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Jeudi 12 avril 2007

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Honourable Michael A. Brown

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L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 12 April 2007

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*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT
(REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

Mr. Kormos moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Kormos, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you, Speaker.

Jack London gives us a little bit of guidance in this whole matter. He wrote:

“After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab.

“A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumour of rotten principles.”

I'm grateful to Jack London for having given us that insight a century ago.

You'll recall—you surely will—back in 1993 when the NDP government of the day outlawed, Bill 40 outlawed, scabs in the province of Ontario. The legislation, of course, refers to them as “replacement workers.” But down where I come from in Niagara, and where my colleagues come from, whether it's here in Toronto or Hamilton or Timmins–James Bay or Kenora–Rainy River or the Sudbury area, people who cross picket lines and take workers' jobs when those workers are involved in oftentimes life-and-death struggles to keep good jobs in their community, to ensure fair shares of the wealth that they create, to ensure safer workplaces, to ensure some modest pension plans that permit them to retire with even a basic level of decency and dignity—when

those workers are on a picket line fighting for those things, women or men who would cross that picket line to take their jobs, while the legislation calls them replacement workers, are scabs, the very same sort of scabs that Jack London talked about.

In that period of time when scabs were banned in the province of Ontario—and we recall the history. When the Conservatives got elected in 1995, they repealed the anti-scab provisions of Bill 40, along with a whole lot of other things. But in that period of time, there were fewer work stoppages here in the province of Ontario. When there were work stoppages, they were of a shorter duration. And the tragedy of working women or men being assaulted, mutilated or killed on picket lines was averted. And we don't have to go back that far to understand that that prospect of a picketing worker being assaulted, mutilated or killed isn't a fiction or a matter of a mere fanciful imagination.

I remember being on the picket line with Navistar workers down in Chatham after one of their brothers, Don Milner, a CAW member from Windsor, was brutally injured when a van operated by a scab-protection security guard drove over Mr. Milner, brother Milner, and injured five other CAW members at a picket line at that Navistar plant on the outskirts of Chatham. I remember the factory well. It was back in June 2002. Mr. Milner broke his pelvis, required hours of surgery, and spent an incredible amount of time in hospital. A 21-year-old employee of London Protection Inc.—it's a strike-breaking operation—was charged with dangerous driving. London Protection Inc., of course, was hired by Navistar to break the strike at their international truck plant in Chatham.

October 2000, here in the greater Toronto area, Mississauga: 450 workers on strike at CFM Majestic Inc. As soon as those picket lines were set up, burly security guards were sent out there, intimidating and harassing those strikers. These are the guards—you've seen them. They're the ones with the shaved heads—it's all about the image—dressed from head to toe in black uniforms and black caps and military jackboots. As the workers tried to block buses filled with scabs to prevent them from crossing the picket line—peacefully, peaceably—guards were brutally slamming those workers aside and out of the way. I can go on: workers terrorized by strike-breakers in Sudbury, Falconbridge, in 2000, and the company Accufax; another scab protection operation, a scab delivery company.

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This is all about values. No worker takes lightly the decision to withdraw their labour from the workplace, but

what could be a more fundamental right in any democratic society? Because surely it's a hallmark of a democratic society when we ensure that workers do have that right to withdraw their labour when lawful negotiations around a contract break down. Surely this Legislature is going to protect the right of that worker to withdraw his or her labour. And no worker ever makes that decision lightly. I want to repeat that.

As for lockouts, I say to you that we should condemn those outright, because they withdraw from the worker his or her contractual right to negotiate a contract when they put a proverbial gun to that worker's head.

Let me complete the reference to scabs by Jack London. "After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab.

"A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumour of rotten principles.

"When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs and angels weep in heaven, and the devil shuts the gates of hell to keep him out.

"No man (or woman) has a right to scab so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in, or a rope long enough to hang his body with. Judas was a gentleman compared with a scab. For betraying his master, he had character enough to hang himself. A scab has not.

"Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Judas sold his Saviour for thirty pieces of silver. Benedict Arnold sold his country for a promise of a commission in the British army. The scab sells his birthright, country, his wife, his children and his fellow men for an unfulfilled promise from his employer.

"Esau was a traitor to himself; Judas was a traitor to his God; Benedict Arnold was a traitor to his country; a scab is a traitor to his God, his country, his family and his class."

As New Democrats, we stand here unhesitatingly in solidarity with workers in this province and beyond, and in our efforts to restore anti-scab legislation to the province of Ontario. It is only with anti-scab legislation that we can restore that tradition created in the early 1990s—in 1993 to be specific, when Bill 40 passed—of peaceful contract negotiations with minimal work stoppages, with safety on picket lines on the rare occasion that they do develop, and with an assurance that contract disputes will be resolved at the negotiating table rather than with armed goons, strikebreakers and scabs hauled in through smoke-mirrored buses, crashing through picket lines of women and men trying to better their lot in their workplace and in their community.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak and comment on Bill 192, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995, introduced by Mr. Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre.

I've been listening carefully to Mr. Kormos. I know his passion about this issue. Hopefully, he can extend his passion to the leader of his party, especially when he was against the extension of the subway, which can eliminate a lot of work in the province of Ontario. We, as a party and as a government, were trying to create more jobs in order to have more workers working. Hopefully, they will have a consolidated effort in one direction.

Anyway, we're talking about Bill 192, which I think is very important. We live in a democratic society. We live in a society where we should be respecting the human rights of everyone, especially when workers who have some kind of dispute go out of their job and may be looking for more money and better conditions for their safety in the work they do. It's a very important issue.

A couple of times since I was elected I introduced a bill to erect a monument outside of this place to remember people who died while they were working, to commemorate people who have given their lives, efforts, talents, skills and physical abilities to build this province, which is very important.

This bill talks about how we can create a balance between employers and workers. I think it's very important because most of the time, when workers go to work and give their ability, attention and skills to build a factory or build a company, the company makes more money and a lot of progress, and I think they are obligated to support their workers and give them more attention. That's why most of the time disputes happen between workers and companies or employers. I think we should have fair treatment. That doesn't mean we should replace them when they go on strike or are locked out. It's a dangerous situation.

I want to commend the member from Niagara Centre, and also our Minister of Labour who worked very hard to create that balance since we were elected in 2003. If you want to talk about work stoppages, I think you'll see a minimal level in God knows how many years. I think if we are able, through mediation, to create some kind of balance and bring a lot of agreements to the bargaining table which are mitigated by our Minister of Labour and the special people who work in the Ministry of Labour, that is going to create peace and tranquillity between employers and workers or people who work in different locations and different places.

I'll give you some examples. We brought in a four-year agreement with the elementary and secondary teachers' support staff; also the Ontario public service health care workers, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the city of Toronto inside and outside workers and several dozen other large municipalities. They created some kind of agreement between the employers and employees due to our understanding of the importance of those workers. The agreements give the ability.

I know it's against human rights to place workers at many different times in many different locations, especially when they strike on a picket line. They shouldn't be forced out, injured, killed, harassed or abused. They have the right to strike in order to better their conditions,

better their situations, maybe for more money or more safety in the workplace. It's very important to create that dialogue and that understanding. Most of the time, we are able through mediation to create that harmony between employers and workers.

I understand that the member from Niagara Centre wants to repeal Bill 7, I believe, which amended the Bill 40 in 1992. I think it's important to deal with the issue and look into it because we owe the workers a lot of respect. We should support them in whatever they do in their daily life, but we have to create that balance, as I mentioned at the beginning.

Some workers work in hospitals, for instance, ambulances, or in correctional services, and what do you do? Do you leave the jails empty of protection or the jailed people out on the street without any protection? I don't know. It's a very delicate issue. I think we should be dealing with it and be open to suggestions.

The member from Niagara Centre brought up some different issues that brought important elements to the situations that should be dealt with. All workers are entitled to go on strike without any hesitation or fear of being replaced at any time and they should also be allowed to express themselves with passion, and they should be supported. Most of the time we are able, by negotiation, to reach an agreement. What's happened many different times is that we have a government and a minister who are open to talks and able to bring the two parties to the table to try to counsel both sides in order to reach an agreement for the sake of the work, for the sake of the workers and for the sake of the cities or the whole society at large.

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I think it's important to talk about the important elements of our society, especially since we live in Ontario, a province that strongly believes in workers and in people who give their lives, their abilities and their skills to build this province, especially in the auto industry. At the present time, we have the best auto industry locations in the whole world and we have a lot of workers who work in different agencies, companies and factories, and also many different elements in our society. It is very important to give the right to workers to express themselves the way they want without harming our society, without hurting others. I think it's important to open up the subject and talk about it, and hopefully the member for Niagara Centre understands the importance also of keeping all the elements working without jeopardizing our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak. Hopefully we can reach a situation where we can create a more peaceful, democratic and open workplace for the sake of human rights and the sake of the rights of all the people who work and give their life and ability to others.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Labour relations, labour bills, labour laws are always an interesting subject to debate. However, in close to 12 years in this House, in all the time that we've talked about labour law and the issues surrounding labour and management, the confrontations, the co-operation, the building of relationships

between labour and business, the one thing that has seemed to be a constant in all of those conversations is the word "balance." There has to be a balance between what labour requires and what management requires in order to accomplish the goals of those two parties.

It strikes me that the modern way to balance those goals, those two needs, is that more and more we're finding that labour and management's goals are the same. They both want success for the company. They both want the company to do better, which will result in higher-paying jobs and more jobs. They both want success in that area and to be competitive in that area. That requires not only the partnership between labour and management; more and more in today's environment it requires the partnership of government as well. It strikes me that in what I call the old days of labour and management relationships, there was a constant confrontation between the two.

This week, when we've celebrated and remembered the victory at Vimy Ridge, we've remembered those people who sacrificed themselves on that very noble hill for Canada and indeed for the world and world peace. That victory was more than just a military victory. It was much more than that. Not only was it the day that Canada came together, as they say—although some debate that, as I saw in the press—I believe strongly that it was the day Canada came together as a nation on that battlefield. It was the first time they had fought together, but more than that, they fought in a way that nobody had fought before. The individuals in the trenches, the privates, the corporals, the sergeants, they were given maps. They were given goals. They were involved in the plan. And being involved in the plan, they knew they weren't just going over the top, out of the trenches, across the field and into the machine guns. That's what had happened for the last three or four years in that war. It was just a matter of putting the number of manpower that you could into the field in order to hopefully gain the position of the machine gun. Man's ability to kill had outstripped his ability to attack those positions. But at Vimy the Canadian soldiers were given maps of the trenches. They were given maps of the lay of the land. They knew what was happening. They were involved in the plan. They knew what their objective was. That had not happened before. And when you involved those people to that degree in the great objective of taking Vimy Ridge, taking the hill that dominated the plains in that part of France—whoever owned the hill owned the plains. Involving those people in that push became the decisive point in the victory at Vimy Ridge.

I think that labour management was at that same crisis some years ago. When people found out that if they involved labour in their management plans, if they involved labour intimately in their progress and in what they wanted to accomplish in their goals and aims, they became a very much more successful company than the companies with labour and management that were constantly at loggerheads and fighting each other.

