it is in keeping with the goals and objectives of Ontario's new biodiversity strategy. It also complements the natural spaces program, the Greenbelt Act, and our government's focus on a healthier environment for the people of Ontario.

Under the new legislation, we are enhancing accountability and transparency. The minister would be required to publicly report every five years on the health of our parks and protected areas. For the first time, the proposed legislation would consolidate existing acts dealing with protected areas. We would have one act for all the components of the protected areas system—something that is truly unique and progressive. The new legislation would guide how protected areas are both planned and managed, and these requirements would be outlined in law, and not just policies or regulations. Finally, this legislation would fulfill our government's commitment to introduce legislation that would ensure that our provincial parks are protected in perpetuity.

Another important step by this government was the launch on Monday of the Great Lakes conservation blueprint for biodiversity. For the last four years, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Nature Conservancy of Canada have collaborated on this project through a highly successful partnership. The two organizations have shared their knowledge and skills to complete this important project. The scientists who worked on the conservation blueprint used the best science currently available to assemble maps and analyze data on ecosystems and special biodiversity features across the Great Lakes region of Ontario. This is the first time such an analysis has been done in the province of Ontario. As a result, we now have a better understanding of our rich natural diversity of plants, animals and ecosystems on land and in the water.

The blueprint does not make recommendations or tell us what to do. Instead, it identifies a portfolio of high-quality natural areas that, if conserved, could sustain essential elements of our biodiversity, including species at risk. In other words, this is a tool, a valuable resource of information that will help us work together to focus our conservation efforts. Governments and organizations can use it to plan how and where to further protect Ontario's rich variety of plants, animals and ecosystems, while supporting the Great Lakes region's sustainable development.

This is important because we know biodiversity sustains life on our planet and has a direct impact on the health of all Ontarians. Natural processes clean the air we breathe, purify the water we drink and stabilize our climate. The Ontario government, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, other conservation organizations and many citizens in this province understand the risks of losing habitat that animals, birds, fish and we need to survive. Many areas that harbour significant natural features and species have been protected. These lands are included in the blueprint to help us build on our conservation achievements on crown lands and private lands throughout our province.

Conserving biodiversity is a complex challenge that requires action on many levels and requires our unwavering commitment. That is why our Great Lakes conservation blueprint for biodiversity is so incredibly important. By identifying a portfolio of high-quality natural areas in the Great Lakes region, this document significantly advances our efforts to conserve Ontario's biodiversity.

All the initiatives I have discussed today will help us leave our children a legacy of green spaces and a healthy natural environment. The legislation now before you at second reading, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005, if passed, would reinforce the conditions of the 1999 agreement signed by the province, the region of Durham and the city of Pickering. The legislation would ensure that all existing conservation easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve are held in perpetuity. It would also reinstate easements previously held and released by the city of Pickering. The proposed

amendments to the Conservation Land Act would both confirm that conservation easements can be used to protect, conserve and preserve agricultural lands, and clarify the role of the Minister of Natural Resources in enabling, amending or releasing easements enabled under the Conservation Land Act.

This act is just one of the steps our government has taken to conserve green space, agricultural lands, environmental lands, and recreation and resource lands in Ontario to ensure that our communities are strong and healthy for generations to come.

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I encourage everyone to support second reading of Bill 16, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act, 2005. I know there are other members who wish to comment on the legislation this evening. I look forward to hearing those comments. I want to commend the minister for his leadership on this issue and ensuring that we, as a province and as a government, move forward to protect lands in the province of Ontario for the benefit of all Ontarians for generations to come.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I appreciate very much the opportunity to hear the speeches of the Minister of Natural Resources and the member for Sault Ste. Marie as they have led off the debate on Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

It's a rather brief bill, three pages in length. The bill is intended to override "any agreement or court order that invalidates an easement or covenant given or entered into under the Conservation Land Act on or before February 28, 2005, with respect to land in the area described in schedule 1."

It's my understanding that this bill is intended to amend "the Conservation Land Act to allow an easement or covenant under the act to be for the conservation, preservation or protection of land for agricultural purposes. An easement or covenant under the act is valid for the term specified in it and cannot be amended or released without the consent of the Minister of Natural Resources."

Certainly the minister and the member for Sault Ste. Marie have given this House an opportunity this afternoon to hear the government's perspective on this issue and why this bill is important. I think we, as a Legislature, have an important responsibility now to consider the arguments that have been made and to put forward some of the concerns, I'm sure, that we will hear over the course of the next few weeks. It underlines, as well, the importance of ensuring that this bill goes to a standing committee of the Legislature so that there are extensive public hearings so that people who are interested in this issue, who have a legitimate, genuine interest, are given an opportunity to have their say before the government passes it into law.

I'm looking forward to the presentation that's going to be made shortly by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, our chief opposition whip and also our critic, I

believe, for natural resources. He's going to give a lengthy presentation this afternoon, approximately an hour, explaining the position our caucus is going to be taking. I think he's an extraordinary member of the Legislature, and I certainly will be supporting what he does in terms of this bill. I look forward to further debate on it.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): One of the Conservative members just asked me if I can find things to say for a whole hour about this, and I want to assure you and the House, Mr. Speaker, that I certainly can.

On the surface, this seems pretty dry; it's about easements. But I want to remind this House, and I'll take a great deal of time later reminding this House, of the questions that I and my leader asked of the Minister of Natural Resources, the Chair of Management Board and the Minister of the Environment about this very issue; and of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who kept saying—and I'll be quoting at great length later—"Don't worry. It's OK. Trust us. We've got the greenbelt. We don't need to do anything else. We've got this great greenbelt now that's going to protect everything." We asked question after question—Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you will remember; you were sitting back here then—and we were laughed at: "Don't worry. What's the problem over there? The greenbelt will protect everything."

As I point out now and will point out later, although we are supporting this bill today, it doesn't resolve the fundamental, basic problem with the flaws in the greenbelt. We shouldn't have to come at these flaws piecemeal in this way. The danger still lurks around the corner that we're going to have these same kinds of problems, because we don't have a permanent greenbelt. We have a floating greenbelt, which means the government can take a piece out here, a very valuable piece of farmland, and put in the same amount of land somewhere else.

There is a variety of problems with the greenbelt as it stands. This is one of them. It didn't work out the way the ministers wanted it to. I will give you more information about that later, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): It's certainly my pleasure to rise and support Bill 16. One of the things that I want to talk about today, and I'm sure many of the members in the House today will be very surprised, is agricultural land and how important it is to our province. This bill will do that: It will protect the farmland that we need to grow the product that will feed the people of Ontario.

One of the things I have heard repeatedly in my many years of politics is about finding the balance between development and preserving our agricultural land. We all know that if we don't find the balance, what we have is crops of houses. It is very difficult to feed the people of Ontario from our housing developments. But we also need to move forward in an economic development manner that supports jobs and a strong economy within Ontario.

I believe that Bill 16 goes forward in what needs to be protected and what should be protected, and what we can do as a government to protect our farmland. We must ensure that there remains a viable quantity of agricultural prime land. If we don't, we will find ourselves in a situation where we no longer can grow the good-quality product that people have become used to within Ontario. So this bill goes forward, and not only that: It's also that our government understands the needs of the people and is finding the balance between what is required for good product and what is required to ensure that our economy stays strong.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I've listened with interest to the debate on Bill 16. This is definitely a bill that needs a complete hearing—a committee hearing, I believe. The conservation authorities do very good work for this province. The Grand River Conservation Authority—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Hear, hear.

Mr. Martiniuk: —works hard, as my friend the whip for the government party indicates, for all the communities on its long stretch. As a matter of fact, the Grand River is the second-longest heritage river in Canada, which is quite remarkable, and probably has the greatest population along its breadth. I particularly enjoy it because I happen to live right on the river. I can enjoy summer, spring, winter and fall watching the four bald eagles which periodically fly by my window, along with the unfortunate geese and ducks and other waterfowl.

This particular bill attempts to override an agreement or court order regarding possible easements or covenants affecting lands and attempts to assist, I believe, the conservation authorities in protecting lands for future generations. The question is, does it do what it intends to do? That is something we can explore fully at a full committee hearing.

The Acting Speaker: The minister has two minutes in which to respond.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I'm very pleased to hear the comments after my parliamentary assistant, the member from Sault Ste. Marie—

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): A great member.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: A great member, absolutely, and I'm glad to have him on the MNR team. I say to the members that I think the support may be there for this, though I hesitantly look over to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who probably has much to say on this bill, after doing a careful analysis of it. But I know that in her heart she probably supports this.

I would say to her, on the specific point that she brought, that this bill is brought forward to make a very strong statement from the McGuinty government about how seriously we take conservation land. We do believe that the greenbelt legislation will protect this land. We also know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the power through zoning orders to protect this land.

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But we want to make a very strong statement to this particular municipality, to say, "You shouldn't mess with easements like this," that we take conservation easements very seriously. We've made the point specifically about this, but as you can see as you read through the legislation, we've also strengthened our Conservation Lands Act so that this type of activity, by anybody, cannot happen again. We've learned through this that we need to strengthen our protections, because the McGuinty government feels that these protections are very important.

