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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 2 May 2006

Mardi 2 mai 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 May 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 mai 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): The Daisy of Hope campaign was initiated by Nova Vita domestic violence program services in Brantford in 1999. The campaign slogan states, "Buy a daisy and help us help abused women and their children. Because a life without violence is the only life to live."

Speaker, I seek unanimous consent in this province-wide campaign to wear the Daisy of Hope for the month of May.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Levac has asked for unanimous consent to wear the Daisy of Hope for the month of May. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): As my esteemed colleague from Simcoe-Grey pointed out on March 28, 2006, Markdale is still underserved when it comes to the number of doctors in the area. They are also waiting to hear from the Minister of Health, who in a meeting on November 16, 2005, promised to make a decision on whether the new hospital will get a planning and design grant.

Centre Grey hospital in Markdale has been described as aging and functionally obsolete. Without major repairs, it may only last two or three more years. Four—count them: four—accreditation surveys have recommended its replacement.

In 2002, Grey county approved the use of five acres of land on the site of the existing Grey Gables seniors' centre. The proposed new hospital will be connected to Grey Gables and will also include a medical centre. Not only have four of the lower-tier municipalities united to commit \$2 million to the building campaign, but Grey county has pledged \$1 million to the project, subject to provincial government approval. The Centre Grey General Hospital Foundation has succeeded in raising over its targeted \$12 million.

What this community would like as a first step is approval to proceed with functional planning for Centre Grey hospital services and work toward integrating with the long-term-care services at Grey Gables.

While I appreciate that Ministers Caplan and Smitherman met with me and Jim Wilson and several hospital officials, this hospital was not mentioned in the budget, and the community would like to move ahead. Over 20,000 residents are served by Centre Grey, the only hospital between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor.

I urge the minister: Revisit this important issue now.

DALTON FAMILY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to welcome Mr. William Peat, accompanying Mr. Brett Dalton's grade 9 class, who are visiting us today from Hillfield Strathallan College in Hamilton. Hillfield Strathallan College has a history that dates back four schools and five proud generations, commencing in 1901.

Brett Dalton, the teacher, is the grandson of Colonel Charles Osborne Dalton. On April 22, 2006, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada officially opened the Dalton Armoury in Scarborough in memory of his grandfather and his uncle, Colonel Elliot Dalton.

The Dalton brothers, known as Mark I and Mark II, stormed Juno Beach in Normandy on D-Day in 1944. Colonel Charles Dalton led "B" company on D-Day, landing on the beaches under heavy gunfire. Colonel Elliot Dalton led the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada's "A" company on a successful attack. He advanced his unit through the town of Bernières-sur-Mer, driving the enemy away. The Dalton brothers were leaders, and their fighting took them through Normandy into northern France.

I would like to offer my congratulations on the regiment's expansion and the establishment of the Dalton Armoury, and applaud the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada on their 146th birthday. Please join me in celebrating the Dalton family for their courage, leadership and dedication to Ontario and Canada.

The Dalton family tradition continues as Brett teaches leadership to these fine high school students from Hillfield Strathallan College. This wonderful school strives to develop a well-balanced student. Hillfield Strathallan College celebrates academic excellence, promotes community responsibility and encourages athletic prowess as well as maintaining a respect for history, thus leading us all to a successful world future. Welcome to all of you; I'm very proud of you.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder if I could ask the members for

unanimous consent to defer for just five minutes my statement recognizing some folks gathering in the gallery, who are not quite here yet.

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

RenewABILITY ENERGY INC.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Last week, Waterloo region was once again the site of a major announcement concerning renewable energy. I had the pleasure of attending an event with Ontario's Minister of Energy, the Honourable Donna Cansfield, and noted environmentalist David Suzuki, where it was announced that an energy-saving technology called the Power-Pipe had been recommended by EnerQuality's technical committee.

The Power-Pipe, developed by RenewABILITY Energy Inc., has received approval for inclusion in the Energy Star technical specifications for new homes. The Power-Pipe is a drain-water heat-recovery system that recycles waste heat from warm drain water before it leaves the home.

Approximately 90% of the energy used to heat water goes down the sewer. The Power-Pipe recycles this energy, saving up to 40% on hot-water heating bills, the second-largest energy demand in the average house.

The technology is very affordable, having a payback period of only two to six years. The Power-Pipe will also reduce peak load electricity demand in homes with electric water heating and allow off-peak water heating only, which fits very well with time-of-use electricity metering. It's easy to install, requires no maintenance, will last more than 50 years and increases water-heating capacity.

I want to congratulate CEO Gerald Van Decker and the entire team at RenewABILITY Energy Inc., as well as Corey McBurney, director of operations at EnerQuality Corp., and Hans Schreff of London Hydro, who announced the Power-Pipe retrofit initiative that will take place in the city of London. Their ingenuity, creativity and vision are helping to secure Ontario's energy and environmental future.

As David Suzuki said of the announcement, "This announcement highlights the advances that can be made when Canadians are focused on efficiency. The Power-Pipe will help reduce associated greenhouse gas emissions and the need for producing more electricity."

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I rise in the House yet again to talk about more job losses in northern Ontario. As everybody knows, early last week Tembec announced an indefinite shutdown of the mill in Smooth Rock Falls. This equates to the sole employer in a community possibly shutting its doors and the entire community being without an employer. But it doesn't end there. The repercussions of this will affect jobs in Timmins and in places like Hearst; as we know, the

forestry industry is an integrated industry. Shutting down a kraft mill means that a sawmill somewhere is not going to have a market to sell wood chips. People like Lecours Lumber in Hearst are faced with the possibility of losing 250 jobs in that community if they're not able to secure a place to sell their wood chips, or the Tembec mill in Timmins, with over 150 employees, plus the staff.

1340

I say to this government, you guys have been sitting back, talking a good line about what you want to do for the north. All I can tell you is, it ain't working. We're losing jobs by the thousands, and if this government doesn't wake up soon, there ain't gonna be nobody left in northern Ontario to shut off the lights. We need you guys to wake up, to work with us in northern Ontario to resolve this issue.

Last point: If you think the deal on the softwood lumber industry has done anything to help us, you should be talking to sawmill operators today. They are livid. They feel that the Stephen Harper government has sold them down the road in accepting a deal that at the end of the day is nothing more than saying that the NAFTA ruling and our position on it were wrong.

GREATER TORONTO TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It appears from just a cursory review of the media recently on the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority that it's certainly not up to the job. In fact, there's been a lot of fanfare, but the Toronto Star, one of the sources of information for the Liberal Party, is saying very clearly, in my view, "In the 2003 election, Premier Dalton promised to deliver such an agency, one with 'the clout and resources to tackle gridlock' across greater Toronto...."

"Sadly, this new authority has no clout and few resources."

So there you have it from their own briefing notes, the Toronto Star. Again today the Toronto Star is up to the task. They know that this particular authority is a shell. It has nothing but the outcome of delay added when you look at the governance model.

Even Mayor Dave Ryan from Pickering, the former seat of Wayne Arthurs, is quick to respond to this. He says that the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority has no power, no authority and no resources. So there you are, Minister. There's a big job ahead of you. But he does make a very thoughtful suggestion, and I want comment on what he is saying. He is saying, "Don't forget, as you've done in the recent budget, that Durham region has over 500,000 people, and much of the planning that needs to be done seems to ignore that." I think all of the regions are in for a great shock, when you look beyond the announcement of the bill that there's some authority. There's anything but authority in this bill.

I contest the minister to step up to the plate and do the right thing.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): Last month's provincial budget provided \$5 million in support to the Ontario grape and wine industry, beneficial to my riding of Niagara Falls. In two of the last three years, the grape industry was ruined by extremely cold temperatures, resulting in hardship for the industry. Our government recognized the problem and moved to provide support for grape growers, the wine council and small and medium VQA wineries in Ontario.

I have received many letters, two of which I would like to read extracts from.

Jeff Aubry of Coyote's Run Estates winery wrote to me: "I wanted to convey my thanks for supporting the small and medium VQA wineries in Ontario. I can assure you the recent government grants, though unexpected, were warmly received. I have used the funds granted to Coyote's Run to purchase a rotary drum filter, an expensive high-tech piece of equipment that will boost the productivity of my operation and help protect my business in the event of another short crop."

Also, Linda Franklin, president of the Wine Council of Ontario, and Norm Beal, chair, wrote to me: "We are writing to thank you on behalf of the entire wine industry for your support and advocacy over the past few months. That advocacy has had a clear and important effect ... on the issues facing the wine industry. That support ... will provide critical help to the many wineries that were in real need after four difficult years." They conclude by saying, "Thank you again for all your efforts on our behalf, and for the important signal to our industry that your efforts produced in the 2006 budget."

The 2006 budget was a win for the grape growers, a win for the vintners and a win for the consumers of 100% Ontario-grown VQA wines.

FORT ERIE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I thank my colleagues for their indulgence, because I wanted to welcome the Fort Erie Progressive Conservative Association of Women, their guests and particularly their president, Alma Sullivan, to the Legislature here today.

This is the longest-running PC women's association in Ontario, founded in 1939. Its members are hard-working, community-minded women who are dedicated to electing Conservative parliamentarians both to the provincial and the federal government, and like members benefit from all three parties, are dedicated and very active in their community to service groups, church groups and groups like the hospital auxiliary, the public library, literacy programs etc. They have successfully elected numerous Conservative members of Parliament over the course of their history, including the Honourable Rob Nicholson, the federal member for Niagara Falls, former Erie MP Girve Fretz and former Niagara Falls MP Joe Hueglin. Heck, if they can get me elected, they can get anybody in the Fort Erie area elected.

Very importantly, too, they provide a John Diefenbaker Scholarship for graduating high school students from the town of Fort Erie. It rewards students who have an average of over 80% in history and who volunteer on a campaign or are involved in student government or other acts of civic activity.

I want to thank the members of the Fort Erie Progressive Conservative Association of Women for their hard work and their dedication to a civic community, and I hope they have a wonderful day here at Queen's Park.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It was much appreciated last week that Premier McGuinty made a trip to northwestern Ontario, his second stop in our area in less than two months. At a time when our economy continues to struggle, particularly with the challenges in the forestry sector, the good news the Premier brought regarding funding for the cardiac and cancer research centre was, as you can imagine, very well received.

We are also grateful that the Premier, as Minister of Research and Innovation, is taking a personal interest in the molecular DNA research lab, which will need substantial provincial and federal support to be successful. Those of us who support this venture believe that this will be the basis for the new economy in northwestern Ontario. We are determined to see it move forward.

It was also encouraging to have the Premier confirm his interest in exploring the possibility of regionally-based energy pricing in northwestern Ontario. This is a concept that no other government has remotely broached, and it is reassuring to know that it remains an area of great interest to the Premier.

I was particularly pleased to learn that consultation on this subject will be held in the northwest later this summer. Frankly, the people who understand best how this could work are not at Queen's Park; indeed they are residents and business people from the northwest. The fact that they will have a chance to make a strong case for regional pricing is good news for those of us who support this concept.

All in all, it was a great trip by the Premier, where the people in northwestern Ontario got to see up close the commitment he and our government have to working with, and improving the lives of, all the residents in our part of the province.

CITY OF NORTH BAY

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): North Bay taxpayers woke up to good news this morning. At last night's council meeting, it was announced that the city would be cutting its tax hike in half. This announcement is in good part a result of the McGuinty government's most recent budget and all the investments the provincial government is making in North Bay.

As North Bay taxpayers know, the federal and provincial governments are providing North Bay with

\$30 million through phase one of COMRIF for our water treatment plant. That was the single largest COMRIF grant in phase one in the province. The city of North Bay is also receiving an extra \$4 million from the northern Ontario heritage fund towards the city's one-third share of the plant, for a total of \$19 million invested in the plant, and we should see shovels in the ground shortly.

The city has also received \$3.4 million in this year's provincial budget for roads and bridges, money that the city wasn't expecting. In addition, the city has received an extra \$1 million towards this year's operating or capital budget.

The city is receiving \$900,000 this year in gas tax money to pay for the construction of our transit terminal on Oak Street and for the operation of our transit system. And the city received approximately \$160,000 in surplus funding from our local DSSAB because of the recent provincial uploading of land ambulance service costs.

This is just a short list of some of the investments the provincial government is making in North Bay that have led to the good news for city taxpayers. I am proud of the McGuinty government's investments that we've made in the city of North Bay directly, in our waterfront, in Canadore College, Nipissing University, the North Bay Regional Health Centre, the children's treatment centre and the continued four-laning of Highway 11. The taxpayers of North Bay are benefiting directly from our McGuinty government investments.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding any standing order, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the House shall meet on Wednesday, May 10, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. for the purpose of considering the following private members' public bills:

Bill 94, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to community involvement—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): You need to ask for unanimous consent to move this motion. Does Mr. Bradley have unanimous consent to make a motion without notice? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Thank you. I will move that motion, now that I have permission of the House.

I move that notwithstanding any standing order, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the House shall meet on Wednesday, May 10, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. for the purpose of considering the following private members' public bills:

Bill 94, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to community involvement activity hours and board support, standing in the name of Mr. Klees;

Bill 95, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act

with respect to providing information to student employees about employment rights, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath;

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Education Act, standing in the name of Ms. Wynne; and

That these private members' public bills shall be considered pursuant to standing order 96 where applicable, with the time divided equally between the three; and

That the order for consideration of the bills shall be determined by a ballot conducted by the Clerk of the House; and

That Ms. Horwath shall retain her place in the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved that notwithstanding any standing any order, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the House shall meet on Wednesday, May 10, from 9 a.m.—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker: —to 12 p.m. for the purpose of considering the following private members' public bills:

Bill 94, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to community involvement activity hours and board support, standing in the name of Mr. Klees;

Bill 95, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to providing information to student employees about employment rights, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath;

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Education Act, standing in the name of Ms. Wynne; and

That these private members' public bills shall be considered pursuant to standing order 96 where applicable, with the time divided equally between the three; and

That the order for consideration of the bills shall be determined by a ballot conducted by the Clerk of the House; and

That Ms. Horwath shall retain her place in the order of precedence for private members' public business.

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

Motions?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: A very important motion. I know that the member for Niagara Centre didn't want me to miss this motion, so here it is. At the request—no, I won't say "At the request of the member for Niagara Centre."

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 Tuesday, May 2, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 122. 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 1354 to 1359.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jeffrey, Linda	Peterson, Tim
Arthurs, Wayne	Klees, Frank	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Kular, Kuldip	Pupatello, Sandra
Barrett, Toby	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	MacLeod, Lisa	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Marsales, Judy	Runciman, Robert W.
Broten, Laurel C.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Tory, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Fonseca, Peter	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gravelle, Michael	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 74; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION WEEK

SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): As this is Education Week in Ontario, it gives me great pleasure to update this House on our goal of building opportunity by making public education the very best education. I know that the Minister of Education will be participating in a host of events celebrating public education this week in Ontario, and that she too will be making an important statement in this House tomorrow, so I wanted to make the following clear in my capacity as Premier in a government which is passionate about pursuing opportunities for our children through public education.

Every Ontarian needs and deserves the opportunity to succeed, and in today's world, the ladder of opportunity

starts with a great elementary and secondary education. Making publicly funded education the best education is essential to building a bright and promising future for all Ontarians. For one thing, the best education will give us the best workforce. In a world where up to 70% of new jobs demand some form of post-secondary education, giving our children the best education possible through our publicly funded system should be seen for what it is: Ontario's new economic advantage.

But learning, of course, is about more than just jobs, important as they are. It's also about the transmission of values and civility from one generation to the next. It's how we build a well-rounded society, form the best citizens and nurture our democracy. That great Irish poet William Butler Yeats once said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." For too many students in Ontario recently, that fire had gone out.

When we took office two and half years ago, our once-proud public education system was caught in a slide.

Il n'y a pas si longtemps, un trop grand nombre d'élèves en Ontario avaient perdu cette flamme. Quand nous sommes arrivés au pouvoir il y a deux ans et demi, notre système d'éducation avait cessé de faire notre fierté et il traversait une sombre période.

Many families with the means were choosing private schools over public education, a stunning number of our young people were not finishing school and even the most remarkable of success stories were overshadowed by news of sliding morale, crumbling schools, lost programs and deep division.

In the last 30 months, working with our education partners—the families, students, parents and educators with a direct stake in the system—we have not only stopped the slide; we have turned the corner. That's good news, because in the end this isn't really about us in this place. It's about Ontario families out there who want the best education for their children, and we are firmly on their side.

After two and a half years, there is peace and stability in our schools. There are thousands of new teachers and up to a million new textbooks. Student achievement is up. Test scores in reading, writing and math are up. Our dropout rate is coming down. Older schools are being repaired; new ones are being built. Our most successful schools are sharing their best practices. Our struggling schools and our struggling students are getting the support they need to succeed. Schools are safer and students, all in all, have a better shot at success.

We have, of course, much more work to do together towards our goal of excellence for all, but after two and a half years, let's pause this week to celebrate the tremendous progress that we have made and thank those who are truly responsible.

Je disais que nous avons encore beaucoup de travail à accomplir ensemble pour atteindre notre objectif d'excellence pour tous et toutes. Mais après deux ans et demi, prenons un moment cette semaine pour célébrer l'immense progrès que nous avons accompli et remercier ceux et celles qui en sont les maîtres d'oeuvre.

So let's thank all those hard-working, dedicated principals, teachers and education assistants who never gave up hope even when reasons for hope were in short supply. Let's thank the students who are making the most of this opportunity to realize their potential. Let's thank their parents, families and mentors for all their help and their praise, and all their late nights at the homework table. Let's thank as well 12.5 million Ontarians whose continued abundant goodwill and support is essential to allowing our young people to succeed.

Let's use this week to focus on the work ahead, to maintain the momentum we will need to reach our goals in reading, writing and math; the momentum we will need to build a truly great economy that boasts the best-educated, most highly skilled workforce in the world; and the momentum to build a truly civil society that respects our diversity and honours shared values.