I think this bill does not encourage that co-operation between management and labour. It doesn't make for the

one-team effort that any jurisdiction has to have in order to be successful in today's marketplace when we are desperately trying to be competitive, when we are desperately trying to be as good as anyone else in the world, if we're going to maintain our standard of living and the way in which we live in this wonderful province of Ontario. This bill doesn't do that.

This bill goes back to the 1990s. What happened in the 1990s? We've had experience with this bill. This bill basically reinstates Bill 40, which was one of the most controversial labour bills ever put forward in this province. People were in the galleries in this House, they were almost coming through the doors out here. They broke through the front doors of the Legislature trying to get at the government that was doing this. It wasn't a very popular piece of legislation at the time. Then, of course, when our government took it out with Bill 7 in 1995, the other group was here in the galleries and in the front hall creating quite a stir as well.

But let's go back to 1990, when we have experience as to what this bill would do to the province of Ontario. Granted, there was a US recession in 1991, but by the second quarter of 1992, the US was out of their recession and the economy was starting its climb in the longest economic boom that the United States and Canadian economies have ever seen. In fact, that boom is still going on. It had a little hiccup in 2000-01; it was not a recession. It is continuing to grow through today. There are some weaknesses in the US and Canadian economies. The US economy has weaknesses in the housing area, and the automotive industry in the United States seems to be a little weak at the moment, but by and large that economy is chugging along in extremely good fashion and is continuing to go even after such a long run.

What happened in Canada? The rest of Canada, not including Ontario, over the period of 1990 to 1995, the four and a half years of the Bob Rae government, created 80,000 new jobs. That's about a normal gain of new jobs in the rest of Canada over any four-and-a-half-year period. There were better times in some areas and there were worse times in other areas, but that's about average, especially when you work in that there was a recession in the heartland of Canada, in Ontario, that didn't seem to want to go away.

During that same period of four and a half years of Bob Rae's government that ran from September 6, 1990, to June 8, 1995, Ontario lost 10,000 jobs. So the rest of Canada gained 80,000 jobs; Ontario lost 10,000 jobs. Something was obviously happening in Ontario that was not happening in the rest of Canada. What was that? That was the Bob Rae government, which had a very adversarial approach to business.

When you take that adversarial approach to business, business and capital have wings and they go to a jurisdiction that is friendlier to them, and they take their jobs with them. So all the labour that you're trying to protect with legislation like this—it's actually creating higher unemployment. That's what happened in Ontario when this type of legislation came in.

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Many businesses from Ontario went to the United States, and mainly to Buffalo, where they could set up and supply their Canadian customers, their Ontario customers. That jurisdiction was a much more friendly jurisdiction than Ontario. So many companies went to Buffalo that Buffalo made Bob Rae their man of the year because he had created such an economic boom in Buffalo because of legislation like this and because of the high taxes that he continued to increase and put on business and taxpayers of all ilk.

This bill is very much from the 1930s and the 1940s. It's very much a setback to the labour dominance of the early 1990s in Ontario, the Bob Rae years. This would set labour relations back 50 years. This piece of legislation does not create the team spirit that you need within management. This legislation does not create the linked unity of labour relations and management relations in Ontario's economy. This legislation doesn't create the common goal that labour and management need if they're going to be successful in the 21st century.

Labour relations today is not the confrontational stuff of the past. Labour relations today is about building teams and about building a future for this great province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for York South–Weston.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): Applause from the Conservative benches, too.

I'm very pleased to rise in this House this morning to speak to this important bill that has been put forth by my colleague the member for Niagara Centre. I know that my party's time is limited, so I shall only take up four or five minutes in order that my NDP colleagues can also get a chance to participate in this debate.

This bill means a great deal to me personally. I was raised in a union household. My father is an active trade unionist, a proud member of the United Steelworkers for nearly three decades now. My mother was an active member of the UFCW. Growing up, it was the union that made my family strong. There were times when that strength was challenged by strikes and work stoppages. However, we were always comforted by knowing that there were laws that gave my parents important rights and protection when it came to bargaining for improved working conditions, salaries and benefits.

In my own case, my very first elected position was as a 14-year-old shop steward at a drugstore outlet that belonged to one of the big chains of the day. For nearly five years, I juggled high school, a part-time job and representing the best interests of more than a couple of dozen of my colleagues, most of them students and seniors, who worked alongside me as members of the UFCW. I learned a great deal. While we never had to go through a strike during my five years as a store clerk, as a cashier and as a union rep, there were a couple of instances where bargaining went right down to the wire.

But we never had to walk a picket line, and for that I felt that we were fortunate.

In 1992, as I was leaving my union position to go on to university, the landscape for unionized workers in this province fighting for their rights was much different than it is today. We were treated as equals, and the playing field was level. That was largely a result of the groundbreaking legislation that was passed by the government of the day. My colleague from Hamilton East is here this morning, and if members will recall, it was one of her predecessors from that riding, the Minister of Labour, the legendary Mr. Mackenzie, who toiled tirelessly to bring into effect the seminal labour relations legislation that provided workers with fairness, real protection and full rights when it came to job action. That legislation gave us labour peace and, in fact, contributed to economic growth during a time of great economic uncertainty. In the two years following the passage of Mr. Mackenzie's legislation, Ontario saw the creation of nearly 170,000 well-paying jobs. Compare and contrast that with the present situation, during which we have witnessed the recent loss of more than 120,000 jobs in manufacturing alone.

That pioneering piece of legislation was gutted in 1995 by the anti-worker Conservative regime. Since then, striking workers and their families have been pummeled and pilloried across this province. Their rights were stripped away, and we see the heavy toll that this has taken across Ontario.

It's union-busting at its worst: large, very profitable enterprises whipping workers into line, taking advantage of legislation that this present government has refused to take action on. We see strikes lasting months and months, if indeed they are resolved at all; unionized workers essentially being beaten into submission, hopelessly watching as scabs—and I say this, scabs who themselves are victims of the present flawed system that pits worker against worker, man versus man, woman versus woman—ride buses across the picket lines.

We need to restore the rights of striking workers. We need this bill passed into law so that Ontario's unionized workers can once again be given full and equal rights when it comes to taking job action.

I especially urge members on the government side, many of them from proud blue-collar union towns like Sarnia, North Bay, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Niagara Falls and Cornwall, to name just a few, to stand up and be counted on this legislation. I say to them, give your constituents—the hard-working women and men and their families who have been victimized by 12 years of iron-fisted anti-union rule—the protection they so richly deserve.

These workers and their families can count on the members of the NDP caucus to stand here and stand up for what's right. This morning, I challenge the members of the Liberal government to rise in their places and do the same and support this bill.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm pleased to join in the debate this morning with respect to Bill 192, An Act to amend the Labour Rela-

tions Act, 1995, brought forward by the member from Niagara Centre. Before doing that, though, I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the member from Davenport, who was here just a few moments ago and had to step out briefly, on his speech last night, as we had debated a motion until about 9:20 prior to the vote. I arrived home last night about a quarter after 10. My wife, as she welcomed me home, said, "Who was the fellow who was talking at the end of the evening just before you adjourned?" She commented that his speech was extremely well done, well-understood and articulate. So I'm going to try to take a bit of a lesson today, if I can, from the member from Davenport. I think he started off by saying that his constituents were telling him, when he was at a community meeting prior to being here for his speech, during part of the evening, that they found that we spoke too quickly and didn't articulate. I'm known to speak quickly in my family; my mother did, and my aunt and my children. I'm going to try to slow down a bit and maybe try to articulate more.

Like many of us in this House, we probably have some roots in our families in the labour movement. My first summer job was working on what is the Toronto city hall in the mid 1960s. I remember walking up many flights of stairs carrying boxes of insulation. I worked for the International Brotherhood of Heat and Frost Insulators, Local 95. My father worked there throughout his career on any number of job sites, both private sector and in some cases public sector job sites. So like many of us, I have a history within our household of the likes of working in and of those who have made their living and raised their families in that movement.

I would suggest that our government understands the importance of stable labour relations. Just last evening, Minister Peters addressed the Ontario Construction Secretariat here in our own building. That's a group of both employers and employees that operates as the secretariat. They spoke to the support that the minister has shown to employers and employees through the Ontario Construction Secretariat and the working relationship that exists through that organization, particularly in their role in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors of construction.

We have been through a history, quite a history, in collective bargaining in the past several years. Negotiations have taken place in almost every part of the broader public sector. We came to office, and at that time, Minister Kennedy, then the Minister of Education prior to leaving for other endeavours, was instrumental in working with employers and employees in the elementary and secondary school systems to put in place long-term contracts, the longest-term contracts that had been negotiated between the parties in history—four-year contracts—for some peace and stability in the educational sector.

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Minister Phillips, in my early days here, was responsible for—and is responsible for, but I worked with him as his parliamentary assistant—negotiations with the On-

tario Public Service Employees Union and negotiated a fair and equitable contract with that group. I was honoured and pleased to be able to participate in that and watch that process unfold on the government side, watch that process unfold of those structured negotiations and the success that occurred in those.

It certainly would be our view that government has to show the lead in respect to setting standards for negotiations to create some fairness and stability and equity within the labour movement. Over the past number of years, quite a number of years, one has to look at some statistics, I guess, to determine how successful legislation is, how successful the capacity to sit across the table and negotiate contracts in a fair way, and, in the event that there is a strike or lockout, to be able to bring those to a conclusion in as equitable and as quick a way as possible.

I'm looking here at work stoppages. In 1975—it was in 1975 that I started my teaching career. As a matter of fact, I think I was teaching two or three days before we were locked out. So my own personal experience was one of starting a career and finding myself out the door in a matter of days. That was resolved reasonably quickly at that point in time. But under Ontario jurisdiction there were some three-million-plus days lost in 1975 to strikes or lockouts. As a matter of fact, during the period from 1975 to 1984, that decade period, there were years in which there were 1.6 million, 2.9 million, 2.5 million, 2.2 million days lost. In only one of those years were the days lost to strikes or lockouts less than one million; there were 760,000 in that particular year.

Things improved between 1985 and 1994. It was only in 1990 that there were just under three million days lost to strikes or lockouts. There were three other years in which there were a million plus, and some five years or so, five or six years, in which there were a million, 900,000, 800,000 and as low as 371,000 days lost. That was in 1993, during the time that the NDP government was in place.

From 1995 to the present: In 1996, 1997 and 1998, we had losses through strikes or lockouts of 1.9 million days, 1.9 million days, one million days, and then again in 2002 a loss of 1.5 million days to strikes or lockouts.

I think when government sets the tone, the mood in the industry at large changes. In the years 2003 to 2005, we've seen less than half a million person-days lost to strikes or lockouts in matters under Ontario jurisdiction. As a matter of fact, in 2006 it's dropped to virtually the lowest level except for one other year that I can see, to some 394,600 persons-days lost, and that's acknowledging the growth in the labour force during that period of time. I think if government takes a strong lead and if you build strong relationships, you can set the tone for others in the industries that are out there. What we've seen is an increasing diminution of days lost to strikes and lockouts. What we've seen is 97% of recent contracts being negotiated without strike or lockout.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

I draw members' attention to the members' west gallery. We are joined by Bob Huget, member for Sarnia

of the provincial Parliament in the 35th Parliament. Welcome.