It's good and healthy for this House and the Ontario Legislature to have this debate, because I know that on all sides, we all agree that conserving land for generations to come is very important. In fact, I would say to the official opposition that this is their deal that we are protecting, a deal that they made where they did the right thing. It needs to be protected and we need to be protecting these conservation easements, if you will, in perpetuity. That's what we're going to do with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate, the first day of second reading on Bill 16, where, of course, I get the opportunity as the critic to speak a full hour on this bill. I look forward to that. I certainly will be speaking to the principle of the bill, which is preserving our green spaces, preserving land and maintaining parks as well, although the bill itself, I might point out, is some two and a half pages long, so I will be speaking to the principle of preserving agricultural land and green spaces. The act, of course, is Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

As the minister just pointed out in his two-minute response, it was originally put in place by the former PC government, and they are following through on protecting agricultural land that was once set aside many years ago for a proposed Pickering airport. Now the government is saving that land for agricultural purposes in perpetuity, as I've stated.

I'm a bit surprised that this bill is being put forward by the Minister of Natural Resources. It is called An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, so I thought perhaps it might be the Minister of Agriculture or the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I'm not quite sure what the logic is for the Minister of Natural Resources being responsible for putting this bill forward, but I look forward, in my hour, to talking about some of the past history of parks and protection of green space, including the government's most recent greenbelt legislation—some of the challenges with that. I think it's safe to say that probably all parties, and certainly our party, support preserving green space and support having many and adequate parks in the province as well.

This bill was introduced by the minister, David Ramsay. It came from a 1999 memorandum of understanding, signed, placing agricultural easements on some of the land in the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve

sold by the Ontario Realty Corp., and the easements were held by Pickering. In 2004, Pickering passed the second phase of its growth management study, which called for development of the southern portion of the preserve. In January 2005, 15 preserve landowners began a legal challenge against Pickering to have easements removed from properties, and in February 2005, the province passed the Greenbelt Act, which protects the 1.8 million acres of land in the Golden Horseshoe from development, including the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

Certainly the greenbelt legislation has been controversial. I think it's important that we protect green space, but there must also be a plan. You can't just halt growth; you must have a plan for transit and roads to reduce gridlock and ensure that there is a plan for farmers, and municipalities within the greenbelt who have to have input in the future of their land use planning.

This legislation would never have been put forward had it not been for the leadership of the Ontario PC government, which took significant steps to protect the Oak Ridges moraine after a decade of inaction by the previous Liberal and NDP governments. We all remember Dalton McGuinty's solemn promise to stop houses on the Oak Ridges moraine and how quickly he backtracked from that promise once he got into office. Just to remind those watching, he promised that as soon as he was elected he was going to stop development of some 6,600 homes that were to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine. We now know that in fact he was able to stop development of roughly 700 homes—a far cry from the election promise.

I would like to give some credit to the PC critic on the greenbelt legislation, and that was Tim Hudak, the member from Erie-Lincoln. Tim has worked very hard in looking at the greenbelt legislation and trying to improve the legislation. He was successful in negotiating and getting it brought through the House leaders' process to get that legislation out to committee so that more public input could be made. I will raise some of the concerns Mr. Hudak raised in that process.

We certainly support the protection of green space, but we need to do it correctly. As Progressive Conservatives, we have a proud record of doing so through the Lands for Life process, the award-winning Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act and the creation of the Niagara Escarpment plan.

I would like to talk for a few minutes about the greenbelt law the government recently passed and about some of the concerns raised by the member from Erie-Lincoln. I note that he was concerned about farmers, for one thing. He brought up four fatal flaws of what he called the "greenbotch." To save the farm you have to save the farmer. If greenbelt farmers are unable to farm profitably, they will simply let the land go fallow. This will cause local councils in the province to be under considerable pressure to develop that land for housing or industry in the future. The greenbelt must include a solid, thoughtful, provincially funded plan to support the economic viability of the farm.

Very valid points. It's one thing to have farmland, but if you don't have a farmer who can be successful, productive and have some economic reward in running the farm, there's no point in having farmland.

I note that just today I received a letter from a farmer to members of Parliament:

"I am a farmer in Ontario. I am very proud of that fact. I work hard, my husband even harder to make a good living at farming. He is in the barn by 4:30 in the morning and comes in at night by 8 p.m. The hours in between seem to fill in effortlessly! We have a young family and we are very lucky to be able to bring them up on the farm. Our extended family loves coming to the farm to connect with where their food comes from and get back to understanding the basics. As a family, we work hard to create and take advantage to educate the public about farming and where food really comes from. Our county runs events like Farm Comes to Town, aimed at grade 5 students and open to the public, and Rural Ramble, which also is targeted at the general population.

"We feel that we do our job well, keep up with changes and regulations to ensure we do the best job possible. Government requirements and political issues do not always make it easy."

I think that fits into something like the greenbelt legislation: the way it affects a family farmer, the way it affects the value of the farm. A farmer whose farm was valued at, say, \$1 million is all of a sudden devalued in half so that they aren't able to borrow the money they need to borrow at the bank to be able to plant the crops etc. Those are things that need to be taken into consideration as we save agricultural land. We still need to make sure it's viable for the farmers.

In this letter they're asking for some help, pointing out that farmers are in an income crisis at this time and that they need assistance to stabilize their industry as quickly as possible. That's a letter I just received today.

Other points that were raised by Mr. Hudak deal with the greenbelt. You need "support for greenbelt municipalities. Municipalities in the greenbelt area will have their future growth frozen, limiting the growth of their tax base. They may make the future infrastructure investments like roads, sewers or the recreation centres unaffordable without significant tax increases.

1630

"A transportation infrastructure strategy must be in place to complement the greenbelt municipalities and support communities outside the greenbelt. This would include the Mid-Pen in Niagara, extending the 407 east through Durham and the 427 north to Barrie.

"The greenbelt"—I know Mr. Hudak made this point on many occasions—"should be based on good science, not political science. Land to be included in the greenbelt should be designated based on science, not by drawing arbitrary lines, or political considerations."

It's worrisome that the Liberal government gave \$25 million to the Greenbelt Foundation, and I'll come back to that.

Farmers would certainly appreciate receiving that kind of funding from government.

Municipalities would also appreciate getting this information.

Twenty-five-million-dollar funding: I consider that partisan advertising, something this government said they would not do.

I think that's a very valid point: The government has obviously made the greenbelt a big part of who they are, and they've also said in their election promises—I've got all 231 before me here, but in several places they've stated that they will ban partisan advertising. There are so many promises here that it makes it difficult to find that specific one. Through the back door, the government is now placing ads promoting the greenbelt. It's not directly doing them, but through a third party and through \$25 million in funding to the Greenbelt Foundation they are placing ads.

I don't know whether anyone has heard the ones on the radio to do with, "Have you seen a deer?" Also, they have full-page print ads in Toronto newspapers: "When we say wildlife, is this what you think of?" and they have some teddy bears; "When we say apple picking, is this what you think of?" and they have apples in a store; "When we say watering hole, is this what you think of?" and they have a picture of an old pump. It's also being advertised on the transit system around Toronto. I think that advertising is breaking their election promise of not having government-sponsored advertising.

Mr. Hudak raised many other concerns, and he also raised concerns about that Greenbelt Foundation advertising. I'd just like to note that he wrote to the Premier back on November 9, so quite recently.

"Tim Writes to Premier McGuinty, Objecting to the Wasteful Greenbelt Spending.

"Dear Premier McGuinty:

"I am writing to express my strong objection to your Liberal government's decision to spend taxpayers' money on political advertisements through the Greenbelt Foundation. Indeed, if you took the time to ask farmers or municipal leaders in the greenbelt area, they would have much better use for those dollars than advertisements, road signs or plush downtown offices.

"According to media reports, to date the \$25 million you have given to the Greenbelt Foundation has been used to rent expensive office space in the swanky Yorkville area of downtown Toronto, some of the city's most expensive real estate; conduct political polling and to carry out a \$1.5-million political advertising campaign. The current appointees to the Greenbelt Foundation were hand-picked by your office to carry out your political direction without any input from greenbelt communities. You have also bypassed the standing committee on government agencies, a committee of MPPs from all three political parties, in order to avoid any scrutiny of the appointees.

"Premier, municipalities like Lincoln, Grimsby, Pelham, St. Catharines, Thorold and Niagara-on-the-Lake have had their growth frozen under the Greenbelt Act. Furthermore, smaller communities like Lincoln, Grimsby, Pelham, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Thorold

have had their provincial transfers sharply reduced or totally eliminated. Surely, some of that \$25 million could be better invested in these greenbelt communities to make the greenbelt actually work.

"Similarly, this funding could have been far better used to assist our farmers. Greenbelt farmers have told the provincial Liberal government time and time again that the Greenbelt Act harms their viability. They have said that the best way to save the farm is to save the farmer.