Great education can do all of that. Public education, at its very best, is worthy of our noblest aspirations when it comes to building a strong economy and a strong and caring society. Public education, at its very best, is worthy of the dreams that we dream for our children and our grandchildren.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED
SERVICES AUX PERSONNES AYANT
UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I rise today to tell this House about some important commitments our government is making to build a better future for Ontarians with a developmental disability.

Je suis fière de vous parler aujourd'hui d'un investissement historique dans les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

In September 2004, our government announced a major investment in Ontario's developmental services sector: a \$110-million investment to strengthen community-based services and greatly increase the number of residential spaces in our communities as we closed remaining institutions for people with developmental disabilities.

1410

Since that time, our commitment to this sector has grown significantly. We invested in the province's first community network of specialized care for individuals who have very high care needs. We announced the Home of Your Own initiative, which is creating hundreds more residential spaces across Ontario for adults with a developmental disability. We created our passport program, giving young adults with a developmental disability critical supports as they make the transition from school to adulthood.

Today I am proud to announce that the Ontario budget for 2006-07 includes the largest single-year increase in

funding for Ontario's developmental services sector, an increase of nearly \$84 million that brings our government's four-year commitment to a record \$276 million.

Lors de ma visite ce matin au centre CORE, j'ai annoncé la plus importante augmentation annuelle de financement pour le secteur des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle : une augmentation de près de 84 \$ millions qui porte l'engagement de notre gouvernement au montant record de 276 \$ millions.

But what's more important than the funding is what it will do to strengthen services for people with developmental disabilities.

This year's funding increase alone will support approximately 900 more young adults in our passport program, help approximately 3,150 more families care for their family members at home through our special services at home program, create more than 200 new residential spaces in communities across Ontario, provide permanent funding to help agencies provide long-term residential care for approximately 250 people and, finally, help more than 370 community agencies address salary and other operating costs. These are investments not just in services and supports but in the people and families who use these supports and in the people who provide them.

Ces investissements ne représentent qu'une partie de notre plan, qui consiste à mettre sur pied des mécanismes de soutien plus forts pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle. Nous travaillons ardemment à la transformation du secteur avec le réseau communautaire et associatif.

These investments are part of a plan to transform the developmental services sector. The members of this House may remember that in September 2004 our government also launched a major policy review of Ontario's developmental services sector. We did this because we knew that our developmental services system was at a turning point.

À mesure que notre société évolue et favorise l'intégration, les attentes des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle évoluent également pour ce qui concerne les types de soins et de soutiens qu'elles veulent et dont elles ont besoin.

Aujourd'hui, elles veulent un système dans lequel les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle sont intégrées à tous les aspects de la société : établissements scolaires, programmes communautaires et population active. Leurs familles veulent davantage de choix et de souplesse pour se procurer les soutiens et les services dont elles ont besoin pour s'occuper de leurs membres chez elles.

We knew that we needed to step up and create a new plan for our developmental services sector that would make it easier for families to find services and supports, bring increased fairness and consistency to the way supports are delivered and give individuals and families the choice and flexibility they want to better meet their needs—a plan for a fair, accessible and sustainable

developmental services system and a plan that will help us achieve the vision of a more inclusive Ontario.

Today I was proud to release *Opportunities and Action: Transforming Supports in Ontario for People Who Have a Developmental Disability*. This document outlines the plan that our government believes will help us achieve our vision. Our plan is based on six important principles:

- citizenship for people with a developmental disability;
- fairness and equity in the support they receive;
- accessibility and portability, so that funding and supports are flexible and can move with the individual;
- safety and security, so that people have the appropriate supervision, balanced by privacy and self-determination;
- accountability for the service that people receive; and
- sustainability, because we must use our resources wisely so that they are available for future generations.

And to deliver on our vision, our plan proposes some key directions for our developmental services system.

We encourage the members of this House to share *Opportunities and Action* with everyone in their community who has an interest in supports for people who have a developmental disability. Ask them to read it and give us their input and advice so that together we can create long-term solutions that will make it easier for families to get services, increase fairness and consistency in the delivery of supports, and give individuals greater choice and flexibility.

Ensemble, nous avons une possibilité de renforcer les mécanismes de soutien communautaire afin qu'ils soient durables pour les générations à venir, et afin qu'ils aident les milliers de personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle à s'épanouir et à participer pleinement à la vie de leurs collectivités.

I will be awaiting your comments and suggestions.

In closing, I wanted to pay tribute to the former Minister of Community and Social Services for all the good work she did.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to inform members of a significant anniversary that we are commemorating in the colourful history of mining in Ontario. It will be my honour on Thursday this week to help officially launch Sudbury Mining Week and a publication commemorating the 150th anniversary of the discovery of minerals in that geological marvel of the world known as the Sudbury Basin. Sudbury Mining Week is part of a province-wide celebration of the mining industry.

One hundred and fifty years ago, Albert Salter, a provincial land surveyor, observed significant compass deflections while laying out a line near present-day Sudbury. Analysis of rock samples revealed nickel, copper

and iron. This was the first indication of the Sudbury region's mineral wealth. Years later, the deposit was rediscovered and it became the Creighton mine, one of the world's leading nickel producers. Today, we know the basin to be one of the greatest repositories of nickel, copper and platinum group ores.

The discovery of minerals set off a chain reaction of engineering, logistical and metallurgical challenges. Finding, extracting, smelting and refining the complex mineral ores was not easy then, and it isn't easy now. Meeting those challenges calls upon courage. It calls upon perseverance. It calls upon ingenuity. For over a century, courage, perseverance and ingenuity have led to the development of new mining methods, pioneering technologies and innovative processes.

What is now abundantly clear is that while minerals may be the natural resource, our real endowment lies in the imagination and the will of people developing that resource. Built to address local circumstances, newly developed high-tech solutions are finding applications in mining operations and other industries around the world, and the world is beating a path to Ontario's door. We have a critical mass of mining expertise that is expanding and building upon itself. That is why our government provided \$10 million to help Laurentian University establish a new Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation at its Sudbury campus. The centre will harness the skills of the best and the brightest in industry, universities, colleges and research centres across the country and around the world. It will keep us on the leading edge of mining innovation.

The McGuinty government believes in the potential of this sector, and we are acting to ensure that it thrives now and well into the future. For example, we recently launched Ontario's first minerals development strategy, which will enhance the mineral sector's global competitiveness while opening new opportunities for all Ontarians. We are investing \$15 million over three years for geological mapping in the far north, we are providing one-stop Internet access to potential mining-related services and we are maintaining a very favourable tax system and business climate.

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Ontario Mining Week celebrates an industry that saw the value of the total mineral production rise to more than \$7.2 billion. It celebrates an industry that is considered a global leader in all aspects of mineral development, including financing, much of which takes place right here in Toronto, the mining finance capital of the world. It celebrates an industry that continues reinvesting in the exploration and development of new mineral deposits, including Ontario's first diamond mine on the James Bay coast.

Moreover, we are advancing growth in our mineral sector in collaboration with our stakeholders in the mineral development sector. With that in mind, I'd like to inform the House that today is Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park. Senior mining industry representatives will meet with cabinet ministers, MPPs, political staff

and senior public servants to continue building our dialogue and to help politicians gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the vital role of mining.

The message I will be bringing is that as far as the McGuinty government is concerned, the mining industry is critical to building a strong and prosperous economy so that we can help ensure our people enjoy a quality of life that is second to none.

In the gallery today, we have representatives from the mining industry. I'd ask them to stand, and could we recognize them.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: I look forward to everyone meeting the miners tonight.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I wish to bring to the attention of the House that we have a former member, the member for Victoria–Haliburton and, latterly, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, in the 35th, 36th and 37th Parliaments, the Honourable Chris Hodgson.

It's now time for responses.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to respond to the Premier's statement on Education Week. On behalf of the official opposition, we certainly want to acknowledge the contribution of the teaching profession to education in this province, and we want to acknowledge the work of everyone involved in the education system, those on administrative staff and support workers.

This week has been set aside to honour and recognize all those who work within Ontario's education system, and we join in acknowledging the dedication of all who contribute to the acquiring of knowledge, the building of character and the development of responsible citizens. This includes teachers, principals, administrative and support staff, and parents who must always be embraced as key partners in education.

In keeping with the theme of Education Week, we must also acknowledge the significant contribution to our province that is made through the province's independent and faith-based schools. Just as Ontario's Catholic schools celebrate the unique and distinct contribution that Catholic education makes to Ontario's education system, we cannot ignore the petitioning of those who are calling on this Legislature to treat all faith-based schools in Ontario fairly and equitably and without religious discrimination to ensure that indeed we make every student count.

The Premier stated in his remarks that every Ontarian needs and deserves the opportunity to succeed. I would hope the Premier includes, in his definition of every Ontarian, all Ontarians and every student in this province. I would hope that includes the thousands of students, their parents, the teachers and support staff who attend, support, teach and work in the independent and faith-based schools in our province.

I would also hope the Premier includes, in his definition of Ontarians who deserve the opportunity to succeed,

autistic children, who continue to be left behind by our education system that falls shamefully short of meeting their most basic needs.

It is our hope that this Education Week will serve to focus our attention on all Ontarians who have the right, as we all firmly believe, to the opportunity to succeed in this great province.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm here to reply to the statement of the minister. I had looked forward to this announcement. I was hoping that the needs of the developmentally handicapped community would finally be met. Instead of that, I was most disappointed when I heard government by announcement once again: more promises to be broken.

More than three quarters of the platitudes we heard dealt with the budget. It was a repeat of the budget speech. I sat here and listened to the budget speech, and it was here again. There is still no plan. There is still no action. There are still no standards or timelines available to this community in need.

Dalton McGuinty wrote to David Lepofsky, who was then chair of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. He asked that the new act should include timelines and standards for effective enforcement. Nowhere has the minister indicated a plan containing any timelines or any standards, two of the essential parts of any plan. This is just another broken promise.

What you should be addressing is the real need of this community. You should not be closing more facilities: the Huronia Regional Centre, the Southwestern Regional Centre or Rideau Regional Centre. Please, Madam Minister, come up with a plan to help these people.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'd like to say that mining is the lifeblood of Ontario's north. It's great to see that the current government is continuing the practice of the previous government of geological mapping to help out the mining sector. I certainly hope that they continue on. On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, we all appreciate and recognize the miners coming forward and recognize their hard work and dedication.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): First of all, on behalf of New Democrats and our leader, Howard Hampton, I would like to welcome all those from the mining industry here.

I worked underground. I worked as an active participant in the mining industry. I've been underground at 8,100 of the McIntyre mine, the Timmins property, the Aunor, the Delnite, and I've got to tell you, you don't look like anybody I saw underground back then. You're looking a lot cleaner than I was, because I'll tell you, after a day's work I was pretty dirty.

People need to understand just how technical and advanced that industry is. When we talk about mining, we're talking about high-tech jobs, we're talking about high-paying jobs, and that money stays in our community. We say, on behalf of New Democrats, it's nice to see that base metal prices are up and it's nice to see that gold prices are up. I went to the PDAC meeting in Timmins a little while back, and everybody was in a good mood. What a nice change. Welcome.

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EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On behalf of New Democrats, I say that teachers are responsible for the intellectual, and yes, emotional development of our young kids and young children. I want to say that as a result of this, they are important workers and deserve our respect and support. Is this peace and stability that the Liberal government is giving us giving what we want? I want to look at a long list of things the government is doing that I don't believe give us what we need.

On the capital expenditure side: Less than 20% of the capital needs identified in 2002-03 have been addressed. At this rate, it could take the government four to six years to actually reach the spending levels they have announced.

On deficit budgets: All boards have deficits, and all boards cut programs to create the illusion that the books are balanced. The funding model is inadequate, it's flawed, and it still needs to be repaired. And yes, the Liberals are still using the flawed Conservative funding formula.

On special education: All boards are taking money from other programs to pay for special education, according to the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board investigators. That is the new normal in Ontario education.

On ESL: ESL programs have been all but eliminated due to the inadequate funding model. Students need English-as-a-second-language services. If students are not supported adequately, then classroom teachers have to spend a disproportionate amount of time assisting those students. It also increases the likelihood of students becoming disconnected from learning and from Canadian society as a whole.

On curriculum: Despite the fact that music, physical ed., and visual and dramatic arts are all mandatory subjects in the elementary curriculum, there is presently no funding specifically designated in the education funding formula for teachers in these subjects.

On class size: We're concerned that the government is talking about average class sizes instead of caps.

On test scores: The government results will continue to be manipulated to produce whatever results the government wants.

We thank educators and parents, and we affirm and confirm that teachers deserve more support than they are currently being given.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): In response to the Minister of Community and Social Services, for two years in this House we have listened as members of this House have stood with petitions. They have stood on all sides of the House with thousands of signatures, demanding to know what this government is doing. The families of the people in the regional centres have been forced into the courts. They have been forced to fight through the legal system in order to protect their loved ones. Today we have seen that there are no new plans for the regional centres. Today we have seen that there are no real plans for community services to take their place at the time those regional centres may be closed.

I can only quote from a document I got today from Dr. Lyz Sayer, who I think says it best:

"It is the most contrived propaganda I have seen. Read between the lines to see there is no legislation that says the government has to support the disabled." Read between the lines to see that "we're getting out of the business of housing the disabled." Read between the lines to see that "individualized funding is the best ... this will undermine the whole infrastructure of not only schedule 1 facilities but all the group homes and agencies. The latter don't have enough money now, and it looks like they'll get less in the future."

She goes on to say, "I went to one consultation and was appalled at how it was set up to only discuss and report on what they wanted..." It concludes, "and none of the discussion my group had about facilities was recorded."

That's the reality of what's happening here: People want to be heard; they have not been heard. The announcement today is more announcement upon re-announcement of a government that has no plan.

VISITOR

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to call to your attention and the attention of members of the House the presence in the lower east gallery of Sarah Chown, who is a university student and the granddaughter of the former mayor of the city of St. Catharines, Mac Chown.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Education, minister responsible for women's issues): And minister responsible for women's issues; thanks so much. I would

like to ask for unanimous consent today so that all parties may address Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

The Speaker: Ms. Pupatello has asked for unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize Sexual Assault Prevention Month. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This is a time for all of us to renew our commitment to ending the sexual violence that devastates the lives of far too many women and girls in Ontario. It's a time for us to move from a focus on intervention after the violence has occurred to a focus on preventing violence from happening in the first place, changing the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate it. We hope that is a signal and a message we have repeated often in this House.

Our government is helping vulnerable women by improving supports for victims of sexual assault. Victims have the right to receive timely and effective treatment. Last year, we implemented the first funding increase to our sexual assault centres in 13 years. We're providing a total of \$12.5 million annually so that sexual assault victims get the community supports they need. I'm pleased to say that, in addition, we made a special one-time investment earlier this year of \$1.3 million for enhancements in sexual assault agencies across Ontario. And I always thank the Attorney General of Ontario for working in tandem with our offices to assist in this sector.

A real improvement depends on much more than funding. Solving the problem depends on not just supporting the victims but on preventing them from being victimized in the first place. We really do need to change attitudes and behaviours on individual and societal levels. We need to teach our children about the importance of healthy, equal relationships. If boys grow up knowing they need to respect women and girls, if girls grow up with the confidence that they can stand up for themselves and others, if all children grow up believing in and practising gender equality, we're going to make great progress in eradicating the power imbalance that's always at the root of sexual assault. Each of us has a role to play in this, from parents to teachers, neighbours and friends. We have a role to play in modelling respectful behaviour toward women and children.

I'd also like to mention the daisy campaign, which today we've already asked permission to wear in the House. I hope that all of us will take time to wear this daisy throughout this month. Nova Vita, the shelter in Brantford, of which our own member Dave Levac has been a long-time supporter, does some tremendous work. They actually began this daisy campaign to help promote the notion that all of us have to be a part of the solution. We congratulate volunteers like the board that leads Nova Vita, because there are so many organizations with an equal amount of passion in this area throughout Ontario. These pins help us recognize the incredible work of women's shelters across the province. Let's proudly wear the pin as a sign of all our resolve to keep working together to eliminate all forms of violence against women. Let's not rest until this task is done.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus in recognizing Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This month has been recognized in Ontario since 1988, and it's a way to create public awareness of sexual assault and to improve the prevention of violence against women and children.

All parties in this House are committed to ending violence of all kinds. We must provide strong leadership to ensure that women and children have the support they need and that the perpetrators are held accountable for their crimes. We must ensure that public education teaches the important lesson that violence must stop, that it has a devastating impact on women's lives and the lives of our children, our families, our communities and our country.

The cost in dollars and cents is minor compared to the incalculable costs of damage to human dignity and self-esteem. For women who have suffered the pain, whose potential has been destroyed, whose spirits have been crushed, we must commit ourselves to preventing the violence. Crisis intervention workers, front-line workers in shelters, police and health workers can all attest to the damaging effect this has on our neighbourhoods and our communities. The effects of this violence are both long-term and far-reaching.

Each one of us, individually and together, must take responsibility and must continue to work to build safe homes, safe communities and safe workplaces. Sexual assault can take place between intimates, dating partners, friends, acquaintances or strangers. Rapes committed by acquaintances of the victims are the most common form of sexual assault.

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Unfortunately, sexual assaults occur much more frequently than we know, because they are not always reported. More than one third of Canadian women report having had at least one experience of sexual assault since the age of 16. Victimization surveys suggest that only 10% of women—or fewer—who are sexually assaulted report these assaults to the police. In cases reported to police, 80% of sexual assault victims knew the accused. They were friends, acquaintances or family members. Children and young people under the age of 17 account for 61% of sexual assault cases reported to police. About three quarters of these victims were girls, and more than two thirds of these girls were between 11 and 17 years of age.

These statistics are indeed chilling. They must spur us to continue to take action to fight the crime of sexual assault. As legislators, we must do our part, along with the courts, law enforcement, social agencies and individual citizens. In my own riding of York North, I would like to acknowledge the work of the York region abuse program in Newmarket, which offers hope and healing to people of all ages affected by childhood sexual abuse.