Further debate? The member for—don't tell me—Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): Nepean—Carleton; thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes people confuse me and the member from Ottawa—Orléans, because we look so much alike. He looks good with long red hair. In any event, Mr. Speaker, I'm just teasing him because our ridings are adjacent, and he's a good fellow.

I'm happy to be joining the debate today. When I was a kid growing up, my dad had a bit of a background in these sorts of things. Being my dad—everybody here has a father or mother that they just adored—I would follow my dad around. He was the chair of the unemployment appeals board, the chairman of referees, back in the 1980s and 1990s, and to this day he's still on the Nova Scotia Labour Relations Board—and he has a business background himself. So these sorts of issues would come up from time to time. One thing I learned as a child, following in my dad's footsteps, is that you have to have a balance and a sense of co-operation among management and labour and staff, and it must be progressive. With all due respect—because I do have the greatest respect for my colleague from Niagara—I don't think we can support this, because I don't think this is as progressive and as forward-looking as I would like to see a bill like this; I think it takes us back a little bit in time.

Today, in this Legislature and in these modern times, we must be talking about other issues that can improve our economy here in Ontario. We should be looking forward, particularly with thousands upon thousands of manufacturing jobs leaving this province, and we should be thinking about how to attract business so that the people in my riding of Nepean—Carleton and the people in all of Ottawa and eastern Ontario and Ontario in general are going to have good-paying jobs and some stability in their lives so that they can send their children off to college and they can save for their retirement. We should be using our time today to bring Ontario from worst to first in terms of economic growth. When I learned earlier this year that we were lagging, in this province, the biggest province in Confederation, behind Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province, I was very disappointed, and I think that we should be spending more time in the Legislature thinking about that and trying to bring jobs to this province.

We should be talking about something that impacts farmers in my riding, throughout eastern Ontario and throughout all of rural Ontario, and that is the lack of a risk management strategy for workers on farms, who are spending countless hours working on the family farm. Unfortunately, with the recent budget cuts, systemic budget cuts since this Liberal government has taken office, the farmers in my riding are just at wits' end. We can't see any more cuts and slashes to the Ministry of Agriculture.

I also think we should be talking about changes to the labour laws in this province that would make it easier for

people to make organ donations. If people are expected to take some time off work to donate a liver or another vital organ, we should be making it easier for them to give the gift of life.

Finally, I think we should be spending time in this Legislature discussing companies that, despite the fact that we have eliminated the mandatory age of retirement, still force their employees out the door at the age of 55. I know that's happening and I've heard it has been happening, for example, in places like Wolseley Canada, which is just reprehensible. We shouldn't be doing that. We have come too far as a society.

Just to recap, we need to have a good balance of cooperation between management and unions. We should be protecting those employees who have been working hard. We've said that they don't need to be retiring at 65, and we should be looking at those types of issues. We should be looking at risk management strategies for the family farm, we should be looking at generating economic growth in this province to bring us from worst to first, and we should be talking about the ability to make it easier for people to take time off from work to give the gift of life.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Applause.

1050

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Thank you, colleagues.

Certainly we forget very easily in this province what is real and what is not. I too grew up in a union household, like many of my colleagues, and I listened with fascination to my colleague from York South–Weston. My background was a little different and my father a little older. He remembered the labour movement of the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s and the 1960s. He was not only a union member, but he was a union organizer. I remember waiting for my dad to come home, and we didn't know, first of all, whether he would have a job that day, because union jobs were few and far between in many of those points in history. Also, we didn't know what shape he'd be in when he came home. We didn't know whether he'd have a broken arm, which he did on occasion, or whether he'd be roughed up because of a strike, because of company-organized thugs who would be used to break up strikes, to hurt union members, to hurt workers to force them out of unions.

You know, I listened to the member from Halton about a team—the team of corporation and union member—and I have to say, from my own background as a child watching my father come home, it didn't seem like much of a team to me. It seemed like two very separate entities and sometimes certainly antagonistic entities.

We live in a world also that's not ours alone in Canada. You know that in the United States, the second-largest employer is Manpower temporary agency. Now, that's where we're headed in this province. We're headed to precarious employment, to part-time employment, to non-union employment—that's what's happening. We

live in a volatile situation. You heard my colleague speak about the loss of good manufacturing jobs. That's the reality in which we live and they're being replaced, as I said, by service sector jobs—not well-paying jobs. That's what they're being replaced by. Your chance, if you are an employer, of ever having a visit by a government member to inspect how you treat your workers, is about one per cent.

Essentially we have employment standards that are not being enforced. We all know that a law that's not being enforced is not a law at all, and of course, we do not have card-based certification. The Harris-Eves government eliminated that. McGuinty Liberals denounced it, but have they done anything about it? Absolutely nothing. The McGuinty Liberals have done absolutely nothing about bringing that back, and from what I've heard across the floor and next to me, I'm hoping that at least they will support this motion from our member from Niagara Centre because at least this is a step in the right direction. But I suspect that they will not. We'll see.

So not only have they done nothing to bring back card-based certification, but this is in contrast to how they ran in the last election. I just quote, and this is from now-Minister Dwight Duncan, who said in 1995: “We in this party believe that workers ought to be treated as equals in the economy. We in this party are opposed to the use of scabs. We believe that the amount of violence on the shop floor will increase....it takes us back to a time long, long ago when it wasn't uncommon for the governments of the day to try and break unions or prevent them from coming into our province.” I would love to hear from him now.

Then, the current Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Rick Bartolucci, said: “All you have to do is talk to the people who are on the picket line at Falconbridge to find out that Bill 7”—that's a Tory bill, of course—“hurts labour-management relations. There is absolutely no incentive, none whatsoever, for management to get back to the table, because they're able to use scab labour.”

That's what they said when they were running for office, but now that they're in office, we see a very different set of actions. Again, I would call on my colleagues across the floor to do the right thing here and to vote for this motion. Clearly, this is a step to redressing it, but more than this motion, they also need to bring back card certification.

It's interesting how history repeats itself, because now I'm married to a man who would like to be a member of a union but is not allowed to be a member of a union in this province, because he's a teacher at a community college on contract and part-time. He's been through two strikes, one when he was a TA up at York University and again, in the community college system. It was déjà vu. There I was waiting again, to see if my husband, this time, would come back from the picket line injured, would come back with a job, and even now we wait, because he's not allowed to be a member of the union by this government. We wonder every September, will he

have a job again this year? Even though he's working full-time, he's not considered a member of a union—another action this government has not taken.

Finally, I want to raise one particularly troubling strike here in Ontario in the riding of London North Centre at Huron University College. Food service workers at the Huron University College food court, members of Local 144 of OPSEU, have been on the line since March 26 on strike against the Compass Group. These 20 workers are on strike for fairness, justice, health and safety. These women and men who work preparing and serving food are afforded only one—one—paid sick day per year, despite the fact that they handle food for the public every day. They cannot afford to take unpaid sick days. They simply want a living wage and fair benefits. This employer is bringing in scabs and paying them \$14 an hour—for them; not for the employees, but for the scabs.

No new talks are scheduled. The union is more than willing to get back to the table. This is yet a living, present example of how the McGuinty Liberals are failing union workers. I want to make it clear that New Democrats stand in solidarity with these women and men in London, in their fight for fair wages and dignity.

I'd like to close by saying, shame on the Compass Group for using scabs and paying poverty wages; shame on the member for London North Centre for letting this go under her watch; and finally, absolute and utter shame on the McGuinty Liberal government for their horrendous track record where unionized workers are concerned. Let's pass this motion of my colleague from Niagara Centre and let's do it now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): I want to put on the record my support as the member for Timmins—James Bay, but more importantly as a New Democrat and a trade unionist, for this particular bill.

I didn't grow up in a house of labour; I was in the house of labour. I came out of the labour movement. I worked in the mining industry for a number of years; I was with the United Steelworkers of America, Local 4440; I've bargained collective agreements on behalf of unions. My local—I've also been hired and I was employed within the trade labour movement, both for the Steelworkers and for the Ontario Federation of Labour.

In my experience, I have no doubt in my mind that legislation such as this is necessary. Why? It's because of what my colleague the member from Niagara Centre talks about, which is that you have to basically level the playing field when it comes to the power that the employer can exercise over workers when it comes to collective bargaining. There is no incentive to resolve tough negotiations if an employer knows he can bring scabs into the workplace. All this does—not having legislation that bans the use of scab replacement workers—is basically give the power to the employer to prolong a very difficult situation and negotiations, and not work at trying to find a resolution.

The other part that I want to talk about very quickly is the issue—it was raised, I believe, by one of my colleagues—in regard to the need to end the right for em-

ployers to lock out. I just want to say very quickly—because I know my good friend Andrea Horwath wants to have a few seconds on the bill—that that is very necessary. We currently have, in the city of Timmins, Grant Waferboard, which has basically locked the workers out in Timmins since September of this year. It has no interest in negotiating a collective agreement with the employees. I think that's wrong, it's reprehensible, and we need to have legislation that bans people like Peter Grant from doing what he's doing to the workers in Timmins. I say, high time that we pass legislation to that effect.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to join my colleagues in speaking very much in favour of this private member's bill that the member from Niagara Centre has brought forward.

I want to spend the few minutes that I have bringing to light a situation where there are a number of women workers—in fact there are 70 workers at FirstOntario Credit Union in Hamilton: 69 women and one man who work for FirstOntario Credit Union. They have been on strike, trying to get a fair deal from their credit union, since October of last year. These women and this one man are up at their six-month mark for their strike, and it's absolutely unacceptable.

The employer wants to have rollbacks on things like pension eligibility, health benefits and full-time work hours. They're taking these women back to the 1970s and 1960s in terms of working conditions—unacceptable. The only reason that this strike has been able to drag on and on and on is because the employer is able to use replacement workers to do the work of the credit union.

Interjection: Scabs, you mean?

Ms. Horwath: Well, you know what? They're not scabs. In this particular situation, they're management. But management becomes scabs when they start doing the work of the workers in that credit union.

So I'm here to say that on Saturday night I'm going to a fundraiser at the labour council in Hamilton to support these women workers. All of the members of this caucus have bought tickets for that fundraiser. Anybody who's watching, who is from Hamilton and knows the disgrace that's going on at the worst Ontario credit union, an organization that's headed up by a guy who comes from the banking sector, who is used to putting the boots to workers, a guy named Mr. John Lahey—I have to tell you, this man has been an absolute nightmare of a person to work for and try to negotiate with. These women deserve a decent shake and we're going to be there, in terms of our spirit anyway, supporting these women on Saturday night.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Kormos, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kormos: As we canvass some of the great history of working-class struggle in this province, be it the Stratford furniture workers strike back in 1933, be it the Oshawa General Motors auto workers strike in 1937 or be it the pivotal workers' struggle, the hallmark of the struggle of the working class in this province, the Ford

Windsor auto workers in 1945—which of course resulted in the Rand formula, we understand, as David Moulton pointed out—the right to organize the union of their choice, the right to a collective agreement and the right to strike, all were rights never willingly given to workers. Rather, they were conceded to them after a tremendous amount of hardship, pain and blood.