"The combined impact of low commodity prices, subsidized products from abroad, higher fuel costs and an increasing burden of government regulations means that too many farmers are having great difficulty making ends meet." We've seen some huge rallies here at Queen's Park, so I think that is evidence of that. "No doubt greenbelt farmers would have far better advice on how to invest the Greenbelt Foundation's funds than" on "political advertising and polling.

"Furthermore, your Greenbelt Foundation would have far greater credibility if its office were located in one of the greenbelt communities. The fact that the Greenbelt Foundation is headquartered in downtown Toronto is absolutely mind-boggling to people who actually live in the greenbelt and are struggling to implement the legislation.

"Granting \$25 million to the Greenbelt Foundation does absolutely nothing to help farmers in need of provincial support, municipalities whose provincial funding has been drastically reduced or eliminated, nor taxpayers in the greenbelt dealing with property tax increases. I ask you to instead direct the \$25 million to helping the communities and farmers who have been charged with the expensive cost of implementing your Greenbelt Act."

It was signed by Tim Hudak, who is the MPP from Erie-Lincoln.

I note that at the plowing match the government announced advertising for the Foodland program, and yet there's more advertising being spent on this greenbelt program than on that recent Foodland Ontario advertising, which is meant to assist farmers.

Other failures of the greenbelt are pointed out by our critic, Mr. Hudak. "Greenbelt About Art of Politics, not Environmental Science: Libs Unveil Final Map at McMichael Art Gallery, No Plan for Farmers or Municipalities and No Science.

"Today, PC municipal affairs critic Tim Hudak criticized the McGuinty Liberals' failure to bring forward a plan to address the fatal flaws of their greenbelt legislation as they unveiled the final version of the greenbelt maps. The McGuinty Liberals chose to unveil the new maps in the McMichael art gallery.

"Today's announcement shows that the McGuinty Liberal greenbelt is more about the art of politics than environmental science," stated Hudak. "The McGuinty Liberals' own Group of 7 cabinet ministers—McGuinty, Gerretsen, Caplan, Dombrowsky, Peters, Bradley and Ramsay—are trying to paint a pretty political portrait, but hidden under this canvas are major errors and missing pieces that have turned the greenbelt into a greenbotch."

"The final greenbelt plan:

"Failed to bring forward an agricultural viability plan for greenbelt farmers;

"Failed to respond to greenbelt municipalities' requests for support;

"Failed to address any appeal mechanism whatsoever except behind the closed doors of the minister's office;

"Failed to publicly release the science behind the greenbelt decisions;

"Failed to address gridlock and the increasing commute times due to the leapfrog effect caused by the greenbelt.

"The fact that the government bowed to our pressure to include Boyd Conservation Area, Pleasantview in Dundas and Beverly marsh in Wellington county is a positive step,' said Hudak. 'It is unfortunate that we had to go through a political process'" to make these changes happen.

"The PCs had put forward a motion at committee to include Boyd Conservation Area in the greenbelt. However, the Liberal members of the general government committee voted against the opposition motion. Today, Boyd Conservation Area was added to the greenbelt due to opposition and public pressure.

"Hudak brought similar pressure to bear in the Legislature and committee to include other areas such as the Beverly marsh and Pleasantview in Dundas."

So I think what Mr. Hudak is pointing out is that it should be based not on political science but on environmental science so that areas that are sensitive are included in that greenbelt. Mr. Hudak did a lot of work on the greenbelt, and he needs to be complimented for how hard he worked on that.

I would like to talk a bit about the commitment of some of the Liberal members who were from the area to this bill, to the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

1640

I note that the member from the area, Mr. Arthurs, the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, has been on record on several occasions opposing preserving this land. In fact, in the 2003 election campaign, he very much opposed preserving this land. So I wonder what has happened with his position. Will he be supporting this bill or will he be voting against it?

I would like to quote from this article, which says, "In an interview after his provincial election victory last Thursday, Arthurs said his position on the development north of Taunton Rd. in Pickering has not changed."

"Arthurs has said he would prefer to put housing and people wherever development is best suited across Seaton and the agricultural preserve.

"He said he will await the results of the study before approaching Premier-elect Dalton McGuinty or any of his new Liberal colleagues for changes to party or government policy.

"In a series of newspaper ads and hundreds of election-like signs sprinkled throughout her riding, Ecker"—that's Janet Ecker—"was portrayed as the villain who wanted to 'pave over farmland,' when in fact

her government had placed a development freeze on the entire area, and effectively over planning powers for the area.

"Arthurs has said he favours rethinking the strict no-development strategy.

"Ecker said she will be urging the new Liberal government to protect all the agricultural preserve and the environmentally sensitive lands in Seaton."

So we can see very clearly that Janet Ecker was supporting the idea of preserving this agricultural land.

When Mr. Arthurs was the mayor of Pickering, he said that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing cannot be trusted to act in the city's best interests.

"Mayor Arthurs has said he thought the agreement was not permanent." That's the agreement to protect the land. "He said his stance had nothing to do with his bid to become the Liberal MPP for the Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge riding."

I would also like to point out from another media article in the Metroland newspapers that there were some financial contributions that went to Mr. Arthurs from developers, which certainly raise some concerns: "Arthurs Draws Red Flags; Says \$25,000 in Donations Recognizes 'Common Interest in Growth.'" This is from Wednesday, August 4, 2004.

"Despite concerns from Pickering residents, MPP Wayne Arthurs is defending his election campaign contributions, including \$25,000 from one address.

"The concerns about the Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge MPP's donation list have been raised in public meetings by local individuals and groups, including Lorne Almack, a member of the local environmental group the Green Door Alliance.

"The \$25,000 came in 25 separate \$1,000 donations from one address—27 Bugey Lane in Ajax. The address is the head office of Coughlan Homes, owned by developer Jerry Coughlan.

"He's been a big supporter for a period of time. We share a common interest in growth in Durham region, both residential, commercial and recreational,' said Mr. Arthurs, who raised almost \$91,000 in total.

"Mr. Almack was expecting to see the names of developers on Mr. Arthurs's campaign contribution list but wasn't expecting to see \$25,000 from the same address.

"It surprised me that there were so many (donations),' he said.

"While Mr. Almack acknowledges the donations are legal, he wants to see the act changed, arguing election donations from developers could make politicians sympathetic to future development applications.

"What the Green Door Alliance and other residents are questioning is Mr. Arthurs's position on developing the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve, which Mr. Coughlan and his business partners own land in.

"I made no secret that prior to the provincial campaign I supported Mr. Coughlan's projects that I thought were good for the community,' Mr. Arthurs said.

“He added he believes the land Mr. Coughlan owns on the preserve is a good place for development.

“That position wasn’t created by his interest in the land,’ he argued. ‘I see those lands as an opportunity for development, not to be fully developed, but there are opportunities for development the same as there are in the Seaton lands (in North Pickering.)’

“Mr. Coughlan and his business partner Ron Halliday briefly addressed the issue in a telephone interview, saying the donations reflect their belief in Mr. Arthurs and the Liberal Party. They did not comment further.

“Mr. Arthurs’s stance on the preserve is contrary to his Liberal government’s, which is against developing the area.”

It certainly will be interesting, as this bill moves forward, to see whether Mr. Arthurs’s position has changed, because it’s obvious that in the election he was in favour of developing this land that is to be protected by Bill 16. Obviously, when you see those sorts of contributions from a developer who has a direct interest, it raises some concerns.

I would like to talk for a few minutes about some of the positive programs that were put in place by the former PC government. Smart Growth is one of them. In January 2001, Premier Mike Harris announced the need for a made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy for promoting and managing growth in ways that sustain a strong economy, build strong communities and promote a healthy environment.

To give you a little background, the Smart Growth panel for central Ontario was set up in 2002 to advise the government on a long-term growth plan to address gridlock and waste management. Smart Growth focused on balanced growth, as opposed to increased intensification. We specifically stated that we wanted to prevent leapfrogging, and I think that’s one of the concerns with the greenbelt legislation that the government has passed. It will save land immediately north of Toronto but may make commuting and gridlock worse as people who don’t build just right north of Toronto move to Barrie and other communities but still have to drive to Toronto and other places in southern Ontario for work. They’ll leapfrog the greenbelt, and growth will intensify and increase in places like Barrie, but then you make the daily commute and the gridlock on the 400 and other highways that much worse.

The Smart Growth plan was much more complete in that it examined affordable housing, waste management, environmental protection, gridlock, and sewer and water resources from a long-term growth perspective. We followed up the Smart Growth plan with investments in public transit through our Golden Horseshoe transit investment partnership, which was \$10 billion over 10 years—as I recall, that was with all three levels of government. Smart Growth was similar to Places to Grow, in that it was based on the nodes and corridors model, whereby the most intense urban growth is in the nodes, and these are connected by transportation corridors that also contain urban growth intensification.

Our Smart Growth focused on gridlock, where Places to Grow, combined with the greenbelt, leads to leapfrogging and longer commute times.

Our Smart Growth plan took municipal plans into account in planning. One of the recommendations of the central Ontario Smart Growth plan was to preserve employment lands as designated by official plans, not as dictated by Queen’s Park.