Sexual assault is a crime. It is not simply something undesirable or unfortunate; it is a violation of the rights of women and girls, as citizens, to feel secure in their

homes, workplaces, in public, at school. It must be stopped.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to rise to take note of Sexual Assault Prevention Month on behalf of New Democrats here in the Legislature today.

The statistics on sexual assault are stark: Two out of three women have experienced sexual assault; 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners or boyfriends; four out of five female undergraduates surveyed at Canadian universities said they had been victims of violence in a dating relationship; 29% reported incidents of sexual assault; 22% of women who have been victims never tell anyone.

Ontario sexual assault centres are still recovering from the 5% cut to their operating budgets a few years ago.

We need to see real action on changing laws to better protect women and avert potential tragedies. We'd like to see more done in the schools to combat sexual assault and date rape. That problem is largely hidden, as few of these crimes are actually reported. According to Statistics Canada, only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to police. Only 1% of women who have been sexually assaulted by an acquaintance report the incident to police. In Canada in 1998, 82.6% of victims in reported cases of sexual assault were women; 98% of the accused were men.

Men who commit sexual assault come from every economic, ethnic, racial, age and social group. Men who commit sexual assault can be doctors, teachers, employers, co-workers, lawyers, husbands, student colleagues or relatives of the women they assault. Here's another troubling statistic: In a recent survey on date rape, 60% of Canadian college-age males indicated that they would commit sexual assault if they were certain they would not get caught.

Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 21 are at the highest risk of being sexually assaulted. In 70% of the reported cases of sexual assault, the victim knew the accused, and 62% of the victims were under the age of 18. If they are sexually assaulted, it will most likely be by a boy or a man who is a friend, a family member or someone else they know—probably not by a stranger.

Part of this month is about communicating the risks and repercussions of sexual assault. It's also about making sure that girls and women know unconditionally that as a society, as women and as men, we will not, do not and can never condone this behaviour, and we will stand by them. They must report, but we must be there to support them throughout their experience with the justice system and throughout their ongoing time of healing after that, through supporting the women's centres and the sexual assault centres across the province that they will turn to for help.

I believe all of this should be happening throughout the year. Unfortunately, school is not the happy, safe place for many students that people might like to think it is. For some, school are the place where bullying, racism and sexist violence is taking place. That's why all of us

supported the Miss G project when it came here not too long ago, having women's studies and women's issues built into the secondary school curriculum. Seeing that the Minister of Education is also the minister responsible for women's issues, I look forward to hearing her announce the mandated women's studies course in Ontario high schools at some point. That's one of the ways we can create a culture of respect for women, by taking their concerns and contributions seriously and giving them the permanent profile they deserve.

Sexual assault centres in Ontario, like the one in Hamilton and area, very much need additional funding to work with women from our diverse communities, reaching out in their own languages to help them deal with sexual abuse and assault. Hamilton is the third-largest immigrant-receiving community in Canada. We need to remove some of the financial barriers that prevent cities like mine from offering services to their diverse communities.

Governments can't do enough and aren't doing enough on this priority file, but I know that today we're all recommitting to making sure that we increase the interest and the attention we pay to this most serious issue. It's our children, it's our daughters, it's our nieces, and it's our nephews and our sons whom this issue deals with every single day, in our communities, in our schools, in our workplaces, in our dances and in places where young people gather. It's unacceptable.

We know that women's groups have long called for more action. We know that coroner's juries have long called for more action. I'm pleased to be here today, knowing that every one of the members sitting in this Legislature is committed to ending sexual violence in Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise to note that Grand Chief Stan Louttit of Mushkegowuk tribal council is here among us in the east gallery, and somewhere behind him is Chief Leo Friday from the community of Kashechewan.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. You've had a lot to say about the impact of large class sizes on the quality of education. We see evidence emerging now in many places suggesting that the result of your government's policies is much larger class sizes in grades 4 to 8, and things like the elimination of music rooms and people being put into

basement classrooms. What do you propose to do about these exploding class sizes in grades 4 to 8 that are happening on your watch? How does this qualify as turning the corner, to use the words you used in your statement today, for those kids and those families who are in these exploding classes in the upper grades?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm glad to receive the question. We are very much committed to our plan to get class sizes down in the early years, from JK through to grade 3. The reason we're doing that is because we think it's really important, particularly in those tender years, to ensure that children have more individual attention so that they can get the necessary support to develop better success, not only during those years but we have learned that if children can experience real success in those years, they are more likely to continue to experience that throughout their learning, through the rest of elementary school, secondary education, training, college and university. That's why we are so focused on that.

To respond directly to the leader of the official opposition, we are getting those class sizes down by providing new teachers in those particular years. This is not something that's coming at the expense of classes and class sizes in the rest of our elementary and secondary schools. We are very much devoted to doing this in a way that does not compromise the quality of education in the other years.

Mr. Tory: An article, for example, in the National Post this morning confirms what many people have been saying. I ran into it at the door with a teacher in the Danforth by-election, who said, "There's absolutely no question." She talked about her own experience, where the class sizes in the upper grades of her school are going up.

We have a letter from a Toronto father by the name of Steve—he didn't want his last name used in the House. He's written to us about his daughter going into grade 6 this year. He says there will be a combined grades 5 and 6 class with 36 kids per class, plus an additional three to four special-needs kids for half the day. As a result, his daughter will be sharing a class with 40 other students. So we've got this bulking up of the upper grades because of, or connected to, or unconnected to—but the bottom line is it's going on—your policies of your government.

Do you believe it is fair to have average smaller class sizes—and, of course, you always use that word "average"—in the lower grades and achieve that by punishing the students in the higher grades by having their class sizes going up and up and up? Do you think that's fair? Is that what you intended with this policy?

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Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, we're not talking about averages in this government. That's something that was part of the lexicon under the previous government. We're talking about a cap of 20% on class sizes from JK to grade 3. Some 70% of our students are now in smaller classes. We have hired 2,400 new teachers so far to get the class sizes down. This is all about reducing class sizes

in a way that does not compromise class size or the quality of education we're delivering throughout the rest of publicly funded education.

This is an important initiative on our part. It has to do with ensuring that children in the early years—from the ages of four through to eight, I believe it is, in grade 3—have the opportunities they need to get individual attention so that they can succeed, especially when it comes to reading, writing and mathematics. This is not without its challenges, but we are determined to get the job done, and we're proud of the success we've made so far.

Mr. Tory: The question I asked, of course, was about the upper years and the fact that you are indeed robbing Peter to pay Paul here. You are achieving whatever you are achieving, average or otherwise, in terms of class sizes in the lower grades at the expense of those in the upper grades.

We see two things: One is the classes being cannibalized in the lower grades, where we have people now studying in basement classrooms where the teacher is barely able to stand up. We have music rooms being taken away so that those classes can be put there. Then we have the other question, which is what is the use of having a student in grade 3 at a low class size when what happens the next year is it's okay for them to go to a class of 40 students and that's suddenly all right for those kids in grade 4?

We asked your Minister of Education about this in estimates—what the facts are and what is going on in grades 4 through 8—and she refused to answer. I'm asking you, why are you insisting on massively forcing up the size of classes for grades 4 to 8? Why are you massively forcing up the class size in those upper grades?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think this is one those opportunities where it is worthwhile for members of this House and Ontarians to compare and contrast. Under the previous administration, they closed 503 public schools while 266 private schools opened up. We lost 24 million learning days as a result of the bickering and fighting. Some 430,000 high school students were deprived of an entire year of extracurricular activities. Test scores were stagnant and special-education students were largely ignored.

Let's see what's happened on our watch. Test scores are up. There are more books in our school libraries. More special-ed kids are getting the help they need, and we've hired, in both the elementary and secondary panels, 4,300 more teachers. Class sizes are coming down in the early grades. Dropout rates are coming down. Peace and stability are back. Arts, music and phys. ed. classes are back in. Guidance counsellors are back in. Student success teachers are in. Lead teachers in literacy and numeracy in our elementary schools are there for the first time. I ask Ontarians—

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

Mr. Tory: No answer on the question of exploding class sizes for grades 4 through 8, no answer whatsoever. Many other—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

TAXATION

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is again to the Premier. People who go to a bar to buy a drink presently pay the 7% GST, probably soon to be lowered, and a 10% provincial beverage tax. So the day after people sent you, with their income tax returns, hundreds of dollars in the McGuinty health tax that you said you would never bring in, if they wanted to go and have a drink to revive themselves from tax fatigue, you are now proposing in your legislation to add one more tax.

Can you confirm that the city of Toronto act enables the city to bring in yet another tax on drinks, that in addition to the GST, in addition to the 10% provincial beverage tax, you're going to allow another tax to be brought in by another level of government to tax a drink that a person might want to go and have?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Well, let me say that the Conservative Party and the government party have a different perspective on whether or not we can trust the people of Toronto to do what is right for the people of Toronto. The leader of the official opposition is saying that they are not to be trusted, that we have no idea what they're going to do, that they constitute a real risk to themselves.

We have brought forward legislation which recognizes that the people of Toronto, through their duly elected representatives, have certain rights that ought to be recognized and respected. This fundamentally, from my perspective, boils down to whether or not this government has confidence in the people of Toronto to do what is right for the city of Toronto. We on this side of the House have that confidence.

Mr. Tory: What the Leader of the Opposition is actually saying, I say to the Premier, is that people are paying enough tax, including on a drink. When they go to try and have a drink, or when tourists try to come and patronize our tourist and beverage establishments in Ontario, they are paying enough tax. That's what I'm saying.

I've heard from a great many people, as we have as members of the Legislature, people coming in here and giving us presentations on this bill that suggest that you should have addressed and should be addressing the provincial-municipal fiscal imbalance first; then, second, when it comes to the city of Toronto, asking if they might do a value-for-money audit of all the money they're presently taking in from taxpayers before you look at any new powers to tax drinks or anything else.

Would you consider putting aside these proposed powers to tax drinks and various other things until you have first addressed the provincial-municipal fiscal imbalance and until you've asked for a value-for-money audit of the city government, before you go having people raise taxes again? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am not prepared to do that, but I think there's another interesting opportunity today

to compare the financial position which the new Conservative federal government has inherited and the one that we inherited here at Queen's Park. Prime Minister Harper has been the beneficiary of good fiscal management, so he's swimming in cash. We were the beneficiaries of bad fiscal management, so we were drowning in deficit. If we had the opportunity to do so, we would proceed quickly to reverse the download that was imposed on Ontario municipalities by the previous government, but we're not in that position. We will continue to work with Ontario municipalities in a thoughtful and responsible way, working together so that we might overcome the challenges created by the previous Ontario Conservative government.

Mr. Tory: This, of course, coming from the man who has taken in \$6 billion in extra revenue from hard-working taxpayers and is still running a deficit of \$2.5 billion. There's good fiscal management for you.

This legislation, I say to the Premier, would allow the city to tax at will. They could tax anything from drinks to hotel rooms to theatre tickets. With struggling US tourism numbers and the dollar now at 90 cents, many people feel this will drown our hospitality industry and make it even tougher for them to keep the jobs that they have.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Minister of Health needs to come to order.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My question to the Premier is this: It's going to destroy and make even more difficult jobs in the hospitality industry, make it tougher for them to stay in business. Can you confirm that this power to tax drinks that's contained in the city of Toronto act will be a part of the new Municipal Act as well, so it will go province-wide and make life difficult not just for tourism operators, not just for taxpayers, not just for visitors to Toronto, but for visitors everywhere in the province, tourism operators and bar operators everywhere? Are you going to take it province-wide in the Municipal Act? Will you confirm that?

1500

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's pretty hard to figure out where my honourable colleague is coming from. First, he says that the people of Toronto cannot be trusted, and I'm trying to figure out whether he's running against me or Mayor Miller these days. He says the people of Toronto can't be trusted because they're going to make the wrong decision when it comes to accessing new taxation authority. Then he's asking me if I might ensure that all Ontarians have access to that same authority so that the ne'er-do-wells who apparently populate municipal councils throughout the province will also foist this upon their constituents.

Let me say that we start from a different premise on this side of the House. We think that the overwhelming majority of people in this province want their elected representatives to do, and that indeed those elected representatives want to do, the right thing for their people. I

have confidence that municipal councils, whether here in Toronto or elsewhere in Ontario, will carefully consider the issues before them and make the appropriate decisions that serve the best interests of the people they are privileged to represent. They see things differently. We're quite positive when it comes to these things.

HOSPITAL SECURITY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Expectant moms and dads across Ontario are worried about a recent attempted baby abduction at a Toronto hospital. Two women posing as volunteers walked into the maternity ward of Humber River Regional Hospital, snatched a baby, left the hospital and got away. Police and security officials were later able to make an arrest. Premier, how could this have happened at an Ontario hospital and what is the McGuinty government prepared to do to make sure it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It is of course an important question to Ontarians, and I had the chance to speak with the media about it a day or two ago. Ontario's hospitals, 152 of them in more than 200 locations across Ontario, are quite unique. They have been built differently, they've emerged differently and each one of them has community-based governance, which includes the responsibilities associated with the operation and provision of security. Accordingly, the primary responsibility here rests with the local hospital.

Our responsibilities are to work with them, to support them, to be of assistance and guidance. Accordingly, we've been working through the Ontario Hospital Association to lend any assistance to any Ontario hospitals that may feel the need to have their programs reviewed. The primary responsibility lands in each local community, where professional hospital administrators and a board that reflects the local community take responsibility for these actions. At the ministry, we take responsibility for working in support of them. These are the steps we've taken, and we'll always be there at their side to lend assistance when required.

Mr. Hampton: After the attempted abduction, Global television sent three reporters to three different hospitals to investigate what was happening. In each case, the reporters got into wards and very close to recently born children. I suspect the parents of infants in this province want to know that something real and concrete is going to be done about this. Can you tell us what specific steps and additional resources the McGuinty government is prepared to make available to hospitals to ensure this doesn't happen again?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: On the issue of additional resources, the budget of the Minister of Finance has provided about 600 million additional dollars to Ontario's hospitals. This is to support the priorities that they deter-

mine. We're all concerned with the circumstances that arose, both the original circumstance at Humber River Regional and those other occurrences. Accordingly, hospitals across Ontario will be—must be—reviewing their procedures to ensure the safety of patients who are there. Different hospitals in Ontario have already implemented much more onerous, if you will, security provisions. We're looking to the Ontario Hospital Association to share best practices with any hospitals that may require assistance.

I accept the honourable member's point that it's appropriate that everybody who has the obligation, responsibility and privilege of running a hospital in Ontario do so in a fashion that affords the greatest degree of protection possible for our patients. Accordingly, it's appropriate to expect that across the health care system people are reviewing their procedures. As I said in my earlier answer, the ministry stands alongside them as a partner, willing to assist as required, and in our partnership with the OHA as well.

Mr. Hampton: I think that if you are parents of a newborn, the prospect of having your infant child abducted has to be just about the worst nightmare someone could have. There are a couple of things the McGuinty government could do. You promised 8,000 new, additional nurses. You're not there yet. In fact, you're not even close. That's one thing: Ensure there are more caregivers in our hospitals to look after patients, especially patients like these who can't look after themselves.

Some hospitals have been able to afford electronic warning systems, where if someone tries to snatch an infant child, an alarm goes off and the doors lock. Is the McGuinty government prepared to ensure that both of those things happen in our hospitals to ensure that no parents have to face this kind of terrible situation?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I would happily remind the honourable member that he perhaps should appropriately preface his questions about nurses by a candid acknowledgement that during the time he had the privilege of serving, 2,944 fewer nurses found employment in Ontario. And according to Doris Grinspun, the executive director of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, we've brought at least 4,500 nurses to the fore in practice in the province of Ontario. This is something that we should be proud of.

I do feel very much like it's appropriate to ask each and every hospital to take responsibility for appropriate security provisions in their hospital. They're very, very different across the province of Ontario. There is no one-size solution. As I've said twice now, it's our responsibility to work alongside our partner hospitals, to use the Ontario Hospital Association to assist in the dissemination of best practices, to lend any assistance that's required to any hospital that feels that its procedures might be inadequate. And of course, based on the circumstances, everybody would appropriately be reviewing those procedures to make sure those little itty-bitty babies entrusted to our care—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, Adeline Levine is a 91-year-old senior. She lives at Fairhaven long-term-care home in Peterborough. Yesterday, her meal plan at the home consisted of cereal in the morning, soup for lunch, and for dinner, a chicken leg with red cabbage. Our seniors deserve dignity, but under your government the daily food budget for seniors in long-term-care homes has been frozen at \$5.34 a day. That's less than the \$10 a day a prisoner incarcerated in an Ontario jail receives. Premier, when are you going to keep your promises so that seniors living in long-term-care homes can eat healthy food?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Of course we take very, very seriously the responsibilities of providing very good quality long-term care to our residents. There are 618 long-term-care homes in Ontario that are providing care to approximately 75,000 of our most vulnerable citizens. Accordingly, our government has invested an additional \$740 million in the operation of long-term care since our government has enjoyed the privilege of being government in Ontario.

Obviously, we make sure that professional services associated with long-term care, such as diet, are appropriate for patients. If there are concerns in an individual case with respect to the quality of service, we've worked very hard to create a 1-800 action line that is responded to immediately. I think that we have a lot of confidence in the people who are running long-term-care homes to provide appropriately, and look forward to offering more information in supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, Adeline Levine is the president of the Fairhaven resident and family advisory council. She's not alone in objecting to the food. She and 1,000 other seniors at Fairhaven signed a petition asking you for \$2 more per day for food. To quote her, "At least give us a fresh tomato. Celery. Anything." But your government responded by actually freezing the budget for seniors in long-term-care homes in Ontario. The budget is the same this year as it was last year.