I say to colleagues in this chamber that the importance of workers' right to struggle meaningfully has never been greater, as globalization has impacted on every worker and every family and every job in this province. It's not this government that's kept good jobs in the province of Ontario; it's not this government that's protected workers against concessions being forced upon them, and lower and lower wages; it's not this government that's protecting workers from the ravaging and raping of their pensions and pension plans. It's certainly not the corporate world. It's the workers, and workers in their working-class struggle, who are going to fight these things. We as a Legislature have the responsibility to give those working women and men in this province—yes, indeed—a level playing field. That means that when those workers exercise that ultimate function of withdrawing their labour, it's our job to protect them from the violence, the scandal and the assault of scabs, and scabs being bused across their picket lines protected by organized goons like Accufax.

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 200, An Act to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario / Projet de loi 200, Loi prévoyant la réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Bisson, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to first of all say that I'm extremely proud to stand here as a New Democrat today, along with my colleague Mr. Peter Tabuns, who was the original author of this bill, and the rest of my caucus in regard to this particular issue. I think we've all understood, quite frankly, that this particular issue is one that is fast becoming a huge problem, not only for Ontario but for our planet.

I come from a part of Ontario, northern Ontario, where we're seeing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions probably far more than people realize in other parts of the province. For example, you will know that I represent the Timmins–James Bay riding. We have seen over the last 10 or 15 years huge shifts, as far as patterns, when it comes to climate in the northern part of this province. It used to be, as most of us remember when we were younger, that winter started probably at the end of

November and never ended until about April or May. You knew that you were going to have snowfalls in fairly large amounts, you knew the weather was going to be 20 to 30 below zero for at least two and a half months, and you got ready. That's what you were used to, living in a northern climate.

We are now seeing, basically, green Christmases, something that is unheard-of in northern Ontario, the part that I come from. You are seeing, for example, winter ending in the beginning of March. This year, we were barbecuing, in the city of Timmins, in 18-degree weather at the end of March this year. That is something that tells us that we certainly have a problem when it comes to the effect of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

I will also point out another example, one that most people probably don't know because they've never had a chance to travel up there, and that is the James Bay communities. There are winter roads that are established, a winter road from Moosonee up to Attawapiskat that has been basically, for a number of years, put in place in order to transport goods and services to the communities of the James Bay. Normally, that road would be open with ice bridges by sometime in December, and the road would be available for the public and for those who need to use it until, at the very earliest, late March, more times than not into April. We're seeing now that those winter roads are not up and running until about the end of January. So clearly, there are at least 30 to 45 days when we're seeing that the winter road is open, and it is ending a lot earlier. You can normally count on that winter road to be open at least three months per year, and we're lucky now if we're getting 45 days a year. This is not something that just happened this year. We're seeing the pattern, over the years, that our winters are becoming shorter and shorter. Although I must say in jest that all of us in northern Ontario would appreciate a little bit of good weather every now and then, we recognize that this is a serious problem for our environment.

This bill is based on work that was done by Peter Tabuns, the current member for what used to be Riverdale, and work that was done by our former colleague Marilyn Churley, along with our federal leader, Jack Layton, that says we need to do something to deal with this particular issue. I want to go through some of the mechanics of the bill very quickly, and I know that my colleague and our critic for the environment, Mr. Tabuns, who knows a lot about this, is going to get an opportunity to speak to this as well.

What this bill says—and I certainly hope that the members of the assembly will support it—is that the province of Ontario needs to put a plan in place that sets us in the position of being able to meet the protocols negotiated under the Kyoto agreement. Under section 3, it says that if emissions were set at 1990 standards, by 2012 we need to meet what our commitments were under the Kyoto Protocol and that they have to be no less than 25% below their 1990 level by the year 2020. What that does is say to the government, "Put in place a plan. Develop a plan based on science, technology and everything

else. Call in the people that you need in order to develop a plan.” Certainly, as New Democrats, we would want to participate in that. We have a number of ideas that my leader, Howard Hampton, talked about yesterday at a press conference in regard to some of the things that can be done, but ultimately the government would have to develop a plan that brings us to meeting those commitments.

The second thing it says is that the Environmental Commissioner will have the authority to look at what has been done to make sure that the government has met its commitments under this legislation. We need to have some sort of a watchdog. I think this is one of the key points. You can’t just say, through an order in council, “We’ll have the Ministry of the Environment go out and do this,” and have no mechanism by which to determine if in fact we are meeting our goals set out in this legislation.

The other thing that it does is something that was raised in the press conference yesterday, and I just want to go back over it again. Some of the media were asking, “Isn’t it kind of late? Can we meet our current targets by 2012?” I’ll admit that it’ll be somewhat difficult but not impossible. This government has had a chance for three and a half years to meet those commitments. They have not sent us down that path, in my estimation, to the degree needed.

What it does is it gives us the ability to go to 2016. Under subsection 3(3), we’re saying, “If greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario are not reduced to the level required under clause (1)(a) by 2012, the executive council shall ensure that the emissions are reduced to that level by 2016....” It builds in a bit of a buffer to allow us to get there, recognizing that there may be some difficulty getting there. I think that if we’re serious and we work hard, we’re going to be able to meet those commitments. We can reduce those emissions by 50% with Nanticoke alone. If we were to do the kinds of things that we need to do to move people from cars into public transit, both intercity rail and in-city transit systems, I think we’d be able to do that.

That can be done in a number of ways. For example, the extension of the subway line that was announced previously in the budget is one way, but I think we need to not only look at that; we need to look at issues beyond just the subway. We need to take a look at what the TTC and other transit authorities across this province have to say about how they’re able to move people off city streets and put them into the transit system. As we know, in Ontario, there’s only one subway system, and that’s the one in the city of Toronto. We need to take a look at light rail, we need to take a look at buses, we need to look at others.

The other part of all this is that we need to take a look at intercity transit. Clearly, GO Transit could play a huge role in pulling people off the 401 and the QEW, which would greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I think the proper type of coordination about how community transit systems interact with the GO system, from

Hamilton to Oshawa, to Niagara, Toronto and everything in between, and properly funding those transit authorities, such as GO Transit, in order to increase their services so that we can encourage people to get off the roads would go a long way toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

1110

I also want to say that section 5 of this bill allows the minister to deal with reducing greenhouse gases in a number of different ways. The bill gives the authority to the minister to regulate emissions limits and performance standards—something that was talked about yesterday in the press conference—and we would be using market-based mechanisms such as emission-trading offsets, something that has been talked about at the federal level. Also, we need to put in place the spending and fiscal measures—in other words, incentives—in order to move industry and move individuals toward strategies that would reduce greenhouse gases. I would argue that if we were to do things such as have been suggested by Howard Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party, and that is to really put in place incentives that allow individuals in their own homes to reduce the amount of energy utilized by better insulating their homes, by using technologies that allow us to reduce the amount of energy used, both natural gas and others, we would be able to reduce by a long shot the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into our planet.

In the couple of minutes I have left, I want to end on this point: I truly believe this is a non-partisan issue and I truly believe all members of this House are going to do the right thing here and allow this bill to go forward. We should not allow politics to get caught in the middle of this bill. This is a private member’s bill. It’s one that basically goes towards responding to an issue in our society that is quite serious. We owe it not only to ourselves today, but to future generations, to take this issue seriously and try to move forward by way of being able to develop strategies that do Ontario’s bit towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I call on members to support this bill so that we can move forward. We certainly want to work with whom-ever within government, industry and others to give suggestions on how a plan would be developed. But I want to say again that I’m not pretending for one second that I, as the author of the bill, or my party, as a political party, would dictate exactly what the plan should be. That’s something that has to be developed in co-operation with the Ministry of the Environment and all others who can be brought into this debate, as far as what the plan should look like. This is a plan the government would have to develop in co-operation with others so that we can meet our commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

Again I say—and I end on this note—that we owe it to not only today’s generation but future generations to ensure that we do what we can in our contribution to making sure that we reduce greenhouse gas emissions, by cutting carbon emissions so that we can make this planet a safer place for all of us into the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Indeed, it's a pleasure for me to make some comments this morning on Bill 200.

I ran across something the other day that I thought was somewhat interesting. It was in a recent article of Time magazine, the Canadian edition. It said that "Svante Arrhenius was a little-known Swedish chemist who in the 1890s issued a remarkable warning: Keep pumping carbon dioxide"—CO₂—"into the air the way humanity has been doing since the dawn of the industrial age (around 1750), he said, and you can double the level of the heat-trapping gas in the atmosphere, raising temperatures dramatically." Those were his observations in the 1890s, the first person to start talking about the issue of climate change and greenhouse gases.

The current Premier has shown distinctive and dramatic leadership on this issue over many, many years. I want to go back to May 21, 2002, when the member from Ottawa South, Mr. McGuinty, asked to seek unanimous consent to move and pass the following motion without debate: "That the Ontario Legislative Assembly encourage our federal government to ratify the Kyoto agreement." Further in that statement he said, "If you are truly committed to doing something about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, then here are some of the things you could do in a positive and concrete way: you could get into the business of funding public transit in a real and meaningful way; you could encourage renewable electricity generation in Ontario; you could phase out our coal-fired hydro plants; you could begin to promote energy conservation in Ontario; you could begin to promote the use of renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. Those are all things you could do..." The member from Ottawa South, then the Leader of the Opposition and now the Premier of Ontario, has been a real leader when it comes to climate change and meeting the Kyoto commitments.

It's also interesting to look at the fact that we've been working with other partners over the last little while to look at this issue on a transnational basis, to come forward with a collective approach with others to solve the problem of climate change.

I'd like to get on the record this morning what Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said just recently: "Ontario's announcement is terrific news. We know that the science is clear and political leaders everywhere have a responsibility to act decisively to combat global warming. But we also know that no state, province or country can do it alone. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a global effort, and this interest from Ontario, along with California's agreements with the United Kingdom, western and northeastern states and others will continue to inspire other states, provinces and countries to join the fight against global warming."

Further to that, we have the new Governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer. We know him as New York's Attorney General who cleaned up Wall Street. This is what he had to say: "The harmful public health, environmental and economic impacts of global warming do not recog-

nize or respect international boundaries. Ontario and New York may be separated by a border, but we're united in a common cause to seek solutions to this most pressing challenge," that we have today, that being climate change.

There are some good elements in Bill 200, but from my perspective, there are a number of deficiencies. One of the things that I might have included in the bill would be the establishment of a permanent committee in this House to look at climate change. This issue, climate change, will transcend this Parliament, the next Parliament and the Parliament after that because climate change will bring about a fundamental change in Ontario's economy, and I think the establishment of a committee to look at that over the next period of time will be helpful to look at the kind of policies that we can shape collectively to achieve the goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to look at the climate change issue.