Smart Growth goals were set out by our government. Some of the goals included using existing infrastructure and resources to increase the capacity for economic growth, investing wisely in new infrastructure, managing growth by making tough choices about where development should go, expanding transportation choices within and between communities, protecting natural areas and farmland for future generations, and encouraging growth in areas where it would have the least impact on the environment.

The Smart Growth panel put considerable effort into research and analysis of alternative futures for the Golden Horseshoe area. I’d like to quote from Mayor Hazel McCallion, who chaired the panel: “The essence of Smart Growth is to build consensus among diverse stakeholders, to come up with a common vision and to achieve broad public support for that vision.... That’s why we want the public involved in the advice we present to the province.”

In February 2002, the Ontario government created the panel and appointed a cross-section of community leaders—including Hazel McCallion as the chair—representing local government, industry, transportation and the environment. Members were asked to advise the province on how to plan for future growth in ways that enhance the environment, strengthen communities and promote economic prosperity.

After months of working together, the panel members came up with draft recommendations. Public feedback on the recommendations helped shape the panel’s final advice to the government. Another quote from Hazel McCallion: “Our advice wrestles with the question, ‘How can we best prepare central Ontario for a healthy and prosperous future?’ ... We have sketched out a way to move forward to enhance our overall quality of life through balanced growth, improved transit and protection of our environment.”

Commending the Ontario government for its leadership in creating the Smart Growth initiative, McCallion added, “Premier Ernie Eves and Minister David Young have already demonstrated their commitment to Smart Growth by acting on our interim advice. We are confident that all levels of government will follow their lead and use our plan as a springboard for action.”

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Called Shape the Future, the report outlines advice on a set of strategic directions for managing growth in central Ontario. The panel’s strategic directions stress the importance of fostering balanced growth, developing an integrated transportation network, protecting the environment and adopting more collaborative approaches to waste management.

Among its specific recommendations, the report calls for establishing an accountable stakeholder body, advisory to the province, to oversee implementation of a Smart Growth strategy across the central Ontario zone; legislation that supports Smart Growth goals; a provincial facilitator to mediate among levels of government and the private sector in support of Smart Growth; and heightened inter-ministerial coordination.

Mayor McCallion emphasized that the report built on the insights gained through consultations with a diverse group of stakeholders, experts and the general public. While recognizing the Ontario government's central role, she stressed that achieving the goals of Smart Growth would require the participation and co-operation of the federal government, municipalities and the private sector.

In 2001, the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Chris Hodgson, introduced the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan. It was another example of a Conservative initiative. He did a lot of work and a lot of consultation in the process of developing that Oak Ridges moraine protection plan.

Another significant initiative taken on by the Harris Conservative government was the Great Lakes Heritage Coast process. The Great Lakes Heritage Coast includes all of the Ontario coastline of Lake Superior, the north shore of the St. Mary's River, and the coast of Lake Huron to the eastern coast of Georgian Bay. It includes most of the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. The coastline sweeps along 2,900 kilometres of spectacular landscapes and shoreline. Major communities along the coast include Thunder Bay, Red Rock, Nipigon, Marathon, Wawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Killarney, Parry Sound and Port Severn. The Great Lakes Heritage Coast covers some 1.1 million hectares of coastline and inland areas. It extends two kilometres inland from the shoreline of Georgian Bay, the North Channel and Lake Superior from Port Severn to Wawa; five kilometres inland from Wawa to Marathon; and five kilometres or to Highway 17 from Marathon to the US border.

The heritage coast has historic significance for Ontario. Ojibwa, Cree and Huron communities were established in the area by the 1600s. Étienne Brûlé, in 1610, was the first European to visit the coast. The heritage coast was a major route for opening up the central part of Canada.

The policy statement on the Great Lakes Heritage Coast is found in the Ontario's Living Legacy land use strategy. The policy statement identifies the Great Lakes Heritage Coast as an area for special planning and management. The idea is to take a comprehensive approach to developing an overall vision of protecting and enjoying the significant values along the coast. Policies for the coast identified in the strategy apply to all crown lands, waters, lake beds, crown islands and the areas in between these along the coast. The policies do not apply to aboriginal or privately owned lands. However, the goal is to encourage owners of these lands to become involved.

Ontario's Living Legacy, which was a process started by former Premier Mike Harris, identifies the Great

Lakes Heritage Coast as one of the nine featured areas identified for a broad range of outdoor activities and international marketing. The Ontario government has made moving ahead on a strategy for the coast its first priority in implementing the featured areas.

The vision identified in the Living Legacy strategy for the heritage coast is to protect the coast's scenic beauty and its natural ecosystems; promote the potential for recreation, tourism and other economic benefits through a network of parks and protected areas; and encourage development compatible with the overall intent for the area; foster co-operation, education, public information and partnerships with other levels of government, aboriginal communities and interest groups in planning and management of the heritage coast.

That heritage coast, as I've mentioned, covers a good part of the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. It's spectacular and one of the natural wonders of the world, that shoreline that is mainly my riding, the coastline of Georgian Bay. It's absolutely spectacular. If you've never visited it, you really should come to Parry Sound. Either take a flight with the Thirty Thousand Islands airline and fly up the coast—it's probably the best way to see the thousands and thousands of islands and rocks—or go out with a Thirty Thousand Islands cruise line and do a tour if you don't like going up in a seaplane.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Where do they leave from?

Mr. Miller: You'd leave from Parry Sound. I'm being asked by another member how you get on the Thirty Thousand Islands cruise. You get on the boat from Parry Sound to make that. It's quite spectacular. You can take a flight right from Parry Sound at the dock in a seaplane, go up the coast and see if you can take a flight out to Henry's Fish Restaurant and have a pickerel dinner or lunch. That's an interesting way to see the coastline.

That was an initiative that was started under Ontario's Living Legacy by Mike Harris. He doesn't get a lot of credit for his environmental initiatives, but the Oak Ridges moraine, the Great Lakes Heritage Coast—the Lands For Life and Ontario's Living Legacy process brought about the biggest increase in parks and protected areas in Ontario's history. That's something probably a lot of people just aren't aware of. The Harris government created a greater number of parks and protected areas than all previous Ontario governments. It protected 12% of the land mass, as recommended by the Brundtland commission, the standard set by the United Nations. I heard the parliamentary assistant, in his talk, say that 50 years ago there were eight parks in the province of Ontario, and now there are some 319 parks, 280 conservation areas and 10 wilderness areas covering a huge landmass. I know the area that was increased in parks and protected areas by Mike Harris was the size of Lake Ontario.

When I look around the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka—I have my map of Parry Sound–Muskoka to help me out—I see the many parks that have been created through this process. That's proof of the process. There

are so many parks now in Parry Sound–Muskoka, some that you can visit, some that are conservation reserves, some that are fairly difficult to get into, but beautiful parks like Island Lake Forest and Barrens northeast of Parry Sound, a fairly large park, with its main lake in the middle being Island Lake.

Last year, I had the pleasure of paddling down a well-known canoe route, my first-ever canoe trip, with my son Winston and his friend Riley and his dad, Dan Mulligan. We paddled down the French River—a beautiful trip. I highly recommend that. That’s a Canadian heritage, French River Provincial Park, and I’d recommend it. We started out east of Highway 69 and paddled for a week down out on to Georgian Bay and back to Hartley Bay. There are good maps and identified campsites, with all the modern conveniences you would need in a campsite, which isn’t too much, other than the spectacular, beautiful setting. So many parks—I look around the map of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

1700

I had the privilege, when the Queen last visited Ontario, of being at the CNE when she came through, and Jerry Ouellette, then the Minister of Natural Resources, unveiled the naming of Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park, of which a tiny part, the northeast corner, hits Parry Sound–Muskoka. There are literally hundreds of parks around the region. Many are brand new parks that have been created.

Also in our area, another initiative that’s been happening in the last few years is the park-to-park trail program that had significant funding from the past Ontario government and hopefully from the government going forward. That park-to-park trail will connect parks such as Algonquin, Killbear, Massasauga—a number of different parks will be connected by this park-to-park trail system.

They’re also managing the Seguin trail, a well-known trail that goes through the Parry Sound area, just south of Parry Sound. It was originally the J.R. Booth railway, which ran all the way from Ottawa to Parry Sound to Depot Harbour and is now part of the park trail system, although they are facing some real challenges on that system, in particular with the cost of maintaining the bridges. I’ll come back to some other parks if I have time in my hour.

Getting back to the Ontario Living Legacy, which was to protect some 12% of the land mass as recommended by the Brundtland commission, the standards set by the United Nations: To give some perspective to the size of the increase that was brought to our park and protected areas by Mike Harris, it’s an area that would cover all of Ontario south of Algonquin Provincial Park, or nearly three quarters of England. Also, \$100 million was put into this to expand the Ontario Living Legacy into a province-wide initiative to enhance protection, conservation and recovery efforts for species at risk in Ontario. Also part of the initiative was to fund more youth programs and resource stewardship jobs for young people, and to protect and enhance fish and wildlife and their

habitats. We acquired more natural areas in southern Ontario, regulated new parks and protected areas in southern Ontario and in Ontario as a whole. I note that many of the existing parks had areas added to them; many were expanded by this process.