Premier, seniors deserve dignity. When are you going to listen to seniors like Adeline Levine?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member's interest in the issue does not forgive the inaccuracies in his question. There has been an increase in the provision of support for long-term-care homes in each and every year that our government has had the privilege of being in government, and that pattern shall be expected to continue. The only thing that has been frozen for residents in the long-term-care sector has been increased copayments. I'm very proud that we've worked hard to fulfill the commitment that we made to residents in long-term care, not to mention the first increase in the comfort allowance in something like two decades.

1510

We are very pleased to acknowledge the necessity of providing a very high standard of care in our long-term-care homes. We believe that is the case across Ontario. In those circumstances where residents feel that the quality of care is inappropriate, we work very hard to make sure that, through our action line, any concerns are appropriately investigated and that that is done in a timely way.

I will look very hard for the opportunity to work with the people from Fairhaven and other long-term-care homes to see what we might be able to do to address the concerns that have been brought forward, because the only appropriate standard in long-term care is a very high standard.

Mr. Hampton: I want you to notice what the Minister of Health tried to pass off as an answer. He said, yes, there's been an increase in personal care and support of \$2.33 a day, and he tried to get people to believe that that was an increase in the food budget. In fact, it's not. The food budget has been flatlined at \$5.34 a day.

Sandra More has a family member in the special care unit at Fairhaven long-term-care home in Peterborough. She says the food situation at Fairhaven is desperate: "... residents sitting in soiled diapers, snacks consisting of sugary cookies and drinks made from artificial juice crystals. In three years, I have never seen a piece of fruit, a container of yogurt or any food being offered as a snack that had any nutritional value."

Seniors deserve dignity. In a year when the McGuinty government had \$3 billion of additional windfall revenue, why is the food budget for Ontario's seniors frozen at \$5.34—

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

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: If the honourable member is interested at all in accuracy, he'll read back his second question and my answer and he'll see that it is me who is working on a consistent basis.

I want to say that it is in recognition—

Mr. Hampton: Try that outside, George.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Did you say, "Take it outside"?

It is interesting to note that the honourable member, who has associated with his reputation in government only cuts, can't even acknowledge that in a year we made a 5.8% investment in the area with respect to long-term care.

Of course, we're obviously very oriented in a fashion to address the concerns that come from family, resident councils and residents themselves. Accordingly, as I said in my earlier answer, I'll look to address the circumstances that have been brought forward at Fairhaven and encourage people who are experiencing circumstances that they don't find satisfactory in the long-term-care sector to take advantage of the 1-800 action line, which is responded to very promptly and where we seek to get to the bottom of issues that are brought forward.

COMMITTEE WITNESSES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Minister of Education: During estimates committee on Tuesday, April 25, I requested that the chair and the executive director of the Ontario College of Teachers be requested to attend the committee and be available to respond to specific questions relating to the administration and operations of the college. Can you confirm for us today that these individuals have in fact been invited, that they will be attending and that they will be authorized by you to answer specific questions at the committee? Would you do that for us?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Education, minister responsible for women's issues): As the member opposite knows, he made quite an extensive list of individuals he'd like to have appear before the estimates committee. We've certainly had this list, and we would have appreciated having it sooner—for example, when you knew you would call this ministry, a week could have been better used. There are individuals who are out of town, but we're endeavouring to put everyone you've asked for before estimates. We actually have so much good news that we would like you to extend the hours of estimates specifically for the Ministry of Education.

Interjections.

Mr. Klees: It may be a joke to the minister that the estimates committee is a place for her to parade good-news stories. The purpose for estimates is for the official opposition and the third party to determine whether or not these agencies and commissions, and the government itself, are in fact accountable. It's for that reason that we've asked for these people to attend.

I want to ask the minister again: Will these people who have been requested to attend consider it the priority that they should, and will they be authorized by you, as minister, to specifically answer questions? That's my question to you.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I have to tell the member opposite this: We have endeavoured to put everyone that you've asked for before you at estimates committee. But you've made it very apparent, including the leader of your party, that while we are giving all of the answers as they're tabled in estimates—you can look at all of the budget numbers—you simply don't like the answers that you're hearing, because the contrast between our government in education and your government in education couldn't be more striking. We are investing \$2 billion in this education system since 2003. We have thousands more teachers there to support pupils in the classroom. We are helping build a system based on quality for the first time, receiving challenges because we dare the community to talk about quality in education. I'll see you at estimates this afternoon and continue to table more good news about this government on education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): A question for the Premier: Since the early 1990s, it has been the policy of successive Ontario governments to use best efforts to ensure that rail transit cars for the operations of Ontario cities—urban transit systems in Ontario cities—would be built in Thunder Bay. The strategy has been to ensure that Ontario taxpayers' money is used to create jobs in Ontario, is used to create economic activity in Ontario and is used to create a sustainable industry in Ontario.

My question is, why has the McGuinty government abandoned that policy? Why are \$200 million of Ontario taxpayers' money for city of Ottawa rail transit vehicles being used to build those cars in California, rather than in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Actually, we are very proud of our investment in public transit. We have made a record investment this year. We made a record investment last year. I'm very pleased to tell the honourable member that all the GO Transit contracts, in fact, went to Bombardier in Thunder Bay. The Ottawa situation—they went through a very fair and transparent process and, at the end of the day, they selected the trains that were most suitable to them in a very fair and transparent process. We have worked very closely with Bombardier over a period of time, and we have met them several times and, as I understand, the plant has been quite busy.

Mr. Hampton: The question was, why has the McGuinty government abandoned a good policy which ensured that rail transit vehicles for urban transit systems were built in Ontario by Ontario workers? Minister, you need to inform yourself. There are hundreds of workers laid off at that plant and hundreds more facing layoff. The strategy was to ensure that Ontario taxpayers' money would build a good industry in Ontario, and Ontario benefited because the workers and the company paid property taxes, sales tax, income tax, corporate taxes.

Can you tell the workers in Thunder Bay who are laid off, and the other workers who are facing layoff, why it's a good idea that \$200 million of Ontario taxpayers' money goes to California, while those Thunder Bay workers lose their jobs?

1520

Hon. Mr. Takhar: The Minister of Public Infrastructure, please.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I'm delighted to take the question. It's somewhat ironic that this is a member of a party who, when they were in government, sold the rolling stock of GO to a consortium in the Caribbean. So please, sir, I think we need some facts in this matter.

There was, of course, an expired memorandum of understanding between the province of Ontario and

Bombardier located in Thunder Bay. The city of Ottawa, responsible for the O-Train project, of which we are a partner for funding purposes, is not bound by that agreement. They have gone through a fair, open and transparent tendering process and invited all parties to come and bid. That is precisely what happened. In fact, the province is very supportive of the city of Ottawa undertaking this action. We are a funder to the tune of some \$200 million to expand light rail in Ontario. This is part of ReNew Ontario and Move Ontario, the McGuinty government's unprecedented investments in transit in this province.

EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is for the Minister of Education. I know from both my career in teaching and my role as a parent how important it is to engage parents in the education of their children. Studies have shown that increased parental involvement in education leads to improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, better behaviour and greater self-confidence for the students. In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, parents of students in Cornwall and Long Sault attend Littératie familiale workshops, which focus on literacy development. These workshops show parents the kinds of books that will best help their children learn to love reading. Minister, what other opportunities are there for parents to get involved in the education of their children?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Education, minister responsible for women's issues): I applaud this member, not only for his question but also for showing leadership in education. Our caucus is filled with a number of leaders in education, which I think helps us with good education policy. So congratulations to you.

I think he points out today a very integral part of what we are planning to do in tabling a parent initiative, a parent policy, that helps us reach out and have more parents involved in our school system. I think he tables a very good example of why it matters in assisting with basics like literacy and numeracy and how parents really can help.

I'm going to suggest that a lot of the surveying that's been done recently tells us that about 16% of the parent population actually say they're involved in the school system, yet if we were to ask parents, half of them at least would become involved if they were asked to be involved. That makes a challenge for us and for our partner school boards. We need parent involvement and we want to do that the right way by extending and reaching a hand out to them and showing them how they can be involved in their child's life in school.

Mr. Brownell: Both during Education Week and throughout the rest of the year, I congratulate our province's teachers and school administrators on the fine work they do in developing the young minds of the future, but I know they can't do it on their own. School councils are one of the best ways to get parental input

and assistance in the operations, events and concerns of our schools. These councils help to open the lines of communication between teachers and concerned parents. This communication and co-operation benefit students in the end. I understand that, as a former teacher. Minister, can you tell this House what your ministry is doing to support the important work of school councils?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Our new policy also includes a \$5.2-million investment in parent engagement in our school system, and that matters for absolutely every school in our communities across the province: \$500 for every parent council, to assist them in being creative and engaging all of the parents of all of the children. It also includes a \$1-million grant that helps some boards, some schools, reach out to parents who perhaps need a little bit more help getting involved in their students' lives in the classroom. It also talks about a near-million-dollar grant that is specifically for school boards to create parent involvement committees.

All of us need to be creative. We want parents involved. We want them involved in great ways that actually help their own children succeed in the school system. We look forward to this kind of parent engagement. I thank the member opposite for showing so much leadership on this issue.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Minister of Transportation: Last week I asked you questions about the detours around Caledonia, provincial Highway 6, and you did not answer. You've had six days now to pull some information together. There have been reports of collisions on these back roads. Minister, will you inform this House and the drivers in the Caledonia area what you're doing to facilitate the movement of vehicles, not only around the periphery of Caledonia but also within Caledonia?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): The minister of aboriginal affairs.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under standing order 36(e), "A minister to whom an oral question is directed may refer the question to another minister who is responsible for the subject matter to which the question relates." There is no relationship, Mr. Speaker. This was all dealing with transportation issues, and the minister responsible should respond and comply with the standing orders.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would ask the Minister of Transportation if he could answer the question. No? Excuse me. I'll take it under advisement.

I have to ask the Premier, in this case, whose responsibility this particular issue would be. If it is the responsibility of the minister of aboriginal affairs, then he could answer it.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Speaker, I think, in fairness, there is some overlap in connection with this matter, but

if the question is related to Caledonia, the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, has principal responsibility for that file.

The Deputy Speaker: Then to the minister of aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I say to the member that I understand, as we all do when we have responsibilities for our local constituencies, how disruptive this dispute obviously has been to your community and to people throughout your riding. Believe me, this government is working day and night to work at resolving this conflict. As you know, we have asked former Premier David Peterson to come in, and he is in meetings as we speak. He has been discussing all of this with all the principals in this dispute. I would assure the local member that the issue of the barricades on these road networks is his first job, his primary concern, and that is what he's working towards: resolving that for you.

Mr. Barrett: My supplementary is to the Minister of Transportation. There's a big problem with travellers and tourists from outside the area. As you can appreciate, they are having difficulties negotiating these roads across Haldimand county. I talked to representatives of the Port Dover Board of Trade and the Jarvis Board of Trade. Turkey Point tourism is impacted. Hagersville tourism is impacted. Minister of Transportation, what specific measures will you launch to help our area throughout both Haldimand and Norfolk to accommodate tourist traffic, cottagers and day trippers who go down to Lake Erie? This is your responsibility, Minister, and we ask for some leadership on this roads issue.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: First of all, I want to say to the member that this is a temporary situation.

Mr. Barrett: Wrong minister.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: If the member would listen to me, when it comes to the rerouting of traffic because of this type of temporary barricading, the OPP obviously outlined and delineated where these detours are to run. The member also knows that our government has given assistance to the municipality directly to help them with this and many of the other associated costs this dispute has caused them. I would say to the member, we are working with your community on this, on the issues of transportation, and the other disruptions that have been caused by this dispute.

Mr. Barrett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would request a late show response from the Minister of Transportation on the roads issue.

The Deputy Speaker: You may file that at the appropriate time. New question.

1530

COMPOSTING FACILITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Today the city of Guelph announced that it is shutting its organic processing plant because your government refused to

fund upgrades. Instead of focusing scarce resources on increasing its stellar 54% waste diversion rate, Guelph must now ship its organic waste out of the city, perhaps even out of the province. Minister, will you agree today to provide the city of Guelph with the \$2.5 million needed to rebuild its composting facility?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the issues facing the community in Guelph. I've had an opportunity to meet with the mayor and talk to her about the success of the wet-dry program, and I've indicated my support for the success of that program. But I'm sure the member opposite does understand that the Ministry of the Environment is not a funding ministry for infrastructure projects. In the supplementary, I'll ask the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who is responsible for the COMRIF program, which is the program that the community of Guelph applied to, to speak to the issues with respect to the application process under COMRIF.

Mr. Tabuns: Unlike the McGuinty government, the city of Guelph is a leader in diverting waste from landfills. After viewing Guelph's waste facility, your predecessor, Mrs. Dombrowsky, said, "Seeing your facility gives me the opportunity to say to those folks who are skeptical ... that I have been to Guelph and it is possible. I'm able to say, 'Look at what Guelph is doing.'"

Guelph needs \$2.5 million to keep that facility open and to keep leading Ontario in waste management. When is your government going to cut the cheque to allow that facility to continue operation?

Hon. Ms. Broten: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm happy to have the opportunity to clarify for the members in this House exactly what has happened with, the excellent facility that I toured when I was the Minister of the Environment. The city has made an application in intake 2 of the Canada-Ontario municipal infrastructure program. That program is a jointly funded program, a federal-provincial-municipal partnership, and there is a joint secretariat that independently adjudicates the applications that come in. The Guelph application was adjudicated. The criteria used are with respect to health and safety, with respect to value for dollar and with respect to provincial priority. Unfortunately, because there were 366 applications, only 88 in round 2 were able to be accommodated with the dollars that were available. The project in Guelph did not receive its funding.

I would encourage the municipality of Guelph, which has been so forward-thinking with respect to managing these important environmental issues, to continue—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question has been answered. New question.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Your announcement yesterday of our government's further expansion of home care, and our response to Elinor Caplan's review of home care, was something that means a lot to patients and personal support workers in my riding of Perth–Middlesex. I want you to know just how important it has been for more of my constituents to be able to receive care in their homes rather than in a hospital. The hospitals in my riding provides excellent care to my constituents, but some needs are better fulfilled at home and in the community, which leads me to end-of-life care.

I was reading through Cancer Care Ontario's cancer care quality index 2006 last week, and I was disturbed to read about the state of end-of-life care under the previous Tory government. I read that home care services for end-of-life clients fell by 3%, that rates of ER visits went up by 4% and homes visits by doctors fell by 3%.

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

Mr. Wilkinson: It just gives me more of a perspective on our end-of-life strategy that we announced. Minister, could you give us an update on that strategy?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It was with tremendous pride last year that I had the opportunity to outline our government's three-year, \$115-million investment in end-of-life care. What we're seeking to do is have the best integrated plan in all of Canada to provide end-of-life care to our loved ones. We want to be able to do that in the hospital environment, of course, but in addition we believe that there are tremendous opportunities to do more of that service in the place where people would most prefer to pass on, which is their home.

Our funding this year will see 1,100 additional people supported at home. We'll also see resources going to fund volunteer home hospices—those are volunteer-driven organizations that support people who are passing on in their homes—and of course funding for 30 residential hospices over the next three years.

Our strategy in the province of Ontario is viewed by other jurisdictions across the land as a leading one. We work very hard to develop a coordinated approach. I look forward to speaking more about residential hospices in my supplementary answer.

Mr. Wilkinson: Minister, that is impressive. The time people spend at the end of their lives, when they are dealing with a terminal illness, is a time to reflect and a time to be amongst loved ones. It's a time that should be spent in comfort and dignity. There are times when government has the opportunity to really touch people's lives, and I feel that this is one of them. I'd be very pleased to tell my constituents about this initiative.

I understand that you're especially proud of one component of our end-of-life strategy, and that is the residential hospice component. Can you tell me more about what residential hospices will mean for Ontarians?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: When we had the privilege of speaking with other people about the network of residential hospices that we're building in Ontario, they

were very enthusiastic about it. For any of us who have worked with a local group supporting a residential hospice, we know that they have so much love on offer to our communities that it's just one of the best investments we can make: to help to leverage love of community.

This year, four additional residential hospices will receive funding support. Those are the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County; Sakura House; VON Oxford, which was been built with the benefit of assistance from Toyota; the Niagara Hospice; and the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice. This is where I had the privilege of making an announcement earlier this year. This is on top of hospices that we're already funding in Waterloo, Burlington, Oakville, Toronto, Richmond Hill, Ottawa, Brantford, Milton, and very recently Roger's House, which is open in Ottawa.

Accordingly, we have a little more work to do. More hospices are coming to life across the province of Ontario. When this program matures in 2007-08, we'll have 30 residential hospices providing love to people at the end of their lives.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. During the last election campaign you promised, "As the province's largest employer, we will never use replacement workers.... A Dalton McGuinty government will lead by example by being an employer that respects employees." My question is, does the McGuinty government stand by that commitment to not use scab labour?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Yes, we do.

Mr. Hampton: Since April 21, workers at the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board have been in a labour dispute with their employer. Twenty-odd scabs—you call them replacement workers—have been hired by management to cross the picket line. Your government, the McGuinty government, appoints half the members of the board at the Ontario teachers' pension plan. In fact, you have veto authority over the appointment of the chair.

Premier, can you tell me why the McGuinty government is breaking its commitment to these workers? Why are you encouraging the use of scab labour?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's a bit of a stretch, frankly, on the part of the leader of the NDP. We don't run the pension plan. We continue to honour our commitment not to use replacement workers as a government. This is a matter that the leader of the NDP may want to take up with the pension plan board itself.

1540

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The recent announcement of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority has been great use for Ontarians. People across the greater Toronto

area have seen success in our government's dedication to fighting gridlock in the growing 905 region. This is no simple task, but it appears as though the GTTA promises to make the greater Toronto area more transit-friendly.

We all know that we have maintained your ministry's commitment to meeting the transit needs of the greater Toronto area. With the subway extension to my riding of Thornhill and now the creation of the GTTA, it is clear that the McGuinty government is dedicated to providing real, positive change.