Secondly, I think there needs to be an amendment to the Education Act, particularly for grade 5 civics and grade 10 civics, an opportunity to put course curriculum in those two grade levels to look at climate change. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, the special edition that Time magazine had just recently on climate change outlined 51 steps, Mr. Speaker, that you and I could take every day in order to help to reduce the impact of climate change, those practical kinds of things that we could drive home in a grade 5 civics class, then again in a grade 10 civics class, to instill the notion of responsibility: that collectively, if we work together, we can make change—just as we did a decade or so ago in terms of instilling the notion of recycling in our young people.

The other issue when you look at this bill is that Ontario will have to take on more responsibility if other provinces fail to meet those targets. We know that the province of Alberta, through the oil sands development, is going to have some difficulty down the road meeting those targets. As I understand Bill 200, it would come back to Ontario to increase Ontario's effort beyond some established goals to take into account other provinces that won't achieve their goals.

I could keep going on for a while longer, but I know my other colleagues want to have an opportunity to talk on this very important measure this morning.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting today that we're in the Legislature and we're joined by two school classes. I think this one is in grade 5, and this one looks about the same age. Would you be in grade 5 over there? Yes, they are. They're from grade 5 as well.

I think it's important that grade 5—that's 11 and 12 years old, I think. It's important to understand that what we do today for the environment—and I want the children, the kids, to understand this—will have very little effect until 50 years from now. You'll be 60 years old before there's a significant change in the environment if we start today and do something. If we don't start today and do something, then we'll be living in an environment that is very much like two cities I just visited, Beijing and Shanghai. Those are two very large cities in China. When

you visit Beijing, you find out that you only see the blue sky between eight and 15 days a year. All the rest of the time the air is so polluted that you can't see the blue sky. In fact, it's difficult to see a quarter of a mile. If you visit the Forbidden City, you cannot see from one side of the Forbidden City to the other because of the smog. It's in a constant state of upgrading. It needs constant painting because of the acid in the air that is eating away at the paint. That would be the future of our environment if we don't do something about the environment immediately.

1120

This is an interesting place. You came on an interesting day. Just a little while ago in the previous bill we heard an NDP member talk about cancelling the York subway program. Now, just 10 minutes ago, we heard a member talking about encouraging people to use more subways. You heard the speaker before me talk about the Premier and what a great environmental record he had, and I'm standing here and I'm going to say that the Premier has an absolutely terrible environmental record. He has done nothing to help encourage a cleaner environment for us today, for you in your future and for your children in your future. So this is a somewhat confusing place. We put all of our ideas out on the table, and hopefully out of all those we can get some synthesis that makes sense that we can go forward with.

In support of my contention that the Premier has not been a friend of the environment, I would quote no less an authority than the Environmental Commissioner, Mr. Gord Miller, who has been somewhat savage in his comments regarding this government's environmental record. That's an interesting point, because Mr. Miller was appointed when we were in government. This was prior to 2003. We sat over there, and we were the government. Mr. Miller was appointed, and the Liberals and the NDP were aghast that Mr. Miller would be appointed as Environmental Commissioner. Mr. Miller had very good credentials, and he was extremely well qualified for the job. When it came time to reappoint him, he had done such a good job that the Liberal government did indeed reappoint him. He continues to do, I think, an excellent job, especially when he savages the Liberal government for their record on the environment.

I want to say right off the top that I'm going to support this bill. I have some concerns about some of the elements within the bill. I think it needs some major amendments to change the direction, in some cases, of this bill. But any bill we pass in this House that affects the environment in a positive way I think is a good thing for Ontario, it's a particularly good thing for the youth of this province and it's a good thing for anybody who wants to live in a clean environment in this world.

There are many places in this world where that clean environment just doesn't exist, where they have turned their backs on the environment in order to pursue the economic activities that create those kinds of disasters that we see in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei and Formosa. Taiwan was another example. There's lots of pollution in and around Japan, which is very significant.

We were on a boat approaching Shanghai, and we were out in the Yellow Sea about 150 miles when the sea turned colour. It turned from that blue sea colour to a brown, and that brown was the effluent that was coming down the Yangtze River. That was 150 miles out into the sea, and from there on into Shanghai the water was absolutely polluted, no fish, no—

Mr. Bisson: It's silt.

Mr. Chudleigh: That's silt. Also, let me tell you, there was some pollution in it. You could see it. You could also smell it. It was a sad quote on the future, and that's what our future will look like if we don't do something very significant about the environment.

We talk about the Kyoto accord and the Kyoto Protocol. I have some significant reservations about the Kyoto accord, because the Kyoto accord allows a polluter, for instance, to go to a country that doesn't pollute and to buy pollution points. So you can go down to Uruguay, which has not a lot of industry, and you can buy from them pollution points because they're not polluting the air. You can buy their points and bring them back to Ontario, and then you can continue to pollute the Ontario air.

That system doesn't seem to have much of a global aspect to it. It doesn't take into consideration that the world is one and that we have to get together and fix this problem because it's a global problem. Simply shifting the pollution around the province or around the world doesn't solve the problem. That's one of the major concerns that I have with Kyoto.

I think that Kyoto is right-headed. It's aimed in the right direction in that it's a world body that has agreed that we have a problem. But there is one significant country, the United States of America, which has not signed on to Kyoto, and of course, there's a huge backlash and outcry about the United States not co-operating in this area. But after the first five years of Kyoto, when you measure the pollution that has taken place and how successful individual countries have been in controlling that pollution, the United States has been far more successful at controlling their pollution with their programs than Canada has been. So signing on to Kyoto or not signing on to Kyoto isn't the issue; it's how successful you've been and how far you want to go in providing the kind of support that it needs.

There's an interesting article today in the *Globe and Mail* written by Gary Mason. Gary Mason is out in BC. It's a real concern. One of the things that he says is: "The voices of doom have begun to drown out the thoughtful, rational discussion that needs to take place around solutions. We need to consider how we're going to get out of this mess while not plunging the world into economic chaos at the same time."

He goes on to quote Professor Howard, who has edited a book on Asia's environmental crises. He believes that the ideologues—those people with ideas and political agendas—have hijacked the climate-change debate; in other words, they've taken over the debate and have begun to channel it in the direction that they want to go.

People have a huge disconnect between the apocalyptic vision—the tsunamis, the hurricanes, the droughts, the disasters, those kinds of things that are befalling us—that some are predicting while at the same time being told that they can change the direction we're going by changing the type of light bulb they use. There's a disconnect between the world disasters and the proposed solutions.

I think we need that sane, rational voice to carry on with the job of getting that done. I don't think that voice rests with the government. I don't think Dalton McGuinty's record is one that we can continue to have in Ontario. I think we need a thoughtful process to come up with a strong environmental approach to this problem and get that done at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): It's a privilege to debate this bill in this House this morning. I want to say that my friend from Timmins–James Bay has talked about the impact of climate change on the north, and he has spoken about that quite eloquently. I want to thank him for bringing this bill forward today.

The essence of this bill is the need for action: action on a speedy basis; action that will actually make a difference to our climate, a difference to our economy, a difference to our society. That's why this is before us today. The targets are ambitious, but I want to speak to the comments of the member for Peterborough before I go into the main body of my speech. If he has amendments to bring forward that are constructive, and the ones that he made were constructive, I suggest that the Liberal caucus vote for this bill and put it into committee, where it can be refined, just as the federal Clean Air Act was refined by the joint action of the NDP, the Bloc and the Liberals.

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One thing that he has misunderstood—and this needs to be understood by all those who are going to debate this bill—is that there is no section of this bill that requires Ontario to take on the commitments of any other province. It simply says that Ontario, in setting its goals, will use the same regime that Canada took on when it ratified the Kyoto Protocol. That's a 6% reduction by 2012 and, where Ontario fails to meet its goals, it will take those goals and add a 30% penalty and work those through in the following three years. Because I know—we all know—that a great deal of time has passed and what we have now is a short window.

Time and its passage: In 1988, James Hansen from NASA testified before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Almost 20 years ago, he stood up and said, "Climate change is real. Climate change is happening. Climate change is reshaping the world around us and we need to act now." That summer was the summer of heat waves and drought across North America. People understood that something was afoot because in fact the conditions they were looking at were record-breaking.

In Toronto, in the summer of 1988, there was a UN conference on climate change. The conclusions that were arrived at in that conference are known to all those who

deal with the issue, and that's the statement that humanity is engaged in a large-scale, unplanned, unpredictable experiment with the world's climate. And we depend on that climate to make sure that we have crops, to ensure that our bridges and roads are not washed away in floods, to ensure that there is stability in our lives. We are engaged in destabilizing that upon which we stand. That was 1988.

In 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro: At that point, the world committed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A very significant piece in that agreement was that no country would do anything that would bring about dangerous climate change. Then, for a number of years, very little happened. Countries went on as they had before. The convention was simply a statement.

It wasn't until 1997 that an agreement was actually negotiated, with some detail—what we know as the Kyoto Protocol—to bring emissions down. Still, life went on and very little was done. In Canada, greenhouse gas emissions under Jean Chrétien continued to rise dramatically. Under Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, tax breaks were given to the oil sands, the tar sands developments in Alberta, that caused a huge boom in oil extraction and a huge boom in emissions. Thus Canada was set on a trajectory of falling far outside any commitment that had been made.

In 2005, the Kyoto Protocol came into effect. Here we are in Ontario, with emissions continuing to climb. We're not in a position to let those emissions continue to climb. In 2005, the Guardian in the UK reported very simply that "Rising sea levels, desertification and shrinking freshwater supplies will create up to 50 million environmental refugees by the end of the decade." That's substantial. That is tens of millions of people uprooted from their homes by drought and by flood. For the most part, those refugees will be in the developing world, not here. For many of us, they will be relatives or friends, people facing desperate situations. The world is starting to come to grips with that tide of environmental refugees, but the cost of that tide, the implications for world security and military conflict, have not yet sunk in.

Within the last year, the Stern report, produced by the government of the United Kingdom, noted that the impact of climate change this century would be equivalent, if unchecked, if not acted on, to a 20% reduction in world gross domestic product, comparable to the combined effects of World Wars I and II and the Great Depression. We all know that those were not great times for humanity. We know the conflict that came out of them and the human price that was paid, and we are in a situation where we actually have the ability to take action.

That's why it's important to have an act before us that says what the destination is that we have to reach to avoid the kinds of problems that Lord Stern outlined for the government of the United Kingdom. If we don't take rapid action, if we let things go on as they are, if we take the very slow timelines that are now being adopted in the

United States, you can be very sure that our chances of stabilizing the world climate at a level that allows us to live the kinds of lives we want to live diminish substantially. Every year that goes by where we're not turning back the tide means that we will have to take much deeper cuts, much more expensive cuts, much more problematic cuts in the future.