There was also the creation of signature sites that would become an important tool for increasing tourism from around the world. Included in this process was the Ontario Forest Accord, a historic partnership to ensure both new protected areas and measures to strengthen the economy of northern and central Ontario. I know that as that is being implemented, the forestry sector certainly has some concerns with maintaining enough area to have enough fibre to keep their businesses viable.

The Ontario Forest Accord, which was a historic accord with environmentalists involved, forest companies and other groups, laid out conditions under which new parks and conservation reserves would be set aside. It also established a process for creating additional protected areas which have been mutually agreed to by the forest industry and the environmental community. That was something Mike Harris did that most people aren’t aware of.

The Ontario Forest Accord Advisory Board provided advice to the Minister of Natural Resources, supported implementation of the accord, monitored the creation of parks and reserves, and helped resolve disputes.

The government also committed to helping local communities increase access to hunting and fishing, and it included measures to maintain wood flows and costs of wood for mills. That’s very important when we look the situation facing the forest industry sector at this time, particularly in northern Ontario. Maintaining the cost of wood supplies has gotten out of whack in the last three years. We’ve learned in the last few months that delivered wood cost, as stated for Ontario forestry mills and paper companies, is US\$55 per cubic metre. That’s the highest delivered wood cost in the world. That’s the cost of planting the trees, cutting them down, building the roads—everything involved with getting the fibre to the mill. The world average is some US\$35 per cubic metre.

The forestry sector in northern Ontario is in tough shape right now. We’ve seen that the Minister of Natural Resources had a forest sector competitiveness report undertaken, and so far he hasn’t implemented the advice of that expert committee, unfortunately. They made some 26 recommendations, many geared toward reducing that delivered wood cost, but so far he’s only implemented a few that will have maybe a \$1-per-cubic-metre effect on the cost.

The forestry sector is hurting right now, particularly in northern Ontario. Many mills are closing across the north, particularly paper mills and pulp-and-paper mills, where the cost of energy and this government’s high-priced energy programs are really making it difficult for a number of companies. Today, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines made a statement to do with the mining sector, and I pointed out in my response to him that the mine I had the privilege of going to open, the

North American Palladium mine at Lac des Iles, north of Thunder Bay, just recently laid off 60 people, again because of that high energy price and the energy policies that this government has.

I was talking about the Ontario Forest Accord before I got sidetracked there. The Ontario Forest Accord Advisory Board provided advice to the Minister of Natural Resources, supported the implementation of the accord, monitored the creation of parks and reserves and helped to resolve disputes. There would also be measures as part of that to increase wood supply into the future.

Some of the new parks created through this process, the Lands for Life, Ontario Living Legacy: In the Parry Sound district were Jevens and Silver Lake, Oxbow Lake Forest, Raganooter Lake, Big Deer Lake, Little Spring Lake, Ferrie Township Forest, Bear Creek, Bear Lake Peatland, Dutcher Lake, Ahmic Forest and Rock Barrens, Shawanaga Lake, Island Lake Forest and Barrens, Ferguson township, White Pine Forest and Big East River. Those are all just in the Parry Sound district.

In the Bancroft district, we have Crowe River Swamp, Sharpe Bay fen, Plastic Lake and Dawson Pond, and Silent Lake Addition.

In the Kemptville area, we have the White Lake and Burnt Lands.

In the Pembroke district: Alexander Stewart, Petawawa Terrace, Bonnechere River, Westmeath Bog, Snake River Marsh and Mud Lake/Creek.

In the Sudbury district, we have Venetian Creek Old Pine, Kawawia Lake Old Growth, Green Lake Old Pine.

The list goes on and on; literally hundreds of different additions to parks that Mike Harris brought in through this process, and 19 conservation reserves, including several in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka:

The Bear Creek Conservation Reserve, which is a 212-hectare site in the town of Kearney: Part of it lies within a winter deer yard and includes a yellow birch forest growing on sands and gravel deposited by glaciers around the creek. The Bear Lake Peatland Conservation Reserve is a 3,845-hectare site featuring extensive peatland and bog and excellent moose habitat near the hamlet of Bear Lake in the Parry Sound district. The Big Deer Lake Conservation Reserve is a 176-hectare site, 15 kilometres from Magnetawan. The Big East Provincial Park is a 1,050-hectare waterway park that follows the Big East River to the Arrowhead Park. Crowe River Swamp Conservation Reserve is a 189-hectare site in Chandos township, Peterborough. It's the largest and least disturbed collection of deciduous swamp habitats, bounded by landforms left by glaciers and moraines.

The Ferguson Township White Pine Forest Conservation Reserve is 364 hectares, 18 kilometres north of Parry Sound. It provides inland habitat for the nationally threatened Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake. The coast of Georgian Bay is well known as one of the prime areas for the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake. In fact, as a side bar, on that canoe trip that I did two years ago down the French River, I saw my first-ever rattlesnake. It was actually swimming in the French River and went to climb up a rock face as we paddled by in a canoe.

1710

The Ferrie Township Forest Conservation Reserve is a 474-hectare site, 15 kilometres northwest of Magnetawan. It includes white pine, tamarack and treed muskeg on dunes and beach deposits. The Island Lake Forest and Barrens Conservation Reserve: I had the pleasure of staying one night on that lake once many years ago. It's a 15,452 hectare site and includes several rare plant species in this habitat for the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake. It's situated 45 kilometres north of Parry Sound.

The Jackson Lake Conservation Reserve is a 1,166-hectare site, with mixed and sparse forest northwest of Geraldton. Jevens and Silver Lake Conservation Reserve: 2,144 hectares north of Kahshe Lake, again in the district of Muskoka. It features red oak and white pine forest—so many unique, natural features on these conservation reserves. The Kama Cliffs Conservation Reserve: 3,713 hectares. It has impressive cliffs on the north shore of Lake Superior. It's 18 kilometres east of Nipigon, and that shore of Lake Superior is quite spectacular. I had the opportunity last year to drive it for the first time as the northern development and mines critic on a northern seven-day trip. Even though it was April and not the most beautiful time of the year, it was still spectacular driving that coastline.

Little Spring Conservation Reserve: That's a 106-hectare site northwest of Magnetawan. Neys Provincial Park: That's 1,939 hectares and features caribou habitat and spawning areas for sport and commercial fish species, breeding colonies of herring gulls, and includes islands and islets in Lake Superior, a whaleback barge shipwreck, Pukaskwa Pits man-made rock depressions. It's situated about 200 kilometres from Thunder Bay.

The Living Legacy built on the work of the Lands For Life consultation process. The Harris government accepted some 213 of 242 recommendations made during that process, and it was an extensive process. More than 65,000 Ontarians responded to the Lands For Life process, which spanned many months. You can contrast that with the consultation process the current government has just gone through with another bill they introduced, Bill 11, where the consultation process lasted some two months. This is the review of parks the government just introduced a couple of weeks ago, with a total of 425 participants at open houses, 141 written submissions and a total of 1,118 form letters from NGOs. That's quite a contrast to the more than 65,000 Ontarians who responded to the Lands For Life process Mike Harris brought in.

This is just the regular road map I used to look at some of the parks in my area, and you see all many, many parks, and as I noted, they have some spectacular natural features.

This year I had the pleasure of becoming a new convert to canoeing, enjoying the beautiful parks we have, taking my son and his friend and father, going with them on another week-long canoe trip for my summer holiday. This year we went to the Temagami area and had a spectacular week there, a week with hardly a drop of

rain. We managed to get three days of rain, but otherwise we visited parts of Lady Evelyn provincial park and climbed Maple Mountain and walked the old growth pine trails on Lake Obabika—something I would recommend to anyone.

Quite a huge expansion of parks brought in by the past government of Mike Harris, not someone known necessarily for that kind of thing and probably not recognized for the huge increase of parks and protected areas that he brought in.

I would like to talk briefly about another initiative this government brought forward, and that was the closure of the Leslie M. Frost Centre. The Leslie M. Frost Centre borders my riding and the riding of the member from Haliburton, Laurie Scott. It was owned by the Ministry of Natural Resources and used for training of conservation officers and other government officials. Also, more importantly, it was used to educate thousands of school-children on our environment and provide children with an opportunity to stay at the Leslie M. Frost Centre and experience the outdoors year-round. In fact, when I was in grade 6, I think, I had the privilege of going to the Frost centre in the middle of winter and spend a couple of nights there. We were out snowshoeing, orienteering and learning about the natural environment.

Unfortunately, this government, with very little notice, closed the Leslie M. Frost Centre. I learned about it in late June, I think it was. I learned about it with about a day's notice, and then, two weeks later, the centre was closed. In terms of government spending, they were saving a tiny amount of money. I think it was around \$1 million that they projected to save. I would say, when you think of all the government employees who were being trained there—you would have to work that in—they may not have saved any money at all. They do point out that there were going to be some capital requirements for the water system because of the new water rules, but those are faced by any business in rural and small-town Ontario.