Minister, a recent newspaper headline asked, "GTTA Too Good to be True?" What are some of the positives that Ontarians can expect to see from the GTTA?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Congestion is the major issue in the GTA and the Hamilton area. It affects our quality of life and it affects our environment. That's why our government has been making a record investment in transit and we are moving forward with the creation of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority.

The main function of the transportation authority will be to make sure that we have a long-term plan to address gridlock. We will also have a five-year capital plan and a five-year operating plan as we move forward.

The other issue is that we need to keep our goods and people moving, and that's why this is an important initiative, not just in the greater Toronto area but in the Hamilton area as well. We look forward to working on that.

Mr. Racco: Minister, my constituents certainly welcome the province's dedication to fighting gridlock in the region of York. As you know, the chairman and mayor for the region of York were present at the announcement. The government's commitment to expand the subway into my riding of Thornhill is clearly building opportunity for everyone in the greater Toronto area. It benefits Ontario, and more specifically the GTA, to expand the subway to the Vaughan Corporate Centre. From a financial standpoint, congestion is costing Ontarians over \$2 billion a year in economic loss. Not only will this extension allow thousands of people to travel easily, but it will also increase the standard of living in our great province.

Minister, considering that the city of Vaughan just yesterday released a study—Julian Fantino is the chair—where it proves that the biggest issues in Vaughan are transportation, at 16%, and health, at 5%, and considering that with the extension to the Vaughan Corporate Centre—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking his question. He has been a big advocate, actually, for the subway extension that we are undertaking. This is the first-ever project that will cross municipal boundaries, so we want to thank him for his advocacy on that project as well.

The biggest issue here is congestion, which actually occurred because the previous government neglected

funding for public transit for a very long time. I said in my speech yesterday that in 1995 and 1996 we used to spend \$660 million on public transit, and in 1999 and 2000 we were spending \$68 million. Then it went down further to about \$38 million. That's why we see so much congestion and gridlock on our highways. But we need to keep our goods and people moving, and we are making the right investment and the right decisions.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: You're probably aware of a rather big article in the Toronto Star this morning entitled, "Big-Box Showdown in Port Perry." In fact, it goes much further than that if you talk to the citizens of Port Perry; for instance, Doug Brown, who's with Shoppers Drug Mart, and local teacher Michael Steele, as well as the BIA members generally on the main street.

The downtown businesses work very hard at being customer-friendly and innovative. I might say that the Canadian retailer of the year actually has a business on the main street as well. They're concerned about the lack of any kind of direction in the context that we're in the middle of discussions of on Bill 51, which is a very tightly controlled Planning Act regulation.

Minister, do you have any advice to share with the municipality with respect to the big box development and the impacts on rural, small-town Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd like to thank the member for this question. We view Bill 51, which is the new Planning Act, as a very integral part of the overall development of this province. We feel it's a method whereby, in effect, councils will be given much greater authority as to what kind of development they would like to see in their municipalities. It also gives them much greater control in a number of different ways they simply didn't have before. There's also, of course, the provincial policy statement that is quite clear and direct as to where areas should grow, together with the growth plan that was announced by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

We, on this side the House, take the planning of Ontario, both at the provincial level and at the local level, very seriously. I do not have any specific advice for that particular situation. We in the ministry will certainly look at it, but we believe that Bill 51, together with the provincial policy statement, the greenbelt and the growth plan will go a long way to deal with the pressures of development in this province.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you for that rather uncomfortable response. I would say that most commenters on the bill, including our critic, have suggested quite the opposite to what you've just suggested here today. What they've said is that you're uploading the power to the ministry and downloading the responsibility to the municipality. But very specifically, it's not just this small town in Ontario; it's Clarington—a lot of small towns are

under the same pressure. They're going to consultants to look for advice. The advice is on the amount of commercial space per population, and there's no way of challenging these things. However, in Bill 51, there is a provision under section 2 that refers to the local appeal boards, and it's to make and design sustainable communities, in the general word of interpretation.

Minister, is there any mechanism by which the small businesses, the entrepreneurs of this province and of my community, can get the ministry or get someone to pay attention, or do they have to go the route of the Ontario Municipal Board to resolve this small-town Ontario problem?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As the member well knows, he's talking about a two-tier municipality. There are certain responsibilities at the upper level, the region of Durham, and they will have to look at their official plan. The implementation of that is done through the official plan of the local municipality. Obviously, it's very important for these two bodies to work together, together with the provincial policy statement that we've outlined. The new provisions in Bill 51 help this kind of situation. I would suggest to the member that he talk to the local council and to the planning staff at the regional level, so that this kind of situation can be dealt with in a very efficient and correct fashion.

We believe Bill 51 is something that will help the people of Ontario, that will help the communities in Ontario with a greater variety of tools that are required in the proper planning of our communities, which we all know is extremely important for the quality of life we all want to have in this province.

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. You might know that a particular business in the city of Timmins, called NorFab, has been working with your ministry for the better part of a year and a half now to get a permit for a highway entrance, something you would think is very simple in this province: to be able to get a permit to move a business. What has happened in this particular case is that the ministry has put up so many roadblocks and so many obstructions that the person who is trying to put the building in place has had to delay building the facility and has suffered a penalty from the company he was going to be working for, for \$150,000, plus, he's had to spend \$100,000 on legal fees and others to deal with getting your permit. He's now up to a \$250,000 of additional costs to deal with the highway entrance. Your ministry staff are putting all kinds of conditions on him. They're making it impossible for him to deal with it. I want to ask you today in this House, will you personally intervene with the ministry to make sure that Mr. Dutulion and NorFab do not have to continue down the process that now has lasted more than year?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): The number one priority is the safety of the highway and the safety of the people who drive on the

highway. We are working very closely with the company—I think it's NorFab, if I'm not wrong—and we will make sure we continue to work closely with them to address some of their issues regarding moving their business. The MTO staff, as far as I'm concerned, have been working very closely with them for the last few months.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for oral questions has expired.

1550

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I want to announce that, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here sent to me by the good folks at the long-term-care facility in Tillsonburg.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

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

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the United States government, through the western hemisphere travel initiative, is proposing that American citizens require a passport or single-purpose travel card to travel back and forth across the Canadian border; and

“Whereas a passport or single-purpose travel card would be an added expense, and the inconvenience of having to apply for and carry a new document would be a barrier to many visitors; and

“Whereas this will mean the loss of up to 3.5 million US visitors in Ontario, losses of \$700 million, and the loss of 7,000 jobs in ... Ontario ... by the end of 2008; and

“Whereas many of the northern border states in the United States have expressed similar concerns regarding the substantial economic impact of the implementation of this plan; and

“Whereas the safe and efficient movement of people across the border is vital to the economies of both of our countries;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the establishment of a bi-national group to consider alternatives to the proposed border requirements and inform Prime Minister Harper that his decision to not pursue this issue with the United States is ill-advised.”

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

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition. It reads as follows:

“We Demand Leadership in Land Dispute

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government was notified of this land issue over two years ago; and

“Whereas the standoff has been ongoing since February 28, 2006; and

“Whereas there has been no leadership from senior levels of government;

“We, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty Liberals start showing some real, consistent and timely leadership in dealing with the current standoff in Caledonia.”

I'm pleased to submit this on their behalf through Kristy.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce this petition signed by many residents in my riding, including Dave Molnar and Cathy Patrick. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), 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'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I want to thank Marilyn Ruttan and Kim Taylor of ReMax Wasaga Beach for sending me this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe-Grey;

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

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe-Grey.”

Obviously, I agree with the petition, and I've signed it.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which I'd like to read.

“Whereas improving job retention rates has a positive effect on developing valuable work skills, confidence in one's abilities and creating a greater economic foundation for the province; and

“Whereas JobsNow allows workers access to valuable resources such as job-matching services, pre-employment supports and up to 18 months of job retention and follow-up services;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the JobsNow program continues to be supported by all members of the House; and that we work together to ensure that workers on social assistance find a meaningful and long-term solution to meeting their employment goals.”

This is a good petition. It is signed. I concur, and I will affix my signature to it as well.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature to this petition, and I’m pleased to give it to Philippe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being 4 o’clock, I am required, pursuant to standing order 30(b), to call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 81, An Act to implement 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 81, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2006, I am now required to put the question :

On April 13, 2006, Mr. Duncan moved second reading of Bill 81, An Act to implement 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1559 to 1609.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brotten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craiton, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	Tory, John
Jackson, Cameron	O’Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 56; the nays are 24.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2006, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

PROVINCIAL PARKS AND
CONSERVATION RESERVES ACT, 2006LOI DE 2006 SUR LES PARCS
PROVINCIAUX ET LES RÉSERVES
DE CONSERVATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 24, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 11, An Act to enact the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2005, repeal the Provincial Parks Act and the Wilderness Areas Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 11, Loi édictant la Loi de 2005 sur les parcs provinciaux et les réserves de conservation, abrogeant la Loi sur les parcs provinciaux et la Loi sur la protection des régions sauvages et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d’autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): When last this bill was before us, it was questions and comments of Mr. Marchese. I don’t see him in the House. Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): It's certainly a pleasure to speak in support of Bill 11, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2005. This is actually a long-awaited review of our provincial parks legislation. As a matter of fact, it's the first review that we've done in over 50 years. The bill is intended to enhance the protection of our provincial parks. This bill will consolidate a number of bills into one act and will set a legislative direction for our policies around provincial parks. It is based on existing policies that we now have.

I know that members who have provincial or even national parks and conservation areas in their ridings will understand when I say that it's one of the greatest things that you can have in a riding. In my riding, I have the Pinery Provincial Park, which is one of the oldest provincial parks in the province and is along Lake Huron. We do a lot of activities in that park, all of them of a low impact to nature. We have camping and nature trails that we participate in. We have the wonderful sand dunes that lie along the lake and allow our constituents and visitors to walk through the dunes. We also have nature-based recreation and education facilities there.

My first experience with the Pinery park was as a child when my parents took us there to go camping. I'm the oldest of 10 kids. It might seem strange that farm kids would go to a provincial park to go camping. You'd think we would try to do something a little bit more urban-oriented and we would want to see the great world out there, but we found that that's exactly what we did see when we got to the Pinery park. As I said, I'm the oldest of 10. Camping was one of the things that my parents could afford to do. My dad was a farm equipment dealer, and the summertime of course was his busiest season. That meant he had to go to work. My mom and my brothers and sisters would be camping while he would go to work during the day and then he would return at night.

One of the great things we enjoyed was campfires. We would sit around the campfire with all my brothers and sisters and have singsongs. My dad played the accordion, which was always a great instrument at a campfire. Actually, I learned to play the accordion from my dad, and I continue to do that with my own children and grandchildren. It seems like an odd thing to do around a campfire, but it's a lot of fun.

We had a lot of adventures as kids. Like I said, it was an economical holiday, but it also allowed us to learn things about nature that we didn't necessarily experience on the farm. We carry on that tradition now. We go with our friends. We went from camping with my parents—of course once you camp, you fall in love with that kind of environment. It's the type of thing you want to continue to do. So as I got into my teenage years, we would go camping at the Pinery with other teenagers. We would give the enforcement officers a bit of a run, but we had fun with them too.

From there, I got my husband involved in camping. He wasn't of that nature, but he became a camper once we started to date, and our friends became part of that.

Then we would do things like go biking along the trails. That's one of the great things we can do in a provincial park as well, and in a conservation area. From there, after getting married, we decided to do much the same sort of thing and we took our children camping. In the early days, we camped with our friends and their children, and we camped in tents. We were still camping in tents and in sleeping bags. I have five children, and we had our system set up where we would go with my sister and her seven kids, and friends of ours with their number of kids, and we would create a circle. We would have lots all together, and we would put the tables in the centre.

There was a routine about camping with kids. In the mornings, the dads would take the kids out for walks after breakfast while moms did the cleaning up and made the beds, as you might say, with the sleeping bags inside the tents. We would prepare the meals for lunch and we would clean up after breakfast. Then we would take our children and do activities such as going swimming in the lake or going on the nature trails. We would do our lunch. Actually, it was a lot of work. For most of the young moms it was really a lot of work to do this, but it was a great adventure for our kids, so much so that now we continue to camp—of course not many in tents anymore. I can't really say I like sleeping on the ground anymore. I'm getting a little too old for that. My husband and I have a fifth wheel, and we enjoy the amenities of this small travelling apartment that we now have. But our children and our grandchildren come camping with us and we do much the same sort of things.

We still go camping very close to home. We're only 20 minutes away from home. The reason for doing that is because my husband and a number of our friends are farmers, and this is the way we can accommodate our children, have a vacation with them and still be able to have our husbands go back and forth to the farm. So they go in the mornings, they do their chores and then they come back and enjoy the rest of the day's activities.

We continue to do things such as have campfires. We continue to take our kids on bike rides and walks through the nature trails, and we have our singsongs and we do our campfires. We do things such as dry camping. For people who are not campers, who are not familiar with camping, dry camping means that you have no hydro on the site, no sewers. You may have a central site for water where you collect your water in a container, and you do your dishes from this container. As well, you do your cooking on a campfire and on a cookstove. When you're used to a lot of amenities, for some people it would seem an awful lot of work, but it's also a very enjoyable time. It gives you a chance to talk to your children, to get to know your children and to get to know your friends on a very intimate basis again.

1620

One of the things that also happens in Pinery Provincial Park, and is something I'm very proud of, is a group called the Friends of Pinery Park. The friends of the Pinery are a group of people who are very devoted to keeping the Pinery going. They do things such as fund-

raising. They have a centre, called the Visitor Centre, where they do a lot of their fundraising. They do a lot of education-type activities there. I've been told that this year the Visitor Centre won't be opening very soon because they have discovered mould there, but I am really hoping that will be cleared up very quickly because, as I said, the friends of the Pinery are a group of people who have dedicated themselves to keeping the Pinery as an ecological centre, and they continue to work.

One of the things that's provided for in this bill under subsection 9(6) is around transparency. Groups like the friends of the Pinery are always interested in how management plans work for such a facility and something such as section 9 is of great interest to them. I know they would appreciate the fact that section 9 requires at least one opportunity for public consultation during development of a management plan. That's where groups like the friends of the Pinery have a great opportunity to get involved in what is going to happen in the future to their park.

Bill 11 will make ecological integrity a priority, and certainly in the Pinery that is very important. Ironically, it's called the Pinery because pine trees were deliberately planted there—you can see them in the rows, very nicely done—but unfortunately they're not native to our area. So in order to create the ecological integrity that's necessary, we have a plan whereby we are replacing those pine trees with species that are native to that area. What that means is that we have opportunities—I attended last year with my granddaughter Christina and her class. Her class took the opportunity to go to the Pinery. While they were there, they had a chance to walk through and see nature and, of course, the naturalists identified for them the flora and fauna they were looking at. What they also did while they were there was to cut down some of the pine trees that are not native to this area. Again, the intent is to restore the ecological integrity of the park. So the community is getting involved in doing this.

Years ago, one of the other things that happened in the Pinery was an overpopulation of deer. Of course, deer going into the park are protected there. What happened was that they no longer had a natural enemy and were so overpopulated that the animals were starting to starve. We could have done something such as provided hay, and it was done, but what that does is domesticate them and that's not what we wanted to do. We wanted the deer to stay wild. So what we had to do was have a controlled hunt. What that meant was that our First Nations groups in the Kettle Point, Ipperwash and Stony Point areas were given an opportunity to do a bow-and-arrow hunt to thin the population enough so that the deer that are there will survive on the food sources that are there. It also meant the deer weren't going to destroy the natural fauna, because of course when they're starving they will eat anything they can find, and they were doing damage to the local native species. We needed to get that stopped and we've done that through these bow-and-arrow hunts.

What our children do now and what we want to do with this bill is protect the parks for future generations.

That's very important to us. I want future generations such as my grandchildren to have the same opportunities to get to know the parks, to do the bike rides, to go through the walks and the nature trails, to walk over the sand dunes and to see the lake in the same way that I did, that my parents did and that their parents did. Through Bill 11, we are able to protect the integrity of our natural parks and our conservation areas.

What has happened over the years that I've also noticed is that when my parents took us to the park when I was a child, people were cutting the lawns a bit, the lots that we camped in were cut, and there was an attempt to eradicate the poison ivy. We tried to make it very domestic, in a sense. That has stopped now, and I think it's a great thing. Now when you go camping at the Pinery, the grass is growing; the natural fauna, the weeds, are there again. The flowers are there again. We have reverted it to the natural state that it should have been in in the first place. So we're now seeing the parks as an integral part of the nature that we have in our province, and we want to preserve that. The bill does exactly that.

Another thing that I think we see as an advantage and why we should continue to work towards protecting our parks is not only for our future generations and the education of our own children, but there's an entire industry around ecotourism. I noticed over the years that more and more people travel to see sights such as our natural parks. There's a real interest in experiencing nature as it is and as it should be. So there's also an industry for my community and my riding that I feel will benefit all of us.

As I said, in supporting this bill, I find that we have an opportunity here to protect our parks, to consolidate the varying pieces of legislation that impact on our parks and our conservation areas, and we will be able to move forward in a way that will enhance those communities that have provincial parks in them, and conservation areas as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech by the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. She spent quite a bit of time talking about her family's experience with Pinery Provincial Park, I think it was, and also what sound like fond memories of family camping trips. I'm pleased to hear that she's enjoying the parks.

The last few years, I've had some personal experience as well: paddling down the French River out to Georgian Bay with my son Winston, and his friend and friend's father; and then, last year, being up in the Temagami area, the Lady Evelyn-Temagami-Obabika area. This year, we have big plans to paddle down the Spanish River, taking the train north of Sudbury.

I just wanted to give a brief history of why this bill has come about. There hadn't been a review of the Provincial Parks Act since 1954. There were some requests around 2001, one by the Wildlands League, for a review of the Provincial Parks Act, and there was also a recommendation from the Lands for Life round table back in

1998, recommendation number 10, which was that “MNR should carry out a broad public review of the Provincial Parks Act and the policies governing provincial parks and in particular, policies on permitted uses.” The PC government of the time responded by saying, “MNR accepts this recommendation in principle. The board of Ontario Parks will be consulted on the concept of a review of the ecological basis of parks and protected areas system, the relationship of protected areas to the larger landscape and the policies of the parks system, and how this review might be carried out.”