This bill, as has been outlined by my colleague, says Ontario is going to take an ambitious approach to dealing with climate change. If it doesn't reach that approach, it will accept the Kyoto burden of adding 30% on to its goal, meeting that within three years of 2012, and that by 2020 we will go a further 25% below the 1990 levels. That's consistent with the European Union. The European Union has adopted the Kyoto Protocol. I think they've got 5% below 1990 but they've recently agreed to go 20% below 1990 by 2020, and if the rest of the world agrees, if the rest of the world is willing to take action, cut by 30%.

One of the things that has frustrated me about this debate—not here this morning, but the debate in the larger context—is the sense that on the one hand, people don't have a picture of the full scope of what's ahead of us, and I tried to outline that, but also that they often feel they're helpless. The simple reality is that our society has the technology, the legislative means, the resources, the wherewithal to make that move to sustainability, to actually make it a far more energy-efficient society, to phase out fossil fuels, to avoid the nuclear path and develop a society that can exist on the earth, can thrive on the earth without undermining the foundations of its well-being.

I want to speak very briefly about this whole question of nuclear power being the answer to climate change. Amory Lovins, who heads the Rocky Mountain Institute, is one of the foremost energy analysts in the world. He looks at this whole question of how humanity can afford to cut emissions and at the same time preserve its way of life. In doing the numbers analysis of nuclear power, he concludes that it is an extraordinarily expensive way to provide energy, far more expensive than conservation, far more expensive than micro power, using the heat that's thrown off when you have boilers in office buildings to make electricity—far more efficient and far cheaper than nuclear power and far faster to put in place.

This government is committed to spending about \$40 billion, \$45 billion on nuclear power and approximately another \$30 billion on the distribution facilities to carry all that power. We do not have the luxury of checking something out to see if it works and then saying, "Oh, we blew \$80 billion. Sorry, we can't afford to do this other stuff."

We made a decision about powering our society through fossil fuels. Frankly, the outcome of that is now apparent. We know that when you do something that's unsustainable, the by-products, the waste products, are going to have negative impacts. Let's not do the same with nuclear power and provide ourselves with waste products that no one wants anywhere near their community, near their riding.

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We have to keep in mind that as the world heats up, the physical conditions that we confront change. As the world heats up, the permafrost in the arctic regions of the world starts to melt, and the permafrost is holding millions of tonnes of methane, locked away for millennia, which will start to leak out into the atmosphere. As the world heats up, the world's soils will give up their carbon. As the world heats up, the forests we depend on will be dryer and more prone to fire. At some point we will have a situation where the release of greenhouse gases from natural processes exceeds the release of greenhouse gases from our energy systems. At that point, we face profound challenges to the stability of our economies and our societies.

No one knows where that tipping point is. No one really knows at what point you start getting those sorts of feedback that will make it very difficult for us to have any real impact on the changes that are coming about. We do know that in order to at least stabilize the world's climate, at least avoid some unpredictable impacts, the world should not warm more than two degrees centigrade higher than it was at the beginning of the pre-industrial period, and we've gone up about 0.6 in the last century. We have to do everything we can to keep under that red line.

The analogy that I'd just like to use in my last few moments is that of walking on a frozen lake. In January, after a week or two of minus 30 degrees, you can walk across a frozen lake in northern Ontario and it's a beautiful experience. The sky is blue, the air is crisp. Some people like it more than others, but it's quite spectacular, and you know that the ice underneath you is thick and it's safe. But as spring comes, this becomes a more and more perilous operation. The ice weakens unpredictably. Currents thin out the ice so that what you see as solid ice may simply be a thin skin on the surface. Increasingly, humanity is walking on that frozen lake as spring is coming and there are more and more thinning spots. Humanity is going forward; it doesn't know where those thin spots are. We have to do everything we can to avoid those spots, understand where they can be and do everything we can to arrest the process that is making that lake, that foundation that we walk on, that we survive on—we have to do everything we can to ensure that it doesn't break under our feet.

I call on all members of the Liberal caucus to support this bill. I call on them to bring it forward to committee and have it adopted by this Legislature. I believe that for the good of this province and this country we have to take that leadership.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I really appreciate the opportunity again to speak about climate change and the environment. It's always difficult, in five minutes, to see what you're going to address, because the five minutes go by very quickly. It will be a difficult decision, at the end of this meeting, whether to vote against the bill or for the bill, because the ideas put forth by the third party are sound ideas, and they're ideas that we all buy into, but there are major flaws with this bill.

In 2001, with the city of Ottawa, I worked on the Better Buildings program. We had Chuck Wilson there, a great scientist, and we had people from industry, from government, from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I was the councillor attached to the Better Buildings program. Chuck Wilson showed that we could freeze or at least limit our footprint with our buildings by doing a few things: building better buildings. I'm glad to see that our government has come that way. We will be going to the California standard for our new buildings and we'll be building great buildings that will have the least cost when you consider principal, interest and energy. At the same time, those buildings will be saving energy, lowering heating costs, decreasing smog and CO₂ and—the nice thing about it—at the same time creating more employment. So that's where we're going with our building code, which is very important because we are a northern nation. We have to go in and over a 20-year period make sure that our existing buildings are the best from an energy point of view. That's all good stuff.

I've been involved in this with a motion in 2004, and on September 26, 2006, I brought in Bill 139. Bill 139 had second reading, had full support. It's a bill which just names April 21, the day before Earth Day, as Climate Change Awareness Day. I have something going on in the high schools, a competition now. I find that young people are ahead of us, certainly ahead of politicians if you look worldwide, on where we should be going on the environment. The students are competing in a poster contest, and the best poster will be judged on April 21 at the 10 high schools involved. The kids are quite interested in it. The winner will win an iPod. The member for Timmins–James Bay, I think in your riding you do include some of the habitat for polar bears. So you'll be happy to hear that our awards for the kids who win the poster contest will be Polar Bear awards and it'll be small glass trophies. I'm sure that it will be meaningful to the kids and we're getting quite a bit of interest.

We have to look at where the talk this morning came from and some of the issues that the third party has with this. The leader of the third party is showing he's against Toronto, he's against the idea that we should have public transit that allows us to move. I'm just quoting: "We don't need another subway mega-project that might perhaps happen sometime four, five years or six years from now extending the subway line into a lightly populated York region." Sustainable transportation is so important, so how does this bill this morning measure up to that?

Our government is a green government. It supports Canada meeting our Kyoto targets. A \$200-million program will be coming forward. We should be waiting for that climate change plan. That is going to be a good plan, a plan that builds in Ontario.

The bill this morning does not protect Ontario in carrying a fair load as we move forward. Part of the bill, subsection 3(3), states that if Canada does not meet its Kyoto obligation by 2012, Ontario must further reduce its emissions due to the failure of other provinces to meet the national standard. This is a very difficult area to get

into. We do not want to take on the oil sands responsibilities of Kyoto. So I will be voting against the bill because it's a flawed bill, although there are very many good ideas in it.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm very pleased to join the debate on the Ontario Climate Change Act, 2007, which is intended to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the province of Ontario.

Certainly we support the bill in principle, but we do take some exception to some of the specifics of this bill. We support, as this bill does put forward, the idea of clear targets which can be measured. We're pleased to see this bill here today in that it gives us an opportunity to discuss an issue which we know is one of the greatest challenges facing us, not just in this province but obviously throughout the world. We do believe in a very-well-thought-out, proactive plan to address climate change now, not later; however, we also believe that any good plan that is drafted must be drafted in consultation with the people in this province who are going to be impacted. But again, it allows the public to take a look at the bill. It allows for this bill to go to committee. It allows for public input. Certainly there are many amendments that need to be incorporated into a bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this province.

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I think this bill also points out the lack of any action on the part of the McGuinty Liberals during their term in office. They have done absolutely nothing to address the issue of climate change after four long years in office, and I think this bill highlights the fact that there has been no action whatsoever. I can assure you that John Tory and a PC caucus would develop a plan of action. As I say, we agree with the establishment of clear targets and we would be prepared to compare our plan to the Liberal plan of inaction and lack of leadership at any time as we move forward.

I want to speak a little bit about the fact that in this plan that has been put forward by the member from Timmins–James Bay, and before him the member from Toronto–Danforth, they are proposing that they would achieve some of the greenhouse emission reductions by way of closing Nanticoke immediately and cancelling the York subway. Obviously we are concerned about that particular plan because, and I go back to what I said before, we believe that any plan—and we support the need for a plan, which has been lacking these past four years—must be done in consultation with all those who are going to be impacted. It needs to be realistic and it needs to clearly delineate how you can achieve these reductions. So we have a problem with the immediate closing of Nanticoke and obviously the cancelling of the York subway. We're also concerned because in this bill there is no mention made as to the cost of the plan. We believe there is a need for much more consultation, but at least we support the spirit of the bill and we appreciate the fact that it has been put before us.

If we take a look at the track record of this government, there were so many promises that were made in

regard to the environment and there were so many promises broken. In fact, the Environmental Commissioner, in his 2005-06 annual report entitled *Neglecting Our Obligations*, states that “there is no strategy for climate change...” and, “The ECO notes a distinct lack of leadership in the Ministry of the Environment. Although the ministry is supposed to lead other ministries in the coordination of Ontario’s response to climate change”—it is shameful that there was no leadership.

They made a promise in their 2003 campaign. They said, “We will clean the air.” We all know that in 2005 we had the worst year on record in terms of air quality. There were 15 smog advisories covering 53 days. They also said in 2003, “We think our most vulnerable citizens—seniors and children—should be able to go outside in summer without consulting a smog index.” Well, 12 of the 15 advisories in 2005 occurred during the summer months. Then of course their most famous broken promise was, “We will shut down Ontario’s coal-burning power plants by 2007 and replace them with cleaner sources.”

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): This is a very important subject, Bill 200, An Act to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. I think this is a big, huge title. I hope the member from Timmins–James Bay will be able to convince his leader, Howard Hampton, who is against the subway to York region because he thinks there is not enough population living in that area. It would help our province and our city of Toronto a lot to minimize greenhouse gases and also the emissions that go into the air, to reduce the number of cars driving on the road.

The second thing is, I was puzzled when I heard the leader of the third party, Mr. Hampton, is against closing the coal generation in the north, and is with it in the south. What a contradiction.

The member for Timmins–James Bay is trying to exclude the forestry industry from that bill. I hope he consulted the member for Toronto–Danforth before introducing this bill, because there is a lot of confusion.

Also, he has recommended a cap-and-trade system in, I think, subclauses 5(1)(a)(i) and (ii).

I wonder what confusion is going on in that party? Why not—before he tried to convince us as a whole in this House—convince his party in terms of one direction, one ideology and one system? Because it is very important for all of us.

As a province, as a Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and as a caucus on this side of the House, we’ve been working very hard. It is a very important issue for us. We introduced a lot of measures to minimize the emissions in the province: by giving \$2,000 support for people who buy hybrid cars; introducing ethanol; creating a system to persuade many different companies and factories to produce hydro from windmill and solar systems and bi-methane—all these initiatives in order to minimize the emissions in Ontario—and also our conservation initiatives which help to minimize emissions in the province.