I think it was a very short-sighted decision by the government to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre. I am pleased that the Chair of Management Board at the time, Mr. Phillips, at least was willing to set up a committee to look at future possibilities. I'm hopeful that the government will recognize they made a mistake and move forward with future plans where we'll see some educational component continuing at the Leslie M. Frost Centre.

In the a little bit of time I have left, I should wrap up and get back to this bill and state that of course we are in favour of protecting agricultural land, protecting parks, but we also have to do so in a balanced and fair way. I pointed out many problems that happened with the greenbelt legislation. The one thing we will be pushing for is to make sure that this bill goes before committee. In fact, we were hoping to have it go to committee right after first reading; we're in second reading right now. We will want to see that the bill goes to committee so that members of the public, farmers and anyone else affected by the bill will have an opportunity to comment on the

bill. The key part of that process is that hopefully the government is listening and will make any changes that make sense. Certainly, protecting our agricultural land is important, but protecting the farmer is also important, and making sure there is a commitment to make our farms in Ontario viable is very important.

As I wrap up, I would just like to talk about one other provincial park, and that is the Hardy Lake Provincial Park, which is in the Muskoka area. Actually, the property was owned by a millionaire, Nelson Davis, back in the 1970s. I felt that I had some affect, myself, on the creation of that one myself, because back in about 1978, my father was the Minister of Natural Resources. I had just finished school and returned from a trip to New Zealand, and there I noted that all the waterfront—this would have been 1980, actually—in New Zealand is public access. It doesn't matter whether it's a stream, a river, a lake or ocean front, it's all public access. You can have a million-dollar home there, but you can still walk across the front of it and have a picnic if you want. I was complaining to my father, who was the Minister of Natural Resources, that in Muskoka there are a lot of significant cottages and private land, but only a few small beaches that were available at that time for the public. He, as the Minister of Natural Resources for the crown, bought the estate of Nelson Davis, which included five miles of shoreline of Lake Muskoka and a lake, Hardy Lake. It's now Hardy Lake Provincial Park. I was pleased to see that, and now the township of Muskoka Lakes has built a great walking trail around that park and it's saved in a fairly developed part of Muskoka. There's five miles of shoreline and some natural beauty; it's preserved in its natural state and there's great access to be able to see that on this trail.

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. As I mentioned previously, we will be looking forward to seeing the bill go to committee and we'll be looking forward to some input from the public on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Churley: Of course I'll be supporting the bill, but you've got to hear my comments, which will be coming shortly.

I'm responding to the full hour of comments from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and I think he is my MPP. Now, those of you from my Toronto area may wonder how that could be, but aren't you the MPP for lake Restoule?

Mr. Miller: Yes.

Ms. Churley: I have a little house on lake Restoule, and coming from Labrador, I always have a place—I can't go any farther north than that, because the drive back and forth would be too far.

Mr. Miller: Are you on Restoule Lake?

Ms. Churley: Yes, I am. I'm on Restoule Lake, in a little tiny—I call it the hovel. I go up there as often as I can. I think it's important, as we debate something like—because to the general public, when you're talking about

preserving easements, the eyes glaze over. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure yours aren't glazing over, though; no. You know the importance of this. But I think hearing about parks and the member's own experiences—I heard him talk about seeing a rattlesnake. Did you guys hear him say that? It's pretty neat. I've never seen a rattlesnake. But I know that driving along over to visit friends on the road in lake Restoule, a moose, just a majestic moose, was standing right in front of the car—it stopping, us stopping, and just staring at each other; seeing loons and wildlife and all of those things. We here in the city need to be reminded from time to time what we're talking about when we're here talking about greenbelt and preserving agricultural land and parks and why it is so fundamentally important not just to the environment and preserving farmland, but for everybody to have the ability to enjoy the parks of this province. So I quite enjoyed his conversation with us today about all of those parks in Ontario.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I'm delighted to join in a few comments with respect to Bill 16. I have to say that it's very pleasing to see members of the House speaking in support of Bill 16—and why not? I think it's so propitious that our government and the Minister of Natural Resources have introduced this piece of legislation, which goes a long way in accomplishing what started back in 1999, I believe, in preserving some very important agricultural land in Ontario. One needs only to go into one of our supermarkets, if you will, or take a drive maybe 20 minutes out of Toronto, to see how important it is to preserve the agricultural land.

What's more important with this bill is that it's in perpetuity. This is what the bill does. It's to protect this agricultural land which has been identified as prime agricultural land, to protect it in perpetuity. Often we say in this House that it's window dressing. Well, this is one of the many times that the Liberal government has recognized the importance of doing things in the long term. So not only can we provide for the farmers, but for all the people of Ontario, who will need good farming, quality farming, for the long term of preserving the farmlands in Ontario.

What better time to do it than now, to recognize that some 4,700 acres in the Duffins Creek area are so valuable and so important that they need to be protected? It's nice to see that there is support in the House to move this bill forward and get approval as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker: Before I recognize the next question or comment, there is a great deal of chatter going on in the House and people standing up. I don't know whether they intend to speak or not.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Arnott: I'm very pleased to have the chance to congratulate the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for giving this House one full hour of good ideas about Bill 16 this afternoon. I know the Minister of Natural Resources was here to listen to, I think, the entire presentation of the member for Parry Sound. In fact, they're conferring right this minute. I know the camera won't pan over, but

the Minister of Natural Resources and the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka are comparing notes at this very minute to determine how they can work together to make sure that Bill 16 is in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

I was very pleased to hear the member for Toronto–Danforth, in her comments, talking about Commanda being in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. I'm very pleased to inform the House that my mother-in-law, Mrs. Allie McCabe, comes from a little community called Arnstein, which is in the Parry Sound district in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. The McCabe family cottage, where we spend as much time as possible in the summer, is in Arnstein. So I've enjoyed spending much time in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka through the years, and I'm glad the member for Toronto–Danforth—I just learned today that she spends her cottage time in the very same area.

I know the member for Toronto–Danforth is about to undertake a very significant challenge as a candidate in the upcoming federal election. I want to take this opportunity to wish her all the best, in case I don't have a chance in the tributes that will likely come toward the end of the time of three of our members who are going to be testing the waters federally. I've served in the Legislature with the member for Toronto–Danforth for some 15 years now, and I have long admired her commitment to the people of her riding and the principles she so passionately believes in as a member of the NDP. I would certainly, as much as possible, like to wish her all the very best as she undertakes her responsibilities as a candidate in the upcoming federal election.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I would like to join in the general support of Bill 16. I'd also like to commend and recognize the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his sighting of rattlesnakes. I think we on the government side from time to time have the similar experience of sighting rattlesnakes.

This government is acting on its plan to conserve Ontario's prime agricultural land to ensure that our communities are strong and healthy for generations to come. If this particular bill is passed, it would ensure that the city of Pickering honours a 1999 agreement with the province to permanently set aside the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve for agricultural uses.

What exactly is this particular preserve of land? It's a very important part of the agricultural heritage of Ontario. It includes something in the order of 4,700 acres of prime land in north Pickering. These lands, as you'll appreciate, are part of a larger area of close to 40,000 acres that was expropriated in the 1970s for the proposed airport.

We, as a government, cannot sit idly by and allow the abandonment of these easements, because this will fundamentally undermine the efforts of land trusts that are reaching out to landowners. Land trusts have been promoting this kind of conservation and easements as a permanent protection; as my colleague said earlier, in perpetuity.

In summary, I want to say that this particular bill is absolutely worthy of our support. It's a matter of integrated, intelligent growth, eventually to leave a legacy of protected agricultural land and green space, a heritage that cannot be replaced and is irrevocable for our children.

The Acting Speaker: Before I recognize the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his comments, there is a great deal of chatter going on immediately to my right: members standing up, members chattering.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The minister is lobbying us.

The Acting Speaker: I understand that, but I think the lobbying can take place outside.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

1730

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the comments from the members for Toronto–Danforth, Waterloo–Wellington, Etobicoke North and York West.

I note that the member from Toronto–Danforth has a cottage on Restoule Lake, and the Restoule River, I think, was one of the parks that was added on in the Lands for Life process. You can actually paddle now from your cottage up the Restoule River to the French River and follow that all the way to Georgian Bay, member from Toronto–Danforth. I'd highly recommend that. You'll probably see a rattlesnake along the way.

I also note that the member from Waterloo–Wellington is up in the same area there, near Arnstein, which is certainly a beautiful area.

While the comments were going on, the Minister of Natural Resources and I were looking at this map of Parry Sound–Muskoka, at the literally hundreds of new parks that have been created in recent years, certainly a great opportunity for people who want to get an experience of the beautiful parks and protected areas in Ontario.

We'll look forward to Bill 16 being debated at second reading here in the Legislature. We also look forward to the bill, as I mentioned previously, having an opportunity to go to committee so that there can be further public input, so that if there are any problems with it, they can be identified and amendments can happen to the bill at that time.

Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Churley: Mr. Speaker, I'm very sorry to have to say that I'm going to have to break the calmness, the feeling of love and peace that's been generated in this place, particularly by the speech about parks from the member who spoke previously.