In terms of Bill 11, that’s a bit of history. I think there’s nothing too earth-shattering. The bill is more or less bringing into legislation a lot of policies and regulations that are currently the status quo, and we will be supporting this bill on second reading and looking forward to it going to committee so that anyone who does have concerns will be able to raise them.

In particular, I have had people e-mailing me wondering about motorized use in wilderness parks. Bill 11 will not open up wilderness parks to motorized use.

1630

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I wanted to make a few comments on the remarks by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I’ve actually been to Pinery Provincial Park; part of my youth included spending some time in that park. It’s interesting how the member related to her family’s experience with that particular park. That’s certainly something many of us can agree with. I know that my family was very much involved in camping as I was growing up. That was my opportunity as a young person, as a child in fact, to experience the wonders of our natural parks and provincial parks, and then of course, after becoming a city councillor in the city of Hamilton, acknowledging the fact that our community parks are something that people have a great passion for and a great sense of protection for. It’s important to acknowledge that and to take responsibility as legislators for the protection of those parks and for the framework around which we protect those parks to be updated over time.

I think the member raised some interesting comments around preservation and protection and taking some of our parks from where they perhaps have degraded and upgrading them to current standards and standards that are appropriate in terms of protection of their importance in our history and in our future.

I want to mention that the member didn’t touch on one thing that we’ve raised as a concern and hope we’ll see addressed, perhaps in the committee process. Perhaps she might in her response address the issue of the minister’s ability to take 2% of the park and designate it for a different use. Perhaps she’d like to respond to that, because it’s something that I’m concerned about and I know others are as well.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance and opportunity to speak in

support of Bill 11. I was listening to the personal experience of the honourable member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex when she used to go to the park with her family, how much they enjoyed nature and the environment around her location. She mentioned that beautiful area that’s dear to my heart, the Pioneer—

Ms. Horwath: Pinery.

Mr. Ramal: Yes, Pinery. I thought I was talking about Pioneer Village. We have one also in London, in Fanshawe Park, which is beautiful too.

The Pinery is a beautiful location, a place which attracts thousands and thousands of people every year. I want to tell the people of the province of Ontario that this bill is not going to change the status quo. As a matter of fact, it’s going to enhance the ability of the government to protect whatever we have. It’s very important to us. So I agree with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who said it’s very important for all of us to work together to protect our natural locations, parks and conservation areas. Many people of this province, when they have spare time, when they want to go on vacation and don’t have much money, can go to the park to relax, enjoy nature, listen to the music of the water, of the birds, and also the music of the trees. By the way, everything in this life has beautiful music, and no music is better than the natural music that comes from nature.

It’s very important for all of us to work together to protect and enhance our beautiful nature in this province, especially the parks and the conservation areas. I want to congratulate the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for her explanation and eloquent speech in support of this bill.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to respond. The legislation: There certainly are a lot of questions that need to be answered. First of all, I think one of the prudent things to do would be to complete the management plans for all the parks in the province of Ontario. Currently there are a number of parks that do not have management plans in place, and I think that the current government should look at that.

With regard to the third party’s inquiry about the 2%, I can give some insight into that. Effectively what happens—and it works both ways. For example, if there’s a mining site that takes place that potentially could be moved into a park, that will allow them to take that mining site, expand it into the park, yet take in 2% from another area. On the other side of that coin, if there’s a protected area, if there is a bog that all of a sudden they feel should be included in that park, this will allow them to expand the park into that bog to protect that significant area and move another 2% out.

There are some significant problems with the legislation that need to be addressed. Currently, the addition of the words “industrial uses” has caused some real concern as to what actually an industrial use is. It doesn’t define it in the legislation, although most people here, if they’ve read the legislation, would see that the definition of a protected area, by world classification, is threefold: no commercial logging, no mineral development and

prospecting, and no new hydro. What the legislation does, though, is specifically state that existing hydro generation can take place. The area of concern would be, and I caution the government to look into it, if there are large numbers of dams that have potential usage for hydro development at future times—there's the development of technology such as low-flow development—this may potentially eliminate the opportunity to use those dams in those park sites because they're not currently producing electricity. That should be something.

Also, the oil and gas aspect: It says the old sites can continue. But I see my time is done.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. You have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Van Bommel: I want, first of all, to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his comments. He lives in a wonderful area of the province as well. To the members for Hamilton East, London–Fanshawe and Oshawa, I think one of the things we all agree on is that we have an opportunity here to protect something for future generations. The member for Hamilton East talked about going as a child, and I think all of us have experienced this, and we understand there's an opportunity here to teach our children respect for nature. That's very valuable. We have an opportunity to protect that so our children will learn what nature really is and why it needs to be protected.

The member for Oshawa talked about management plans and said there were parks and conservation areas that were in need of finishing their management plans. In the bill, under section 9, it says that “The minister shall ensure that the ministry prepare a management direction that applies to each provincial park and conservation reserve,

“(a) by the fifth anniversary of the day this section is proclaimed in force....”

So the intent of this legislation is to make sure that those management plans are completed, that they are in place and that we have them to lean back on, because it is important. I think we all need to have a clear indication and a clear plan of where these parks are going to be and how we will protect them, and the kinds of implementation and types of activities that would occur in those parks, because we have varying different classifications of parks. But it needs to be clearly spelled out for everyone what the intent is.

I want to say thank you to all the members for their response to my debate on this. I look forward to further debate on this issue.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased today to be able to join in the debate on Bill 11, Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006. I would like to make the Chair aware that I will share my 20 minutes with the member from Oshawa, if that's okay.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Ottawa or Oshawa?

Ms. Scott: Oshawa. Thank you, member for Ottawa.

This is certainly a bill that's been discussed at length. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka led off for the PC Party discussion of the bill. “The bill enacts the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2005, repeals The Algonquin Provincial Park Extension Act, 1960-61, the Provincial Parks Act and the Wilderness Areas Act and makes consequential amendments to other statutes.”

There is a history of great provincial parks in Ontario. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex shared with us her family experiences and the importance that brings to educating our young people and why we want to preserve provincial parks. Certainly the history of the parks stretches over 100 years. The PC Party played an instrumental part in that history: in 1913, the Provincial Parks Act. In 1954 we had eight provincial parks, and by 1960 we were up to 72 provincial parks in Ontario, hosting over five million visitors annually. It's important to note that.

1640

I have the great opportunity to represent the riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, which is a wonderful area for parks, for outdoor activities. We like to share that with people who don't have the opportunity to live in such a treasured part of the province as we have.

Ontarians understand and welcome the value of protecting ecologically important sites and accessing the natural beauty of the landscape. The Kawartha Highlands Signature Site in part of my riding encompasses 37,587 hectares and is the largest park in Ontario south of Algonquin Park. My riding and the ridings of Parry Sound–Muskoka and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke all touch the boundaries of Algonquin Park.

All the local stakeholders recognize the protection of ecological integrity and the nature-first approach to the Kawartha Highlands as an essential, overriding priority. The Kawartha Highlands Signature Site did an extensive consultation; 1997 to 2003 was when the origins of that park occurred—the round tables, the recommendations with the Bottle Creek ANSI, or area of natural and scientific interest, and the Long Lake Barrens. They all recommended that a much larger area surrounding these protected areas be an enhanced management area.

We had the local municipalities, at the time the Burleigh Anstruther Chandos Cottagers' Association, now the North Kawartha Lakes Association, involved in the consultation project; the township of North Kawartha and then Galway–Cavendish and Harvey, which it also touches on. That's where one third of the protected area lies. They participated in very long discussions with stakeholder groups. It was the previous member of provincial Parliament from the riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Chris Hodgson, who was in the gallery today and is here this evening at Queen's Park, who worked to reach consensus on all appropriate levels of protection and traditional use of this area. Chris Hodgson undertook the focus discussion with groups and represented a broad range of perspectives in order to come to general agreement for the future of this site. I want to

bring that up and the fact that the Kawartha Highlands Management Advisory Board has done a great job. It is in need of some more members. I always mention to the Minister of Natural Resources that they need to have some more members on their advisory board so they can go forth with the important work that they've been designated to do.

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: There are some. They're not full, though, Jeff.

I appreciate the member from Peterborough. He and I have been trying to fully complement the board there so that it can move on and have a quorum and proceed accordingly.

Some stakeholders have presented some concerns on Bill 11, and I think this is why we need to move it on to committee, to have some possible amendments made so we can get it right. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society has concerns with this legislation. They'd like to see the concept of ecological integrity maintained throughout the entire act. They're concerned that Bill 11 is silent on treaty rights of aboriginal peoples, and it needs to clearly state how municipalities should engage in the public process, which is consistent with the Environmental Bill of Rights of 1993. As I mentioned before, the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site is a good example of a consultation process that went on there.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, which represents 81,000 members in 640 clubs across Ontario, is active in conservation of both wildlife resources and the ecosystems that support them. More than seven million Ontarians participate annually in wildlife-related activities, and they recognize the economic advantages provided by these activities. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters has many concerns with this legislation, and specifies that its concerns are with the access to conservation areas. The Ontario Mining Association, which is here tonight, is concerned with buffer zones around the parks and the definitions of these zones, how big they might be and whether the Ontario Mining Association would be limited to finding new mines in order to carry out their work.

First Nations are concerned with this legislation, more in the lack of consultation and their roles in the creation and planning of the management of parks and conservation areas.

Independent landowners such as cottagers within existing parks are concerned about existing land use and permits. They have a legitimate concern and want to know what will happen to their property and their lifestyle. I know that's been mentioned by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, but also the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site is a combination of recreational uses and private landowners. Access roads are a big discussion there and how they're going to be able to continue to get in and out of their properties: Will there be any roads built within the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site? We've a lot of hurdles to get over yet, but the intent is appropriate.

There were over 65,000 respondents when Lands for Life process was put into play. I think we're using that as an example of why we need some more consultation process in respect to this act.

In addition to the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, I have over eight protected parks and conservation areas, and I want to ensure that any legislation affecting the management and protection of these parks is appropriate and sustainable.

In Bill 11, for example, recreation is excluded from the planning and management principles, despite the fact that MNR planning and policy for conservation reserves and parks includes recreation. Is this an oversight, or was there a communications problem within the government bureaucracy? Things like that need to be sorted out.

I want to speak about the Frost Centre and the sudden closure of the Frost Centre that occurred in my riding in July 2004. That centre had been in operation since 1921. In 1945, it was for natural resource management and became a ranger school at that time. Years later, when the University of Toronto grads completed Canada's foremost forestry school, the veterans returned to that. It was named the Frost Centre after the former Premier in 1974. Of course, Premier Leslie Frost represented the riding of Victoria–Haliburton at that time. It's a great name.

When that sudden closure happened—that was an education tool for outdoor education that we had there—people from all across the province and the country commented on the fact that they had been there and the valuable tool that was in educating their young people. The community got behind it with petitions with over 10,000 signatures, and we engaged in the process. I know the member from Peterborough was involved. The Frost committee was founded, and that committee has done great work. The requests for proposals are under study now. The Frost committee working group is still engaged with that process, which again is an example after which the government could pattern other models of consultation. They went out and did a lot of consultation with the public and business. They realized there had to be a responsible business plan and how it would fit the needs of the area. Thus, we have some parties interested in possibly reopening the Frost Centre in some capacity.

We're waiting for the government's decision on that. We hope it's positive. Certainly in the area that I represent, in the Haliburton region it's the second most economic income in the province of Ontario. It's a great economic engine up there, as well as the education tool that existed as the outdoor education component of it and was used by many schools and different school boards, universities and colleges. We hope the government is positive with that because this is all toward the preservation of what we want to see in Ontario. We want to enjoy our outdoors. We have to have a balance of enjoying it, living there and educating our people.

With that, I know the member from Oshawa wanted to comment on this bill. I appreciate the time I've been

allowed to speak to it and look forward to the fact that it will be going to committee for further comment and maybe some amendments that will make it even stronger.

The Acting Speaker: I now recognize the member for Oshawa.

1650

Mr. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 11, An Act to enact the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2005 repeal the Provincial Parks Act and the Wilderness Areas Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts.

Moving forward, there's an area that probably causes concern on both sides of this issue, and that is access to and utilization of Ontario's resources and those who are trying to protect them in separate fashions. I must say that the minister is certainly taking a bold step in trying to appease those sides. There are a number of issues in this area that need to be specifically addressed, though.

When you look at the parks act, for example, as I mentioned to the government member who was speaking earlier in regard to this, it specifically discusses certain aspects of the management direction. Yes, it specifically states that within a five-year period you have to have a management—it doesn't say "plan," it says "management direction." If she had looked further down at clause 9(3)(c), it "may include a management statement or a management plan." What that effectively means is that a simple statement of the intent of direction or the intent to review the park or the intent to protect the area or the intent to continue with the current process should be an acceptable management direction on behalf of the minister. It doesn't really give a full plan and lay it out, as listed, for a 20-year period, in clause 9(3)(b), where all these subsections are, where it talks about a 20-year plan.

Part of the other aspect is the huge cost load on the ministry. In order to come up with these plans, they have to go into each park and effectively look at the current growth plan for the forest or the bogs or whatever forest and fauna are in that area, and how they're going to manage or potentially manage those issues for a 20-year period. Some of the areas will certainly need review and some of the areas need to be discussed, as I hope to bring forward here.

A lot of people really don't know a simple question: What's the largest provincial park in Ontario?

Interjection.

Mr. Ouellette: No, it's not Algonquin; it's Polar Bear Provincial Park. Polar Bear Provincial Park is the largest park in Ontario.

The addition of industrial uses in the definition of a protected area is very concerning as to what that means. They've included the world-recognized definition of a protected area, and Ontario, through our government, achieved those requirements of the number of spaces as a percentage of the land mass. What is the definition? The definition is: no commercial logging, no new mineral development, no mines, no prospecting, no staking of claims and no new hydro development. Even in here, it specifically states that current hydro development in a protected area continue on.

The area I have concern with, that specific aspect of the legislation, is that in a number of the parks there are a number of dams or water-retention facilities that currently may not be being utilized for hydro generation. The dams are there; they're holding back the water. But if the government were to look at it, potentially, in the future, with low-flow development, they could be producing up to five megas. I know there were a number of inquiries at other facilities that had to be upgraded, retrofitted or reconstructed that potentially had the opportunity for hydro development and would still maintain the current facility or retain the same amount of water there. That eliminates that from the process, which causes concern, especially at this time when everybody is concerned about increased hydro costs and the impact on the forest industry. There's a large impact on the mining industry and on businesses such as General Motors in my riding of Oshawa.

I would hope they would take into consideration that the utilization of any of the current water retention facilities is included in part of that definition. I certainly hope that's reviewed by the government members, because what it does is eliminate possible usage of already existing facilities or sites in Ontario.

It also spoke about road access issues. I know I made some notes regarding this. Road access is one of the big areas of concern, in that utility corridors—it specifically states that it "will not be used for a period of five years or more." The difficulty with that is that the way Ontario is laid out, access to forest fibre for the forest industry is sometimes difficult. Sometimes they need to cross through a protected area, and they're granted a five-year period in order to access that. But unless they're clear-cutting, which is a practice that is not promoted in Ontario—it's actually a selective cut; they don't go in and harvest all the trees. Proper management would say that you go in and harvest a section of the trees at that time and then, at a later period, you go in as the forest matures. Effectively, you start off with about 2,400 stems per hectare in the black spruce forest, for example, and it slowly thins itself down. Over a period of time you need to be able to access this. What this effectively does is it gives you a one-shot opportunity to go in there to access some of those areas, and then you're done and good, which means you shut down access for a lot of the forest industry in a lot of areas that may have to cross some of these areas. I would certainly hope that they address that issue.

Also the size change, as the member from the third party mentioned, regarding the 2%, and I brought that up briefly: What that allows—I'll use the reverse, as I mentioned in my comments—is that if there's a site beside a provincial park which is significant, and it is suddenly realized that this area impacts or will impact part of the park, or potentially is developing into a bog or an area that needs to be protected, the minister can go into that area, expand the park by 2% into that area and possibly give up another 2% for some other purposes. But it's a two-way street in that it also allows, say, the mining in-

dustry that may be utilizing a gravel pit or quarry—which is not really the mining industry; it's the aggregate industry—to expand by 2% on the fringe of a park to capture some of that. Then the park takes space from another part of the area. That's probably the reason why that particular part of information is in there.

Some of the other areas that I would hope they would look at: For example, there is no commercial logging allowed in a forest. What happens in the case where a number of years ago there was what's called a blow-down? That's when mature trees are blown down in an area and then their fibre is lying on the forest floor. This is fine during the first year, but in a couple of years that timber dries out and becomes a hot spot for forest fires in the province of Ontario. The options are, do you go in and try to do controlled burns to control the area or do you allow the forest industry to harvest that blow-down and take care of the potential forest fires that may move into that area?

It's kind of a Catch-22 in that in Ontario we have a conscious decision that we put out all forest fires. We don't have burns that go out; the ministry will go in and try to put out any forest fire that's not a controlled burn. That means we're trying to control forest fibre to make sure the industry, whether it's the forest industry or just for safety's sake, is all taken care of. What should take place in that particular situation where a blow-down occurs? Should you allow the forest industry to go in and remove that or not? Most of the time it's "not," as in what has taken place in Quetico, and I'm sure the minister is hearing from the forest industry that this is a potential hazard, that it's going to cause a lot of forest fire opportunities. They're having a lot of problems with the same thing in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park as well, I believe.

As I mentioned before, the big concern is the definition of "industrial." There are a few industrial things that are listed there, but what is the definition of "industrial"? It hasn't really been defined in the legislation.