All of these initiatives fit in the same direction, and I hope the member for Timmins–James Bay will be able to

convince his party to come forward and support our initiatives, working together to minimize the greenhouse emissions in the province of Ontario. It is our duty as citizens of this land; we are the stewards of this land. We should protect that land, protect it for future generations.

Despite all of this talk from the Conservative Party—I listened to Mr. Chudleigh from Halton region, and he is talking about supporting the Kyoto accord; in the past he’s against it—we should be a part of that globalization system, because if we reduce the emissions in Ontario, it doesn’t mean it’s going to help the environment across the border.

Our Premier has been working very hard alongside the Minister of the Environment to consult with the states around the province of Ontario, like Michigan and New York state, to work together in order to help the region to minimize the greenhouse emissions, because it is very important, not just for us at the present time but also for future generations.

Our duty, as I mentioned, as a government, as a province and as a people who are in charge as stewards of this land, is to protect it, not for a year or two or 10, but forever. I’m proud to be part of the government. We are taking the right initiatives, and I hope the member for Timmins–James Bay—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Bisson, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bisson: I want to thank all of those members who participated in this debate. I heard some support. The question will be just how much support we have.

I remind members that this is an issue that is affecting not only the people in this province but across this world, and we need to do our bit in Ontario in order to be able to deal with reducing emissions of carbon into the atmosphere. We all know far too well how difficult it is to live on a planet as polluted as this, and where it will be.

I do want to say to members and I want to make it clear: Bill 200, if people take the time to read it, doesn’t purport to tell you what to do as far as the plan. What this bill says is that there will be a plan drawn up by the Ministry of the Environment. That plan will be drawn up by them and other experts who are involved in the field. Certainly we as New Democrats would like to participate in giving suggestions about what would be in the plan, but in the end it will be up to the cabinet, it will be up to the ministry, to decide what’s in the plan. This bill does not tell the government what’s in the plan. What it does is say, “Here’s the process you’ll have to follow to develop a plan.” That’s the first issue.

The second issue I want to speak to in regard to this particular bill—and I would just end on this point—is that we have very little time to act. I think Mr. Tabuns, our critic for the Ministry of the Environment, was very clear: Our planet, more and more so, is being affected, and the issues are starting to compound themselves in regard to emissions that are going into our atmosphere. If we don’t take action, all of us individually, all of us collectively and all of us as provinces and nations, to do something about doing our bit to reduce greenhouse gases, this planet will be in a much worse state. I would

argue that Ontario needs to do its bit, and this bill, introduced by myself but originally conceived by my colleague the environment critic for the NDP, Mr. Tabuns, and supported by New Democrats, helps to get us along that way. I call on members to vote in favour of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT
(REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 77 standing in the name of Mr. Kormos.

Mr. Kormos has moved second reading of Bill 192. 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.

We will call in the members for a vote.

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS
CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 78 standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 200. 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. Carried.

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

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT
(REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Kormos has moved second reading of Bill 192. All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Hoy, Pat	McNeely, Phil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Milloy, John
Dhillon, Vic	Kormos, Peter	Patten, Richard
DiNovo, Cheri	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Duguid, Brad	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley	Sergio, Mario
Hardeman, Ernie	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Chudleigh, Ted	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 6.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I request that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Kormos has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS
CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Now we will deal with some unfinished business. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bisson has asked that Bill 200 be referred to the standing committee on justice policy. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY
AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): As of yesterday, 120 questions have been asked and zero answers have been given regarding the involvement of the Premier, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and members of their staff regarding the OLG debacle. My constituents have asked me questions using phrases like, "Why is the government avoiding answering questions?" and words such as "contradiction," "blame game," "hiding the truth," "dishonest," "can't be trusted," "arrogant," "shameful," "avoidance."

I find that through the entire questioning on this matter, members of this House and the people of Ontario have yet to hear the truth. The minister has hidden behind the Ombudsman and the OPP investigation. It is further disappointing that the Premier and the minister want to continually look back to previous governments to lay blame. In almost four years of this government, it has done nothing but assemble their campaign strategists and

other spin doctors to create a story rather than just tell the truth. Where there is smoke, there is fire, and there is a lot of smoke.

I call on the Premier and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal responsible for lotteries to open their offices to an investigation and a review by a legislative committee so that a forensic audit can be done, so that the people of Ontario can know the truth on this matter. We ask that the Premier and the minister begin to show leadership and do the right thing.

SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): It's with a heavy heart that I make this statement today. Yesterday in my riding of Mississauga East, a young boy was involved in a very serious accident on Highway 410. The school bus he was riding on was taking the students of St. Alfred Catholic School in Mississauga on a field trip. Sadly, 10-year-old John Pham died late this morning in the Hospital for Sick Children. This is a terrible tragedy that touches so many, including parents and teachers across the province and the country. Our hearts and prayers go out to John's family.

Twenty-seven other children and four adults were also on the bus. Fourteen of those 27 children and at least one of the adults were sent to hospital.

I have visited St. Alfred school and other schools in my riding on numerous occasions. Many St. Alfred Catholic School students have recently been guests of Queen's Park on a school tour. The children at St. Alfred have always been an enthusiastic group. I have called the school and spoken with Principal Julie Command-Tollis to offer my support.

On behalf of all Mississauga residents and the members of this chamber, I'd like to offer our prayers and condolences to the Pham family and all the children involved in the accident.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I rise today to make all members aware of an important day for this Legislature that is fast approaching.

On Monday, the leader of the official opposition will rise to debate a most important motion. The motion will ask the Legislature to endorse its desire for the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly to hold an inquiry into what has become known as Lottogate. The motion calls for an investigation into the flow of information between the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the Minister and Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Premier's office regarding the issues of fraud and other irregularities within Ontario's provincial lottery system, including documentary and viva voce evidence.

The motion is very important as it will determine once and for all whether or not this government and its

members believe in the very issues they ran on in the last election, such as empowering the Legislature and its MPPs, governing with honesty and integrity, respecting the traditions of the Legislature—that was a good one—and operating an open and transparent government—another good one.

On Monday, members of this Legislature have a choice: Vote in favour of this motion so Ontarians can find out the answers to the questions the Premier and members of his cabinet refuse to answer during question period, or vote against it, furthering encouraging the cynicism Ontarians have towards politicians and government.

The choice is clear. I encourage all members to carefully consider over the weekend how they're going to vote on this bill, on this motion, and return to the Legislature on Monday to vote their conscience.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Current CCAC policy regarding in-home nursing for medical injections must be changed.

Right now, the CCAC will only let a nurse administer an injection to a client if the client can't be transported to a doctor's office or an after-hours clinic without their condition worsening or if the client or the primary care giver can't be taught to administer the needle himself or herself.

Our constituent, 60-year-old Ghislaine Desrochers, was released from hospital and was told a nurse from the CCAC would teach her how to inject herself twice weekly with two medications. She objected, as her medical condition made this impossible. Her husband objected, as he feared hurting her, poking around with needles. She was then told she would have to go to her doctor or after-hours clinic twice weekly for these injections. The CCAC only changed its position because the family doctor was away for several weeks and couldn't administer anything, and a review of the file showed that a nurse was already coming in to provide other health care and so could administer injections at the same time.

This policy wastes a doctor's valuable time when a nurse is perfectly qualified to do the job. It costs the health care system more if you don't have a family doctor and have to go to an after-hours clinic for needles. It's unrealistic to tell a 66-year-old son that he has to inject his 87-year-old mother with her medication, another case we've had to deal with. If CCAC clients need injections, then nurses should do this at their homes. Patients and caregivers have enough to deal with without worrying that they're going to hurt themselves or their loved ones with needles.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's my pleasure to rise today to offer my congratulations on behalf of myself, and I'm sure the members of this House and the entire

McGuinty government, to my constituents Betty Farr and Jason Richardson, who are medal-winning Special Olympians.

Mr. Richardson and Ms. Farr are currently training vigorously in preparation for the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games that are being held in Shanghai this October. I would particularly like to take this opportunity to highlight the accomplishments made by these two great athletes during the Special Olympics summer games of 2006. Mr. Richardson and Ms. Farr literally dominated the power lifting portion of the competition.

Ms. Farr, who is the first female Special Olympian to take up power lifting in Brantford, set a new record by dead lifting an incredible 130.5 kilograms. For those of us who are metrically challenged, that's 287 pounds. That's incredible. Ms. Farr was not done there, however. She won another gold medal in the squat and a silver medal in the bench press.

Mr. Richardson was also successful, as he won a gold medal in the bench press, a dead lift and the squat: a triple gold medal winner—simply amazing.

On behalf of myself, and all the members of this House, I might add, I offer and we offer our congratulations to both athletes on their remarkable accomplishments to date and wish them good luck during the competition in China this coming October. Thank you very much. Bring home the gold, guys.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): In 1973, the fundamental question in the Watergate scandal in the United States asked by Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee was, what did the President know and when did he know it? When the truth came out after a Senate committee investigation, the President of the United States resigned.

Here we are, more than 30 years after the Watergate scandal, and the McGuinty Liberal government hasn't learned a thing. Today, the fundamental question in the Lottogate scandal is, what did the minister know and when did he know it?

For the past three weeks our party has been asking this question. In fact we've raised it, and questions stemming from it, 121 times. We've received not one straight answer from the Premier or any of his ministers. Instead, they are hiding behind the Ombudsman's report by claiming they will adopt his recommendations. What they don't acknowledge is that the Ombudsman is highly critical of the way the government has managed our lotteries, which may have led to thousands of Ontarians having their winnings stolen.

I recall during my first term here in the early 1990s the Ontario Liberal caucus, then in opposition, insisting on committee hearings when an NDP minister was accused of inappropriate conduct. They demanded hearings and they participated in those hearings with enthusiasm and zeal. Now in government, 15 years later, they would seek

to deny the opposition that same opportunity to seek the truth. What have they got to hide?

There's an old adage that those who don't learn from the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them. What did the minister know and when did he know it? The only way the public trust will be restored is to answer this question through a legislative inquiry.

1340

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share with my colleagues a letter that appeared in yesterday's Peterborough This Week newspaper. The letter was written by Mr. Mark Walsh, president of Kinark Child and Family Services, and I quote:

"Ontario's children and youth will benefit from the \$24.5 million in additional funding earmarked for children's mental health that was announced by Minister Mary Anne Chambers earlier this week.

"These additional funds are welcomed with open arms by the children's mental health sector. Through this announcement, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the current government have displayed a commitment to helping Ontario's youth and a determination to tackle the mental health issues facing this province's young people.

"This announcement will not immediately eliminate wait lists and provide each child in the province with the same opportunity to live a quality life, but it is progress and will help agencies provide more service to children and youth who have been waiting for months.

"This funding will move the cause of children's mental health forward and hopefully lay the foundation for future increased funding announcements in order to catch up and meet the mental health needs of Ontario's children and youth.

"Kinark Child and Family Services"—of Peterborough—"applaud Minister Chambers and the government for listening to the sector's call for action."