First of all, let me say that New Democrats are pleased that the government has finally moved to heed our calls and many other people's calls to uphold the easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

Everybody here knows, and you do, Mr. Speaker, because you've been sitting here over the last several months, that the NDP has been calling for action to

uphold the agricultural easements on Duffins-Rouge for some time. I remember going to caucus meetings—you're well familiar with our question period meetings, where we decide what questions out of all of the important questions we're going to ask that day—with me pressuring really hard to go on this, because this came to our attention in the process of the greenbelt going through and all those good things happening around the greenbelt. In the meantime, we were watching what was happening with developers and the town and the town council with the Duffins-Rouge area.

It started when our leader, the member for Kenora–Rainy River, raised the issue for the first time on March 7, and then I asked follow-up questions on several occasions in April and May. We were very, very concerned at the time regarding the government's lack of action to uphold the easements in light of Pickering council and Durham region's decision to remove them.

With the introduction of this legislation, the government has finally admitted, as far as I'm concerned, that the status quo could not suffice and novel special action is required if the agricultural easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve are to be upheld. That is what we're doing here today.

Back in March, when Durham council moved to remove the easements, denial, denial, denial was the McGuinty government's position with respect to the Duffins-Rouge lands. In response to our questions calling for the government to take action to maintain the easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stated this, and I'm quoting—I'll save you the quote. I see you looking at me there at the table.

“Let me repeat once again: The lands that are in the agricultural preserve in Pickering are part of the greenbelt. Whatever the city or town of Pickering does by way of resolution removing some designation on those lands is up to the town of Pickering. But quite frankly, the lands are still part of the greenbelt.” That's taken from Hansard, March 7, 2005.

Then the minister went on to say, “I'm very pleased to tell this member and his caucus and everyone in this room and outside that we do have a permanent greenbelt; that the legislation that was passed is stronger than any other legislation we've ever had in this province.”

I would say, there's clearly something wrong with this picture. The reason I'm sounding so strong—I will use that word on this issue—is because it bodes bad for future problems. It means that down the road, if the greenbelt was not able, as the ministers kept saying when questioned in this House, to protect these easements, then we're going to have more problems down the road. So I'm going to talk a bit about that. If the greenbelt legislation, as the minister said, is truly stronger than any legislation we've ever had in this province, then why now—why?—has the government deemed it necessary to introduce stand-alone legislation to further protect the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve? This is clearly contradictory.

I noticed that one of the members earlier, when I in a two-minute referred to this, got up and said, "Well, we don't really have to do this. It'll be protected, but we just want to make a strong statement here." Come on; give me a break. We're here because the greenbelt legislation does not protect these easements, and that's fine. I'm glad that we're here today with legislation and that finally, after all these months, with a lot of concern and a lot of worry, the government is taking action. But I have to say, therefore, that the government, if they really believe what they're saying, clearly doesn't understand the powers, or the lack of powers, of its own laws.

To further illustrate the statements made by the ministers at the time, the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet got in on the action too in a response to one of my questions. He stated, "I think the public is aware that we, the McGuinty government, have made it very clear that we'll do everything we can to protect the agricultural preserve.... The member will know that we have our greenbelt legislation; we have the minister's order on the agricultural preserve, which we believe will protect the agricultural preserve. So we're quite confident that we have the tools in place to ensure that that important property stays as an agricultural preserve." That's from Hansard, May 31, 2005. The Chair of Management Board went on to state, "We have taken the greenbelt legislation step. We have the minister's zoning order on it. We are convinced that this will provide and does provide adequate protection to ensure it stays as an agricultural preserve."

These statements and others want us to believe that the present regime, the Greenbelt Act and the ministerial zoning order, are sufficient for the full protection of the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve. But clearly, despite what a member over there said, who may want to withdraw that—it's just patently ridiculous—the introduction of the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act is an admission by this government that the Greenbelt Act is not sufficient to protect the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

I'm going to get to my point here. I'm not just standing here and giving all these quotes—although there is some fun to it, I must admit, reminding the government of how strident and how clear they were several months ago in their responses to my appeal and my leader's appeal to do something about this. But I'm raising it because they have found out that in fact those protections, the Greenbelt Act and the ministerial orders, were not sufficient. I'm concerned about the implications and the impact, therefore, down the road on other easements in other situations. It is my fear that under development pressures, areas on the periphery of the greenbelt will eventually be removed from the greenbelt because its boundaries are not permanent, and they won't have their own act like Duffins-Rouge to protect them.

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Our fear that the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve was not adequately protected by the greenbelt legislation has now been shown to be the case. Of course, the

legislation today is vindication for those of us—I thought I was reading everything correctly. When you stand here in the House as an opposition member and you've read things carefully, you've consulted with experts and you stand here and you ask the ministers, you put the case to them, and you say: "Here's my understanding of this; here's my understanding of other experts," and they stand there so arrogant and pious in their answers—not even an "I'll take a look at that, because if you're correct, then we may have a problem"; it's, "No, no, no. Everything we've got in place will protect this."

I'm very concerned when those are the kinds of answers that I've gotten to every question I've asked about my concerns with the greenbelt legislation. It's, "Don't worry. The greenbelt is the greatest piece of legislation ever created in the universe"—I'm paraphrasing here, of course—"let alone the province," and, "Everything will be taken care of; don't you worry." That's the kind of response we get. Well, this is an indication and a vindication that in fact our concerns were correct. Again, I am glad to see that the government has come forward today with this piece of legislation to fix it, but it is just fixing one of the problems that the minister knows I have raised in this House.

The problem with the greenbelt has always been its lack of permanent boundaries, which leads to the reality—and I've talked a whole lot about this in here, and that the Minister of Citizenship, who's here today, if he were sitting over here with us in the opposition, I know he would agree with me, because I remember working hard with him, and he worked particularly hard; he was the critic. There were a lot more members, so he got to be the critic for the Oak Ridges moraine and, I have to say, did a tremendous job. We all acknowledge that.

Interjection: A great job.

Ms. Churley: He did: the salamander and—I did some work on it and did my bit, but Mike Colle, we have to hand it to him: When he was sitting over here on this side of the House in opposition—he wants me to read out his phone number now, but here's where we're going to stop, because now I'm going to say some bad things about him, because now that he's over there in government, he—

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): You set him up.

Ms. Churley: I did set him up. I know. Let me see if I can—oh, I see why he brought it up: "Save the Oak Ridges Moraine." That's how committed he is/was, MPP Mike Colle. I'll leave him to give his Web site and phone number: "Save the Oak Ridges Moraine."

But when I needed his support sitting on that side, in terms of making it clear to the government that this is a floating greenbelt, not the permanent greenbelt, and therefore has all kinds of problems that we need to fix, he was not standing there with me. Of course, now that—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: Can I keep this pen? I like the pen.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): That's a going-away gift.

Ms. Churley: He says, “That’s a going-away gift.” I’ll get lots more of those in Ottawa.

But coming back to the greenbelt: Again, this is serious. It is serious. I know I’m joking around here, but I’m raising it in the context of having raised this issue about the easements and the greenbelt, not being able to protect it, and the ministerial order, not being able to protect it, and that there are going to be other situations. There are indeed other situations where, if there is not stand-alone legislation, we’re going to have the same problem.

The government, you see, left the greenbelt boundaries malleable to political and development pressure. I’m going to be nice here today and not go into some of those dinners where developers paid thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars to have dinner with the then finance minister and the Premier while the greenbelt was being developed. I won’t really go into that too much today, but we remember that. The boundaries have been left open for that kind of interference. There is nothing in the Greenbelt Act to stop the removal of 1,000 acres, say, from the southern boundary of the greenbelt, which has a lot of good, prime agricultural land and prime environmentally sensitive land, as long as an equal amount of land is added somewhere else where development pressures aren’t as intense.

That is really critical, and I cannot get the government to acknowledge that. I find it frustrating, because it’s a reality. It’s real. You just have to read it. If you understand it, it is a floating greenbelt, and every time they stand up and say it is a permanent greenbelt, it is piffle, shall I say. I think I’m allowed to use that word. You can interpret it as you please, but it is not so, and it is a big problem. As you can understand, our concern here is that areas that are close to urban centres and under significant development pressure, such as the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve, could potentially be removed and substituted within the greenbelt by lands elsewhere.

Why the government thought the greenbelt legislation adequate to protect the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve in the first place is quite a mystery, because it didn’t take a whole lot of brain power to figure out that in fact it couldn’t do that. Based on the government’s position as extolled by the ministers I quoted earlier, the question I would like answered here today is, when and why did the government decide to reverse their position? When and why did the government determine that their greenbelt and the ministerial zoning order were insufficient, as we always said it was, to protect the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve? And in light of the need to introduce this act, will the government finally admit the serious flaw in the greenbelt legislation: the fact that it floats, that it is not permanent, and commit to amending the legislation to make the greenbelt boundaries fixed and permanent, as they say it is now? Will the government move today to amend the greenbelt legislation to make the greenbelt permanent?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: No.

Ms. Churley: The minister is saying no, but I have to ask; you never know. I had legislation. I guess it died on

the order paper when the House prorogued, but I put forward my own greenbelt legislation, which was permanent.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: But the acreage is there.