One other area that I should discuss: Oil and gas wells are specifically listed in this bill to be allowed to continue on. What the government members probably don't realize is that the gas wells, believe it or not, are holding tanks for the industry in Ontario. They will come in and put gas in those wells and they can hold it there and it can be utilized at a later date. Does that mean that that's an industrial usage or is that part of the usage or the intent of the usage of those sites found within the province of Ontario? We really haven't heard any definition in that area.

The speaker before me mentioned the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. There's a lot of concern for the Ontario Trappers Association, who more or less manage or farm the wilds of Ontario to make sure that populations don't reach peaks and lows, which are a natural occurrence. Actually, they kind of hit a flat line—to make sure that the animal population doesn't hit diseases where it passes and they reach large lows and things like that. What is the impact going to be in certain areas for

trapping? I know that hunting was mentioned in one section, that it was being allowed in existing sites due to regulations etc., but there was no mention of trapping in that same section. I would hope that the members take a look into the Ontario Fur Managers Association throughout Ontario and their concerns on this issue.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 11. I hope it goes through the committee process so that a lot of people can get a lot of answers to these concerns.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

1700

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few comments. I hope I don't sneeze during these comments. I felt one coming on as soon as the member from Oshawa sat down. Anyway, I'm going to try to get it all out. I want to make some comments on the remarks by the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock and the member from Oshawa. I think both of them spent some time acknowledging the need to move forward, the need to update the existing regime. It has been about 50 years since it has been looked at and addressed. Certainly I think everybody would agree that looking at this framework for protecting our provincial parks is extremely important. I think they both also have brought to the table a number of specific issues that need to be reviewed and resolved and given further thought. They also both have indicated a real desire to see fulsome second reading debate and also some scrutiny at committee. New Democrats would certainly agree with that. I know that our lead critic on this file has also indicated some concerns.

I was interested to hear some of the enlightenment from the member for Oshawa around the gas wells issue, something I certainly didn't know, and I don't know whether the government members knew about that either. He raised salient issues around the definitions of things like industrial use. He talked about concerns, for example, about cleaning up areas where there has been fallen wood to prevent forest fires. I thought that was an important point that needed to be raised. He also spent some time talking about the impact of the legislation, Bill 11, on for example the forest industry. We all know that the forest industry has been in the news a great deal in Ontario in terms of how they've been hurting not only from softwood lumber disputes and then resolutions and real concerns around that but also around the loss of jobs in the mills and in the north.

Again, I think anything we can do to make sure the committee has the opportunity to review this bill in great detail would be helpful. I know the comments of the members who have just spoken will be important in that discussion.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'm certainly pleased to hear the comments of both the member from Oshawa and the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I believe that their concern will be able to be addressed during the next phase of the bill. Certainly second reading of Bill 11 should be supported. Bill 11 is An Act to enact the Provincial Parks and Conservation

Reserves Act. It would enhance the protection of Ontario provincial parks and conservation reserves. I'm sure the proposed act is largely based on existing policy. There's no major material added to it.

I believe that all of us wish to see that our parks be improved and made better than they are because Ontarians use our parks significantly for recreation purposes. We certainly have an industry that parks cater to, and I believe that we should do anything we can to make it better.

I want to take the opportunity to announce in this honourable House that this coming Saturday in my riding of Thornhill we are going to do some tree planting at Pomona Mills Park, and I will be happy to report the debate that took place in this House to make sure that the people in Thornhill and Concord, my riding basically, are aware of the intent and the objective of Bill 11 and the fact that there is general support from all the members in this House for this type of bill. Therefore, I suspect that not only in Thornhill but all over Ontario—last week we did some cleaning up. Of course, next Saturday we will do some additional tree planting, which is a yearly event. I thank you for letting me say so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock and also the member from Oshawa. The member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock brought up in her speech the situation with the Frost Centre, where unfortunately in July 2004 this government suddenly, without any notice whatsoever, closed the Frost Centre. I think I learned through rumours that it might be closing the day before it closed. Within two weeks the employees were locked out and it was closed—no warning, no consultation. Unfortunately, to this day now it's still sitting empty. That was a centre used for outdoor education. I had the pleasure of attending it in both grades 6 and 8, a long time ago, and had some outdoor education stays there at the Frost Centre. It was a very worthwhile centre. I hope that the government hasn't forgotten about it and that the minister of infrastructure renewal will act and get something going at the Frost Centre.

On the topic of consultation, I've heard from the Mattawa First Nation. They are concerned that there hasn't been enough consultation to do with this bill, Bill 11, the parks bill. I want to make that point.

The member from Oshawa talked about park planning, and this bill does require management direction for all the individual parks and conservation areas. I would question whether the Ministry of Natural Resources has the financial capacity to actually carry that out. I have heard from interested people that the fish and wildlife area of the Ministry of Natural Resources is \$25 million short in its funding to be able to do a reasonable job at this time. So I wonder how the ministry is going to take on new responsibilities when they're not properly funding the fish and wildlife area at this time. That's something that is certainly important.

I'm out of time, but I would like to see this go to committee. We will be supporting the bill and looking forward to further input at committee.

Mr. Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me another chance to speak in support of Bill 11. It's important for all of us to continue speaking about it. I was listening to the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock and the member from Oshawa talking about the importance of this bill, but they have some kind of concern. I sometimes share their concern. They're elected to this place to represent their own people and to also voice their concern. I want to assure them that our government takes this issue very seriously. It's a very important issue for us. Otherwise, we wouldn't open it. The rules and the whole thing are in place. But it's very important for us, after all this technology, after life has changed, with so much different machinery, so many different diseases, so many different issues coming along with new technology, to update our rules and laws to protect our environment, to protect our parks, to protect our conservation areas.

I come from London, Ontario, which we call the "Forest City." We have a lot of parks, like Fanshawe Park, like Springbank Park. Many Londoners enjoy going to the park in their free time. That's why our government, our Minister of Natural Resources, supports us, the city of London, and gives us a lot of trees. For instance, last year they donated 5,000 trees, those trees being planted in many different locations in London to maintain the image of the "Forest City" of London. So this is part of our commitment to protect the environment, our commitment to encourage people to protect and enhance parks across Ontario.

As a government, we have to put the rules in place in order to continue protecting those parks, and also to protect the species that live in those parks—protecting the species, protecting the parks, protecting our environment, protecting our future in this province.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Oshawa; you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the members for London–Fanshawe, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Thornhill and Hamilton East. Still, there wasn't a lot of definition. I think a lot of people have heard some concerns brought forward, the fact that we don't see it specifically laid out that a management plan has to take place, that management direction is an acceptable alternative. That could mean, effectively, the status quo. It may mean more, but we haven't seen it. When they find out the financial implications, it may not be something that's feasible or they may have to move over.

Some of the things that haven't been brought out include, what do you do in the case of Pinery park—one of the government members spoke about it—if the emerald ash borer beetle comes in, and effectively the way to control that is by cutting down the trees? If you have to go into Pinery and take out that Carolinian forest, do you go in there and take it out or do you allow the forest industry to go in and harvest it to utilize it as part of their fibre so they're not taking fibre from somewhere else? Those are some of the things that would now be

classified as part of the management plan. Is that actually part of a commercial operation or is it part of the management plan to deal with this issue? I don't think we've seen that.

1710

One of the other areas is that whether or not people realize it, in some of the parks there currently are land-owners who have patented land within those grounds, meaning they own the property. What is going to take place with them? There are always concerns from those individuals that they're trying to be kicked out of there, for something that was there long before the park was established. Are they still going to be allowed?

Also, as to the LUPs, or land use permits, that currently exist in some of the parks, I would really like to hear exactly how the government intends the LUPs to exist and continue operating, or is it going to be a case where they're going to be grandfathered, which means those individuals currently there, and then they'll be phased out of existence forever and a day, which means they're not going to?

Those are some of the concerns we're hearing from the other groups and organizations. I hope the government will answer those questions during this debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity this afternoon to make some remarks on Bill 11, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, the long name of which is An Act to enact the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2005, repeal the Provincial Parks Act and the Wilderness Areas Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts.

Mr. Speaker, as you've already heard through the debate this afternoon, it's very clear that in principle, in an overarching way, most members of this House I think would agree that the updating of this legislation is required. It's been about 50 years since there has been any substantive revision of the parks act. We, of course, as New Democrats also recognize that the act needs to be updated to incorporate the best scientific understanding of how to better care for and manage our protected areas. Things have come a long way in the last 50 years in terms of our understanding of our ecosystems and the way that we as humans interrelate with those ecosystems. So the time is now to take that understanding and that knowledge and the development of that science that has occurred over the last five decades or so since the act was last looked at in a substantive way and to bring that knowledge to today's practices. That's what this review, I hope at least, is all about.

Ontarians, of course, are very proud of our provincial parks. I think every single member who has spoken thus far on this bill has spent some time relating to or indicating or in other ways referring to the experience they've had in their own lives from a family perspective and from a member's perspective as people who represent ridings in which many of these parks exist. Although that's certainly not my particular experience, coming from more of an urban riding—I don't believe I

have a provincial park right in my riding—I do have other conservation areas and urban parks. When I was a city councillor, I experienced the real verve with which people in communities protect their parks. Parks and green space and wilderness protection is something that Ontarians generally are very committed to.

So Bill 11 is an opportunity for us to make sure our provincial parks system that has been built over the years in this province is stewarded very appropriately in the future. Although every party in this House has had an opportunity as government to have the torch passed to them and move forward with it, it's now time that we collectively look at what has been done thus far and figure out how to go forward in a way that really does show our commitment to the ongoing not only survival, but growth and thriving of our provincial parks and our provincial parks system.

Of course, that's not just the responsibility of government. We all know there have been a number of active participants in the protection and management of Ontario's parks. Many individuals, but also many groups, have devoted themselves over the years, over the decades, to the ongoing protection and betterment of our provincial parks and conservation reserves. They have played an extremely important role, and I don't think there's any way we can individually or collectively thank enough those people and those groups who have taken it upon themselves to sometimes, from their perspective, push us toward doing things in a more proactive fashion, but certainly always to be there as stewards of the environment, of our green spaces and of our future when it comes to the protection of Ontario's provincial park system. They've played a very important role and I know will continue to play an important role, not only in the context of what I expect will be happening, which is the significant committee debate or committee hearings around this bill, but also as we move forward into the future over the next several decades after this bill has been dealt with and in some form becomes legislation. I don't ever see a time when the people of Ontario, either individually or in the activist type of groups they've put together to work collectively, will not be taking responsibility for stewardship of our provincial parks.

I'm certain the government has already heard from many of those groups that are interested in the park system during the drafting phase of the legislation, but it will be extremely important for us to take the time aside—and important also for those of us on this side of the House, who haven't been at those discussions—to hear from those stakeholders during the committee hearings of this bill.

As usual, or as is not outside of the norm, the legislation is a start, but we think there are some places where it falls short. I think there are some key areas where it is important for us to acknowledge that there are some shortcomings, so we can not only touch on that in this debate but also address some of those issues in greater detail at the committee stage and hopefully with some of the enlightenment of other stakeholders and participants in that process.

One of the first and most important things I wanted to touch on is the issue of First Nations. I know it was raised very briefly by a previous member this afternoon. Bill 11 is silent on aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples. Their potential role in the creation, planning and management of parks and conservation reserves is all but left out of Bill 11. That is a serious problem. It's a serious omission that the government really needs to reconsider. The bottom line is that there's nothing in this bill in regard to the co-management of protected areas, for example, with First Nations. We know that is something that takes place. There are opportunities or situations where co-management of protected areas currently takes place, yet the bill doesn't address those issues. These kinds of shortcomings, specifically around the active participation and engagement of our First Nations peoples, are extremely important. It's very sad to have a bill in front of us that does not acknowledge the invaluable role that our First Nations communities play in our wilderness areas, our provincial parks and our protected lands. Unfortunately, these shortcomings in regard to First Nations are really out of step with the new protected area legislation in other jurisdictions, which has come to reflect an increasing understanding and appreciation of aboriginal rights and interests with regard to protected areas.

First, to ensure that the rights of First Nations are properly respected, the act needs to include a clause that clearly states that nothing in the act shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from the protection provided for existing aboriginal or treaty rights of aboriginal peoples of Canada, as recognized in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. I know that the member from Timmins–James Bay and the New Democratic Party leader, Howard Hampton, have often talked about the lack of a non-derogation clause, and that's something that needs to be added into the legislation.

I think the other piece that's glaringly missing is in regard to section 8—that issue was raised already in debate this afternoon—the ability of up to 2% of a park to be removed from one area and added on to another area. Again in regard to section 8—and I'm going to go through it in a little bit more detail if I have the time—the bill doesn't at this point, but what we would like to see a clear stating that prior to the establishment of a new protected area or expansion of an existing protected area, the minister is required to identify and consult with all affected First Nation communities whose lands or traditional territories may be affected by the establishment or expansion of the protected area.

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Again, in section 8 of the bill—which is on page 6, I believe—it talks about the “Disposition of land, less than 2% of the area.” It goes on to say in subsection 3, “The Lieutenant Governor in Council may by order dispose of an area of a provincial park or conservation reserve that is less than 100 hectares or less than 2% of the total area of the provincial park or conservation reserve, whichever is the lesser.” Then it goes on to talk about “Disposition

of land, 2% or more of area.” So there are two different procedures that need to be followed, depending on the amount of land, either by hectares or by percentage of the size of the park.

The second procedure: “The Lieutenant Governor in Council may not order the disposition of an area of a provincial park or conservation reserve that is 100 hectares or more or 2% or more of the total area of the provincial park or conservation reserve, unless

“(a) the minister first reports on the proposed disposition to the assembly;

“(b) the minister tables the proposed new boundaries of the provincial park or conservation reserve with the assembly; and

“(c) the assembly endorses the proposed new boundaries of the provincial park or conservation reserve.”

That's basically saying that if you're going to get rid of or change more than 2% or 100 hectares, it needs to come before this House.

I think the things to remember here are twofold: One is of course the issue of making sure that the consultation with First Nations and the participation with First Nations is built in. That's not here, and that needs to be done. But the other issue that my colleague from Timmins–James Bay mentioned to me is the concern that—we all know the way the election system works and the concerns that people have about whether or not in fact the members and the government elected actually make up a majority, or the real will of the people of Ontario. Even having things come to this House, when it comes to the issue of provincial parks, when it comes to the possibility of getting rid of huge swaths of our provincial parkland, there is some concern that the will of this House might not even reflect the will of the people of Ontario.

We have real concerns about whether or not that's an appropriate thing to even build in, the opportunity to get rid of over 100 hectares or over 2% of a piece of any provincial park in the province. It's something that needs more discussion, more debate, but certainly, regardless of whether you're talking less than 2% or less than 100 hectares, or more, the bottom line is that none of that should be done at all without the rights of First Nations being properly respected, and their participation fully engaged in any process that would seek to reduce or in any way change the configuration of a provincial park.

The other issue is that at present there is no provision in the bill to ensure that in the formulation of management plans for parks, opportunities for co-operative or joint management with local First Nations communities are fully explored. Again, the bill is silent on that requirement. What we are suggesting or we think needs to be in there—the government has spoken a lot about its commitment to its new relationship with First Nations, but here we have yet another piece of legislation that doesn't even contemplate the fact that the First Nations do have a role or possibly could have a role in co-operating with government in management of parks as new management plans are put together. I think that's another

huge omission, and one that the government needs to seriously consider. It is something that I think will be a completely lost opportunity at best, and at worst will be an insult to First Nations if they are aware that once again they have been forgotten in that process of putting together legislation that likely will affect their daily lives.

Further to the preparation of park management plans, we need to include a local First Nations representative who has indigenous or traditional knowledge to inform the park planning processes. So even if there isn't a park management plan or a co-operative, going-forward relationship in terms of the management, at least the plan itself needs to be developed with the participation of First Nations representatives, particularly ones who have got the traditional knowledge that will help inform that planning process, because there is no better knowledge, no better understanding, no better relationship, no better intimacy with the ecological balance in any provincial park than that which you would find that is inherent in the First Nations people who are living on and with the land in question.

There should also be an opportunity in the bill for First Nations to nominate areas of cultural significance in these plans. For example, an important fish or wildlife area, areas that are important to maintaining traditional ways of life, sites of villages and rock paintings should be able to be identified for protection. Such sites should be considered for full management by the relevant First Nation so they can ensure over the future that these areas are appropriately protected and managed by them as their specifically identified areas of concern.

The bill also needs to include provisions whereby new or expanded protected areas require the sharing of economic benefits from the protected area with neighbouring First Nations. Again, this is the issue of the extent to which the province is prepared to share the proceeds of the generation of economic activity with our First Nations communities. There have been, I think, real lost opportunities and real failures in regard to ensuring that the sharing of those resources is committed to. So we would just like to see that issue addressed and enshrined in the new legislation. We have a long history in this province of failing to consult and share revenues generated from the traditional lands of First Nations communities, and that's something we don't need to perpetuate again in Bill 11.

In 2004, the member from Timmins–James Bay introduced Bill 97 in this House, the First Nations Resource Revenue Sharing Act, which addressed this very issue. The bill was taken on the road to consult with First Nations. We heard excellent testimony at that time around needed amendments to that bill. Unfortunately, the voices of those First Nations communities that participated in the discussions with the member from Timmins–James Bay around Bill 97, the First Nations Resource Revenue Sharing Act, did not see the light of day and the job wasn't finished because the government wasn't prepared to move the bill to the next stage. So First Nations at this date are still lacking in their revenue-

sharing framework in Ontario, and that's something that really does need to be addressed.

People will recall—and I mentioned it already—that the government made commitments around their new relationship with First Nations communities, that they were going to establish this new relationship of trust and consultation, but we saw problems. We saw problems with Bill 210. Again, I know the minister worked very hard, after the initial outcry by First Nations about the lack of consultation, to rectify that. We also know that there was an outcry again when the LHINs legislation was brought forward, that there wasn't consultation with First Nations communities.

Now, here we are with Bill 11, and again there are concerns that the First Nations communities simply have not had an opportunity to consult about this particular bill. Notwithstanding that, almost three years into government, it's just more broken promises from the government around not only resource revenue sharing agreements but also other issues facing First Nations, not the least of which is the acknowledgment and respect that's needed if you're really going to have a true relationship of consultation and government-to-government discussion.

There are a number of other pieces of the bill that I haven't had a chance to talk about. I'm going to go quickly through some of the other issues. One is section 7, which is the "no motorized vehicles in wilderness class parks" issue. The current definition of "wilderness class park" has been used for decades and it basically states, "Wilderness parks are substantial areas where the forces of nature are permitted to function freely and where visitors travel by non-mechanized means and experience expansive solitude, challenge and personal integration with nature."

Bill 11 weakens this definition by replacing "where visitors travel by non-mechanized means" with the phrase "where visitors travel primarily by non-motorized means." I'm a little bit concerned that the change in wording weakens the definition of "wilderness class park" and could potentially affect ecosystems protected by wilderness parks and the wilderness experiences sought by those who visit them. This is another issue that we're flagging as needing some further debate, particularly some further review in the committee process, and we look forward to that. We believe that the definition of "wilderness class park" has to remain as it is and not as proposed in the bill, but we also have some acknowledgment that there might be exceptions that are required to this; for example, firefighting equipment. If there's an emergency that needs to be addressed, if there's a forest fire that requires mechanized vehicles to go in and take care of that, obviously that's something that needs to be dealt with.

1730

The other one I wanted to raise very briefly, because I am almost out of time, is what my friend and colleague from Timmins–James Bay called the lazy minister clause. It's section 9, page 7 of the bill. What he raised

was a concern that the bill indicates that the management plans need to be put together and that they need to have their plans put in place. But the bill basically says that if that's not done within the fifth anniversary date of the order that creates a provincial park or conservation reserve, then basically the existing regime is what governs the situation, the concern being that if we're serious about changing things, if we're serious about upgrading the current legislation, then let's do it and let's not put in false safety nets. Let's make sure we're committed to getting the job done and not give the minister an escape clause.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I generally think that the member from Hamilton East provided an interesting overview on Bill 11, which is the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. You look at the purpose of the bill: "The purpose of this act is to permanently protect a system of provincial parks and conservation reserves that includes ecosystems that are representative of all of Ontario's natural regions, protects provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage, maintains biodiversity and provides opportunities for compatible, ecologically sustainable recreation." I think this is one of these interesting bills that will no doubt go to committee to have some hearings. There will be a number of individuals and stakeholders that are interested, as we all are, in this great history and heritage of provincial parks right across Ontario. Every government of various political stripes, over a long period of time, has had an equal share in moving and enlarging and creating more provincial parks in the province.

This is one of these bills where I see an opportunity of all three parties in this House coming together in mutual interest to look at this bill, because it's necessary, because this is a heritage, a very important heritage, that there is a common interest in for everybody in this House. The member from Hamilton East and my good friend the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock highlighted a number of key issues. This is one of those rare opportunities where I think we'll see all of us come together on a bill to provide parks and increase the heritage for everybody in Ontario.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): It's a pleasure to speak today in this Legislature about our provincial parks and what a wonderful natural resource they are. It is time to review and revamp this Provincial Parks Act. It's not been done since 1954, and anyone who has an interest in parks and outdoor recreation appreciates that.

During the previous Conservative government, we were very fortunate that the biggest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of this province was undertaken. Not only do these resources attract millions of tourists annually to this province, but they also protect our natural heritage, and in fact our heritage overall, which is wonderful. Having said that, our heritage does belong to all of us. I would implore my colleagues opposite that while considering stewardship, they must also respect all key stakeholders in this debate and must encourage a thorough consultation.

What concerns me is that throughout this consultation process previously, only a total of 425 people attended open houses. Attendance ranged from as low as 31 participants to as high as about 62. During the previous Conservative government, when they undertook consultations, over 65,000 Ontarians were able to respond to Lands for Life and provided valuable input. So I would encourage members opposite, when this goes to committee, to certainly listen to all parties and not only make sure that this legislation protects our natural heritage and encourages tourism, but also make sure they listen to groups like the hunters and anglers and other interested groups, stakeholders' organizations and individuals.

It is my pleasure to address this bill, and hopefully we'll see it back new and improved.

Mrs. Van Bommel: I certainly want to add my comments to those of the member for Hamilton East. She was talking about the growth of our parks and the concern around the expansions, and she was also talking about the community members that enjoy all of our parks and conservation areas. As I said earlier, we have in my area the Friends of Pinery Park, but I know that all provincial parks have groups like the Friends. These are people who are very concerned about conservation in their communities. In my area, Carolinian forests are an integral part of the natural heritage that we have. The Friends are those groups that help to support that, that do the fundraising and try to make sure we can keep our parks and that they are sustainable in the long run.

I find that a lot of these people who are part of our communities and who do this kind of work do this in other areas as well. In my area, it's not a group that confines itself to the provincial park; they're usually involved in conservation projects all throughout the riding. I know I have people like John Russell and Ross Hayter and Alf Rider who concern themselves not just with the Pinery, but who are also involved in the Lake Smith conservation area. Those people are our conscience when we are dealing with these kinds of things. I know they work very hard to make sure we have these types of areas for our children and for the future. They work very hard to make that happen.

As was mentioned earlier, I think among all the parties we can agree that we want to protect our natural area, our natural heritage. We want to continue the sustainability of those. So through Bill 11, we will enhance that protection.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's my pleasure to comment on the speech by the member for Hamilton East, and I do hope she gets some remedy for that cold she's experiencing.

I think she raised many, many salient points with regard to the bill, but I don't think this is an overly contentious bill. I think there's substantial agreement that much of what is happening with this bill is something we can all support in principle. But I do believe there are some things that do require clarification, and the member for Hamilton East certainly articulated that with regard to some of the concerns she and her party would have with

regard to this bill. So I think, as we take this to committee, we'll be expecting some clarification on some of those issues to ensure that those points are clear.

There's one thing that I do want to talk about and that I'm pleased will continue to be protected in this bill, because we have, as you know, various classes of provincial parks. Algonquin Park is a specific class, and it is the only park, I believe, that allows the logging of timber resources in it. That is something that is extremely important to the people in my riding, and I'm very pleased that the federal government was able to negotiate a softwood lumber deal with the Americans this past week. The practice of logging in Algonquin Park has gone on from before there was a building here. It is something that has sustained many, many generations, and it is a use that is consistent with the other uses of Algonquin Park. I absolutely believe, and I would fight that issue tremendously if this government changes its tune on that, that logging will and should continue in Algonquin Park.

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The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members from Peterborough, Nepean–Carleton, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their remarks.

I want to take my two minutes of response time just to review some of the issues that I thought were important to bring to the debate, most of them, of course, centred around First Nations communities. I know there are other members of our caucus, particularly our leader, Howard Hampton, who are going to want to speak to those issues. There are issues not only around existing treaty rights, but also around the opportunities to ensure that we're engaging First Nations communities in the process of determining what the park plans look like, what the access in and out of some of these more remote parts of the parks entails, and making sure that the existing situations are maintained in any future park plans that are put together. Also, there are issues around the lack of acknowledgment for First Nations' participation in things like ongoing management plans as well as revenue sharing; that's another issue that I raised. If anything takes place that creates revenue, we need to make sure that those First Nations communities are not only right there in the planning process but also in the sharing of any revenue that it generates.

As well, I talked about the fact that the establishment of new protected areas and/or the reduction of existing areas—the 100-hectare minimum or less-than-2% areas—are things that cannot simply be done by the stroke of a pen. They need to be done in full consultation with First Nations communities, again highlighting the fact that this government has dismally failed in its promise to make sure they're consulting with First Nations communities, and seeing Bill 11, again, as an indication that their comments around that consultation have still not been followed up. That's extremely inappropriate.

My time has now run out. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm very pleased to be able to join in the debate today on Bill 11, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. Bill 11 is looking at the whole area of provincial parks and conservation reserves with a view to making ecological integrity the first priority as we move forward in planning the use that surrounds our provincial parks and conservation reserves.

Interestingly enough, this act hasn't been looked at in 50 years. As you can imagine, there's been quite an evolution in the last 50 years in the issues surrounding provincial parks. When the act was first passed, there were only eight provincial parks. Today we actually have 319 provincial parks, as well as 280 conservation reserves plus 10 wilderness areas. More than 10 million visits are made to our provincial parks each year by the citizens of Ontario and visitors from other parts of the world. So these are a very significant part of our natural heritage, and I think all parties are in agreement that it's time we look after these parks and bring the legislation around them up to date.

Of course, what has happened over those intervening 50 years when the act hasn't been updated is that there has been a significant body of practices built up at the Ministry of Natural Resources around how we manage our provincial parks and our conservation reserves. That's something that all three parties share in: building up that body of best practice. It's largely that body of practice which is being consolidated into law to ensure that as we move forward, those protections that are in place in policy actually become firm protections that are in place to protect our parks and reserves—that those are actually enshrined in law and not simply in practice.

For those of us who live in southern Ontario, it's also important to point out that we are not talking here about conservation authorities. Particularly those of us who live within the jurisdiction of the Grand River Conservation Authority know that there are a lot of places known as conservation areas. Those are actually administered by the conservation authorities as opposed to the province, and are not the subject of this particular act. Those of us in southern Ontario often get confused because the conservation reserves tend to lie in more northerly parts of the province.

When we look at the act, it does a number of things, as I said, regardless of the various details. It sets up, for all these types of areas, that the prime principle when it comes to planning is that we must preserve the ecological integrity of the parks or conservation reserves because we do want to make sure they are protected for future generations. The act, however, does recognize that they play an important part in the area of tourism. They often provide an important role when we're doing scientific research, because we have those natural areas that we can use as a benchmark for how natural systems really do work. We do know that, because of their tourism component, we also need to look at the economic impact of surrounding communities.

When we looked at the existing practice, some of the issues that have been raised here—the new act would prohibit the granting of new leases, new land uses, private land uses in the parks or conservation reserves. However, those people who currently have leases or permits for either private use or commercial use would be allowed to go ahead with the existing use. I think this needs to be made clear to allay the fears of people who lease land for a cottage in a provincial park. There are lots of folks who historically have been allowed to lease land for cottages in provincial parks. That sort of use would be allowed to continue.

When we looked at parks like Algonquin, which is very heavily used along the southern corridor, we knew it was important that we may need to develop new commercial leases. There are so many visitors to that park that in fact there are a number of commercial outfitters, eating establishments and that sort of thing, which are set up in the park to provide support to all those people who come for that great experience in Algonquin Park.

However, it's also important to note that when we look at some of those more remote parks and reserves—in fact, when we look at all the parks and reserves—we are explicitly prohibiting new industrial uses such as mining, logging or aggregate extraction, major electric power generation other than those that might be localized hydro generation for communities that are located near the parks. We are restricting the use. The one place where we will continue to allow some logging is where it has historically occurred in Algonquin Park. As the member from Renfrew correctly points out, we understand that commercial logging within Algonquin is the important economic lifeblood of a number of the surrounding communities, and we have no intent here of ruining those communities that have sometimes rather fragile economic bases. So we are being very sensitive to, first of all, wanting to protect ecological integrity, but also looking at what reasonable use is within that context.

1750

It has actually been quite interesting to listen to some of the debate as it has gone on. I think the first day this was under debate I happened to be in the House when the member for Timmins—James Bay was talking about the bill, and he expressed the concern that we were maybe going too far in restricting the wilderness areas to non-motorized uses. He used the example of his one-and-a-half-horsepower Evinrude. He wanted to be able to take out his little boat with his one-and-a-half-horsepower Evinrude when he went fishing. He was concerned that maybe we would be stopping that use. He actually struck a chord with me, because I used to have a close personal relationship with a three-horsepower Johnson when I was a teenager. So I understood his attachment to his one-and-a-half-horsepower Evinrude.

Interjection.

Mrs. Sandals: Yes, I did.

Mr. Yakabuski: Explain that.

Mrs. Sandals: It was on a very nice little Peterborough Pal cedarstrip. This was a vintage boat, I'll have

you know. It was an excellent little boat to putter around in.

So I had some sympathy with his desire to continue puttering up the river as he went fishing. I think he was probably quite accurately reflecting the concerns of his constituents and the way in which they might use some of the conservation reserves.

But then I was quite intrigued, because I was here the next day, and the member from Trinity–Spadina was speaking. The member from Trinity–Spadina, of course, expressed the concern that he was afraid of water and afraid of mosquitoes and actually—

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Just generally fearful.

Mrs. Sandals: He just generally thought that going north of Steeles was a major excursion. I'm quoting him; I'm not imputing to him things he didn't say. It was interesting that he had taken a much different tack in interpreting the bill, which was to be, I think, rather alarmist in suggesting that the bill would allow ATVs, all-terrain vehicles, to be motoring around our conservation reserves. Clearly, that's an overly alarmist view of the bill. So it is going to be interesting to see, when the NDP come to committee, where they land on this whole issue, because we've heard quite different points of view.

One of my own favourite little parks is a place called Hardy Lake Provincial Park, which is between Gravenhurst and Bala, and is one that I think is never advertised, really, outside the Muskoka district. It's a day-use-only park. Before a lot of people discovered this park, you could park by the side of the highway and walk your canoe down into the lake and have a lovely little day trip canoeing and picnicking around the lake. Unfortunately, now it has become more heavily used, although still, I must say, day use. They've cut out the route where it was easy to walk in and canoe. But it's a lovely little park, locally used, wonderful for day tripping.

I think that's one of the important things when we look at this act: It recognizes a number of different sorts of parks. At one end of the extreme we have Algonquin Park, the granddaddy of all parks. At the other end we've got Hardy. Then you go farther north and into the conservation reserves, and they really are wilderness areas.

We need to set up different rules. That's why the act requires that there be an individual management plan for each of the parks, because it is important that we get it right for each and every individual park. This is definitely one of those one-size-does-not-fit-all. We want to make sure that's what we're providing in the act, so that there will be the facility for the Ministry of Natural Resources to work with local communities, to work with experts, to work with the people who are currently responsible for managing the parks, to work with the people who live in the communities that surround the parks, and work out a management plan that is sensible for each and every park in this province and each and every conservation reserve, because I think we are all agreed in this House that it's important that we protect our ecology, that we protect those natural places, that we

have a place we can all retreat to, but most importantly, that for future generations we preserve some of that natural habitat with which Canada, Ontario, originally started.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or his parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Indeed I am dissatisfied with this afternoon's response from the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs. Part of my reason is that on two occasions I've asked the Minister of Transportation about roads issues, not only within and adjacent to Caledonia but also throughout the riding of Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, for a total of four questions now over the last week. On both occasions the Minister of Transportation bounced the question to the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, although today the Speaker appeared to rule that he was to answer and then the Premier ruled that the Minister of Transportation didn't have to answer. Maybe some of that confusion will be clarified in the response this evening.

If the questions had been on the negotiations to remove the barricades, for example, I could understand how the two ministers would have an overlapping responsibility. Again, it would be appropriate for the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs to respond. That being said, my questions focused on transportation issues that fall within the purview of the ministry and the Minister of Transportation.

I'll repeat one of the questions in part. Argyle Street is blocked. Provincial Highway 6, the bypass, is blocked. I have requested what the Ministry of Transportation is doing to accommodate traffic, focusing primarily within the boundaries of my riding, Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

I feel that question period is obviously a fundamental component of our democratic system. It allows MPPs like myself the opportunity to ask the executive branch questions, and it's reasonable to expect that we would get answers from what we would consider to be the most appropriate minister. Roads and transportation planning are issues of the ministry, of ministry staff and the minister. Again, Ministry of Transportation staff don't

answer questions for the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Whether this symbolizes a trend demonstrated by this government on not only this issue but other issues, we've watched with dismay as the present government has played the Ping-Pong game on the Caledonia land dispute. I guess it was two months ago that I was told to go to Ottawa on this issue. I've been told that with respect to issues agricultural. The Minister of Agriculture and Food on many occasions indicates, "Go to Ottawa." It doesn't matter what we ask the government; we get deflection, what I consider some finger pointing and the blame game. It's so odd to see this approach become inculcated within the executive council itself. I asked a question about roads to the Minister of Transportation. The question is bounced to the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs. I appreciate that the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs could respond if I had asked a question on that issue.

When my caucus colleague Mr. Runciman raised a point of order, the Premier indicated that on questions relating to Caledonia, the minister of aboriginal affairs is responsible. How far does this go? Do we see a title change: Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, Minister of Transportation, minister responsible for Caledonia? Do we include other towns? Do we work on the assumption that any question, regardless of content, that deals with Caledonia must be directed to the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs? Who makes that decision? Is it you, Speaker? Is it the Premier who makes that decision, which, from what I can see, seems to have occurred this afternoon?

I'm getting so many e-mails with respect to traffic volumes, very significant problems that have to be addressed: load-bearing of bridges, narrow roads, safety, reported collisions, signage and routing.

The Acting Speaker: The minister responsible for aboriginal affairs has five minutes to reply.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'd like to answer the member as directly as I can, to tell him—I think he knows this—that the OPP have established the detour route around the blockade on Highway 6, and that in this case it would be the MTO contractors who are assisting the OPP with this redirection of traffic around the blockade.

The government has supplied two portable, changeable message signs in order to further notify the drivers of these detour routes. I'm sure the member is aware of this when we have detours such as this; I know I'm very familiar with them at home, when roads are washed out etc. Also the load restrictions the member speaks to for the two bridges are also then on these message signs, up to date, because of half-loads etc. The drivers are well-informed and directed by signage that the OPP, through MTO contractors, are providing. So that's the answer to his question.

Quite frankly, we refer to this as being a temporary situation. We are working very hard. As you know,

David Peterson is now the Ontario lead, meeting with all the groups in the communities and working to resolve this. I feel there's a lot of good will there. We're going to get this resolved. But in the meantime, both the OPP and the MTO are taking care of the road traffic.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matters to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 6:45 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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