Ms. Churley: “But the acreage is there.” You see, the minister gets that part of natural resources. He gets that part, but let’s take it from there. The acreage is there, but you can move those acreages around.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: You might need that flexibility.

Ms. Churley: He says you need that flexibility, and I say that’s the problem, and you’re going to have all kinds of problems down the road. But he says no; they’re not going to do that.

The impermanency of the greenbelt boundaries is the lesson we can learn from the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve flip-flop. Again, I would call on the government today to make the greenbelt permanent, because the greenbelt is something I have always supported and continue to support. Who in their right mind—I know some of the Tories didn’t support it, but who—I’ll be careful here—in their right mind, wouldn’t support—

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Be nice.

Ms. Churley: No, I’m serious. Who wouldn’t support green space? It’s prime agricultural land.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): They want to pave over everything.

Ms. Churley: They do. We want to save it; they wanted to pave it. That’s right.

To save prime agricultural land and environmentally sensitive land—of course we support it. It was absolutely critical, but we wanted the government to do what it said it was going to do, not create a floating—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Churley: They’re having a little party over there. It’s OK.

The greenbelt is a good thing. Unfortunately it’s marred because this piece of it has not been fixed. That flexibility, as the minister puts it in a very positive light, to me means something else, not flexibility but that we could, down the road—and we’re already seeing it, what people are calling leapfrog development, into Simcoe south. We’re already seeing developers buying up all kinds of land in the area between, some of which has all kinds of good—even better agricultural land than what is preserved in the greenbelt. The McGuinty government has already approved, for instance, the big pipe, despite its significant impacts on the Oak Ridges moraine aquifer system, the Rouge River and its implications for further sprawl in the GTA. And where does the big pipe go? It goes right through the greenbelt. At this very moment, as we’re debating this bill today, the government is poised—and it’s sadly poised—to approve the Pine Valley extension that will run right through Boyd park, which, as the government knows, is an area of natural scientific interest. It too is an area inside the greenbelt.

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I have to say that this is all very sad, because it’s a blight on the legacy they want to leave. Right now the general population has no idea that these kinds of things

are happening, as we speak, within the greenbelt. Most Ontarians believed the government when they were told the greenbelt would be a permanent, protected area and that features such as the headwaters of the Rouge River would be protected instead of being drained to facilitate the installation of the big pipe, which is starving creeks like Robinson Creek but which lines the pockets of Liberal-friendly developers, and that is what is going on. This is the sad part about the greenbelt, that these kinds of things are still going on.

I believe that this is not what Ontarians expected from the McGuinty government, nor do they even realize at this point that it's going on. You just have to ask the people who are being impacted right now by this kind of development that is going on within the greenbelt. You just have to talk to people from the Bond Head area and people from Bradford West Gwillimbury how the government is living up to its promise. They're still struggling, going to see government members and talking to me to try to stop that.

This area just north of the greenbelt is in Simcoe county. This, and I've described it many times in this House, has become the Wild West of development and land speculation since the government implemented the greenbelt. We're seeing situations where developers are offering and are paying municipalities for sewer upgrades. Those are the kinds of things that are happening now, as we speak about this bill today, which is a good bill.

But it's important for people to understand that, as we try to fix this one problem, there are all of these other things going on. It's a clear indication that the government's greenbelt is failing when it comes to living up to what they said it was going to do. One of the things they said it was going to do was stop urban sprawl. What we're seeing is what they call leapfrog development, all this land being bought up. We are seeing this big pipe being built that's going to generate a lot more urban sprawl in that area. Development continues to sprawl north of the greenbelt boundary despite what the government wants to pretend to be the case.

Then there's the development of major highways. Currently, the Minister of the Environment has on her desk the terms of reference for an environmental assessment—I just talked about that—that includes the development of the Pine Valley highway extension. Again, I mentioned that. I'm repeating it because I'm very, very upset about that, and so are the people in the area. This is going to go right through the greenbelt, through the heart of Boyd Park in Vaughan.

The Acting Speaker: I can't hear. There are conversations here. There is a conversation there that has been going on for at least 10 minutes. I would ask the members—please, it's very difficult to hear. It's extremely difficult with all the conversations.

Thank you very much. Please continue.

Ms. Churley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure they all want to hear my speech, as I try to give some guidelines as to what I think should be done here. I know it's late in the day, and that to most people this is not a

really significant, important bill, when you think that it's just about easements. I understand that. So I'm not insulted, Mr. Speaker, but I know you do have to hear what I have to say in case I say something unparliamentary, and I'm not going to do that. You know I would never do that.

I want to go into a little bit more detail about the big pipe, because that's something I have a great deal of concern about, and that too is happening in the middle of the greenbelt area. I recently went to city hall—I believe you were going to come with me, Mr. Speaker, in your capacity as MPP, if you were available, but you weren't that day—to give a deputation to Toronto city council, which I did, along with a letter from Jack Layton, the member of Parliament for my riding of Toronto-Danforth, and of course the leader of the federal NDP.

Many, many deputants, including the Environmental Commissioner, came and spoke to city hall. The mayor was reluctant at first to get in the middle of this one, interfering with other jurisdictional matters. But he was convinced, as well as the members of city council, in particular after hearing from the Environmental Commissioner, I think, who raised alarm bells about the possible impacts on Toronto's and York's water if this big pipe goes ahead. They passed a resolution, which I have pieces of here, and I think it tells the whole story.

The works committee "recommended to the policy and finance committee that:

"(a) the city of Toronto oppose the current design and construction of the York Durham sanitary sewer trunk sewers and associated de-watering practices (present and future);

"(b) the city of Toronto request the province of Ontario through the Minister of Environment to:

"(i) deny approval to the 19th Avenue sewer which goes through "the Oak Ridges moraine and sensitive aquifers, and that alternatives and local sewage solutions be explored as per the Minister of Environment's list of conditions; and

"(ii) refer the big pipe project description to the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for an assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act."

There are other clauses in this that the city council voted on and supported. I think that is something the government should be listening to. When its own Environmental Commissioner stands up and says—and I'll end on this note for today, Mr. Speaker, because I know we're coming to 6 o'clock. The Environmental Commissioner pointed out something very interesting: The Oak Ridges moraine—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Churley: Just this last point and I'll be through for today: The Oak Ridges moraine is not included under the Environmental Bill of Rights, and this big pipe is within the Oak Ridges moraine. Therefore, if people who want the Environmental Commissioner to actually investigate this matter, he cannot do it because it is not

included. It's exempted, and the present Liberal government has not seen fit to include it under the Environmental Bill of Rights. He has expressed real frustration that his hands are tied in terms of doing what he is supposed to: his job as Environmental Commissioner and following up on these requests from the public to study this situation.

I have about another good half hour left of things to talk to you about, Mr. Speaker, but I think—

Interjection: You're doing a good job. Now sit down.

Ms. Churley: He's saying, "You're doing a good job. Now sit down." It being almost 6 of the clock, is it not, I will—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: The Speaker is telling me to keep going, but I'm going to end my speech for the day and the Speaker can end for today. Look, it's 6 o'clock.

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: Mr. Speaker, should I end my speech for today?

The Acting Speaker: If you want to end your speech, you can, but that would be the end of the speech. You must continue until 6 o'clock.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I will tell you when it is 6. I will let you know precisely when it is 6.

Ms. Churley: Sorry, I don't mean to tell what you to do. I just know that when I used to be in your place in the Chair, sometimes I would accept—I'm not saying you should—it being almost 6 of the clock. I'm done for the day.

Until 6:00, it is very clear that I have other things to say about this. I have been expressing my concerns that, should the government not fix the problems with the greenbelt, because they have admitted by bringing this bill forward today, a special, stand-alone bill to protect these easements, that the greenbelt legislation and ministerial orders, which the minister previously said would fix this problem, will not work. What does that mean for other problems within the greenbelt? It means that, sadly, we're going to need—

Interjections.

Ms. Churley: It is, really—I rarely complain about the din and noise around me, but this is actually ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you, I find it somewhat disrespectful. I don't care if people are listening, because I'm talking to people out there anyway, but I really do find it a bit disrespectful. I'm sorry; I know it's late in the day.

Anyway, I hope you're all back to hear the second half of my speech. Thank you very much for this opportunity today.

The Acting Speaker: It now being 6 of clock, orders of the day.

ENDING MANDATORY RETIREMENT
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
POUR ÉLIMINER LA RETRAITE
OBLIGATOIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement / Projet de loi 211, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne et d'autres lois pour éliminer la retraite obligatoire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): For those who were not present this afternoon, it is upon unanimous consent that we will proceed beyond 6 o'clock today to deal with this item.

On the last occasion, it's my understanding that Mr. Hampton had the floor. Mr. Hampton not being present, we will call for further debate. Is there any further debate?

There being no further debate, Mr. Peters has moved second reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have a note here from the government whip. It's to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Peters for the second reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement, be deferred until Thursday, November 17, 2005."

It's signed by Mr. Levac, the chief government whip.

That being the case, and it being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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