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I rise in the House today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to the subway extension from Toronto to the city of Vaughan, which is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario. This extension will reduce gridlock, enhance the York region economy and provide more efficient transportation for students traveling to York University. It will also create thousands of good jobs in the construction industry. This is a positive step in providing better transit options to those living in York region, the fastest-growing regional municipality in Ontario.

The NDP thinks that York region residents and students of York University do not deserve to have efficient transit that connects them to downtown Toronto. The McGuinty Liberals, on the other hand, believe that this is

a necessary step to keeping the two areas connected and to keeping emissions from cars down. The McGuinty Liberal government is building a successful, green, sustainable economy while the leader of the third party has once again demonstrated that the NDP are stuck in the past without a clear workable environmental plan.

While the third party voted against subway expansions and giving an alternative to those stuck in gridlock, the McGuinty government recognizes the need to improve air quality through reducing vehicle use and improving public transit. The McGuinty Liberals are moving forward with their commitment to tackling climate change, and the NDP continues to delay progress, play politics and destroy—

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

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to talk about a very important issue for Toronto, York region and the GTA, which is the expansion of the York subway line.

The McGuinty Liberals have committed funding to the people of the GTA for the York subway expansion because we know that it will play a vital role in helping to lessen the problems associated with gridlock, help commuters, students and others to get to where they need to go quicker, and help fight climate change, something very important to all of us.

At a press conference yesterday, the leader of the third party suggested that we didn't need the York subway expansion. I want to state for the record that this is not the case. It is a betrayal of public transit and the people of Toronto and York region to say so. Why the NDP would want to deny commuters, students and all those who would rely on this vital service to have more access to transportation and to lessen the amount of cars on the road is absolutely inexplicable.

Given the NDP's lack of support for the subway and the discussion earlier today at Toronto city hall, I want to quote the mayor. He said, "That link is a critical transportation link in Toronto because it links downtown to the 905 and creates a new transportation hub in Vaughan. We should be city building. These links should have been done years ago." Those words came from the mayor of Toronto, March 24, 2006.

It's time the leader of the third party took some responsibility for his comments and answered the question that—

The Speaker: Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like all of us here to welcome the parents of Calla Pfrimmer, who's been doing an excellent job as a page from Huntsville, Ontario. Pat and Brian Pfrimmer are down for the day and they're in the members' west gallery.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Over the last couple of days you've made comment on some of the language that's being used in the House, and again I think I heard it today where accusations of misrepresentation and untruths are being made again. I didn't want to interrupt the statements, but I want to ask you if it's still appropriate in this place for those types of things to be said, whether or not the intent was somebody else said it and then it was read by somebody else that said it. I'd like your ruling on that so that we can get this place back to the spot where you have asked us to be.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To that point of order, Speaker: As the NDP House leader, I appreciate the comments made by the member. I agree with him that the member's statements by his Liberal colleagues were entirely inappropriate, inaccurate, non-factual, and his courage in criticizing his own colleagues is to be lauded.

Mr. Levac: On that same point of order, Speaker: I do appreciate the member for Niagara Centre's interjection on this, but what we're looking for is actually a ruling on whether or not anyone in this House is allowed to read a statement made by somebody outside of the House into the record when it's against what you've been trying to tell us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): All members would know that in this place we need to practise the civility that we would practise outside of this place and that although some words and some phrases may in fact be found to be technically parliamentary, we should exercise that kind of good judgment that would exist in the general population. I've been urging members to do that. Thank you for the point of order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFER ROADS FOR A SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 VISANT À CRÉER DES ROUTES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS SÛR

Mrs. Cansfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

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

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

REMEMBRANCE DAY
OBSERVANCE ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'OBSERVATION
DU JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Mr. Tascona moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 204, An Act respecting the observance of Remembrance Day and to make related amendments and repeals to other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi concernant l'observation du jour du Souvenir et modifiant ou abrogeant d'autres lois connexes.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): This bill provides for the observance of two minutes' silence on November 11 of each year and for making November 11 a statutory holiday and amending the Employment Standards Act.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to introduce important legislation that would save lives on Ontario's roads.

Since our government took office nearly four years ago, we have worked tirelessly with our road safety partners to improve safety on Ontario's roads, yet more than two people are killed and 10 seriously injured every day on our roads. Children lose their parents, wives lose their husbands and people lose their closest friends. We cannot allow this to continue, so we are taking action to save lives and to prevent injury.

Our government's proposed legislation would set a new standard for road safety, with tougher sanctions to target drinking and driving, aggressive and dangerous driving behaviours. If passed, this legislation would also help protect police officers in the line of duty.

With this legislation, we are proposing to further protect Ontarians from drinking drivers. Anyone caught driving with a blood alcohol concentration of .05 would face tougher penalties than ever, and they would get stiffer for repeat incidents. First-time roadside driver's licence suspensions would range from three days for a first reading of between .05 and .08 blood alcohol concentration, to seven days for a second infraction and 30 days for a third or subsequent incident. The second time someone is caught, they'll have to complete an education program, and if they're caught again, they'll have

to install an ignition interlock device in their vehicle for six months. And, if this legislation is passed, repeat drunk drivers will finally face the real possibility of having their cars seized by the courts.

We're also going to make our roads safer by cracking down on street racers who choose to race on Ontario's roads. Since 1999, there have been 35 street-racing-related deaths in Ontario, and innocent bystanders are often the victims of these senseless acts. This legislation, if passed, would give law enforcement the power to suspend the licences and impound the vehicles of drivers involved in street racing and stunt driving. This legislation would give police the power to issue an immediate roadside seven-day licence suspension and a seven-day vehicle impoundment for street racing or participating in a driving contest or in stunt driving. It would also increase the minimum fine from \$200 to \$2,000, and it would increase the maximum fine from \$1,000 to \$10,000. This would make our street racing fines the highest in Canada.

We're serious about protecting the men and women who help keep Ontario safe. It's sobering to consider that more police officers are killed at roadside than during any other activity. We've asked the law enforcement community what they feel we could do to help improve their safety while on the job. We've heard their comments, which is why we're proposing to allow police vehicles to display flashing blue lights, in addition to the red lights they already use. This change may seem small, but it will improve a police vehicle's visibility, and that is critical to the officers' safety, especially at night. It's the least that we can do to help keep police safe while they're helping to protect us and keep us safe.

Injury prevention is a key driving force behind this legislation. Motor vehicle collisions cost Ontarians \$9.1 billion annually in social and health care costs.

With this proposed legislation, the McGuinty government is delivering on its commitment to ensure that Ontario builds upon its successful record as a leader in road safety by keeping our communities and families safe.

I call upon all members of this Legislature to join me in supporting this life-saving road safety legislation.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Today I rise to share an important accomplishment with the House. It falls upon the commitment to strengthen Ontario's rural communities in the 2007 Ontario budget, which was delivered on March 22 by our colleague the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Ontario's Minister of Finance.

Through the budget, our government is investing \$140 million out of the rural infrastructure investment initiative. That's part of our ongoing commitment to help rural and small communities in this province provide safe and reliable local infrastructure.

This one-time \$140-million investment doubles the funds initially committed to the rural infrastructure in-

vestment initiative when this program was first launched in September 2006. It is a significant enhancement to their \$185-million commitment to assist farmers and rural communities announced by Premier McGuinty at that time. Ontario's small and rural municipalities have told us that they need stronger local infrastructure, including safer bridges and roads, dependable water and waste water systems, better solid waste management processes, improved sports, recreational and cultural facilities and reliable community energy systems. We have responded to the need through this new investment.

These new funds will foster economic growth and promote a higher quality of living for the people in these communities, indeed all across Ontario. In fact, today I was in the village of Winchester with our colleague for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, MPP Jim Brownell, to participate in an event announcing a grant of more than \$738,000 to help this community. Local officials there told me that these funds will be used to revitalize 100 Club Park, the largest recreation area in the entire township.

Indeed, 190 communities right across Ontario received a share of this \$140-million investment. Communities applied for this funding, and their applications were evaluated against a set of criteria established to ensure that projects meet Ontario's priority needs and have a positive economic and social impact on our local economy.

Our government is allocating this funding now to address infrastructure needs so that municipalities can move forward in the 2007 construction season. Our government has made strategic choices to sustain and stimulate public infrastructure in Ontario. To this end, the \$140-million rural infrastructure investment initiative builds on ReNew Ontario, our government's \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan, one of the largest such investments in more than a generation. By doubling our original commitment to \$140 million, we are further demonstrating our support for Ontario families living in rural and small communities.

As Ontario's Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, I am indeed very proud to share this announcement with the House here today, and I'm very proud of what this investment will mean in improving the quality of life of Ontarians who live in small and rural communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I want to respond to the announcement by the Minister of Transportation, bringing in what I consider to be a very important bill. I want to commend her and the government for bringing this legislation forward.

This morning was indeed an historical event in this province, no doubt the first time, and perhaps the last, that a Liberal Premier acknowledges the work of a Pro-

gressive Conservative member of this Legislature for work done on behalf of a file and in helping to shape government policy.

I trust we'll have the opportunity to improve this bill through committee. We have some amendments we would like to propose that I believe will further strengthen this legislation. What is missing from this bill is the reference to aftermarket parts that I believe should be considered, specifically the proposal to clearly define nitrous oxide ignition systems within cars to ensure that they cannot be triggered from the driver or passenger side. We don't want in any way to interfere with recreational racing, but we do want to make sure there is no chance of anyone interfering with their car by enhancing the power of the engine through these aftermarket parts.

I look forward to participating in the committee process. I want to say again to the government that I appreciate your initiative in bringing this forward. I trust that we'll see speedy passage of this bill—certainly the official opposition will work co-operatively with the government to that end—and we trust that the government will be as responsive as well to some of our recommendations that we'll have in committee to improve the bill.

1400

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Before I address his remarks, to the Minister of Transportation, I appreciate her efforts on behalf of the Grimsby MTO office. She was kind enough to indicate that she's seen my letter and is working on the issue, so I appreciate that. Hopefully we'll get that issue resolved momentarily.

I'd say to my colleague the minister that with all due respect, this does seem to be a bit of a conversion on the road to electoral defeat; we suddenly see a small amount of funds being allocated to rural Ontario. In many senses, we very well know that to Dalton McGuinty, the counties between Toronto and Ottawa are the flyover counties he sees from his airplane as he flies back and forth. They don't register on his radar screen. In fact, there are a number of rural members here in the assembly—and I share their concerns—who were passed over, over and over again, for cabinet positions. In fact, a cabinet position was most recently given to an MPP who had only been in office for three days, passing up many veterans. No wonder we've seen a couple of long-time veterans from eastern Ontario who have decided to retire rather than try to defend the awful Dalton McGuinty record when it comes to supporting rural Ontario.

We saw again most recently in the budget the Ministry of Agriculture cut. It's supposed to be a lead ministry, so called in the McGuinty government. It's now cut once again in the most recent budget. The Ministry of Natural Resources likewise has been cut, another important ministry to rural Ontario. We all remember the Move Ontario program a year and a half ago that basically told people

in rural Ontario that they had best move into the big cities if they want to receive any funding from that capital project. I know my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has a private member's bill before this assembly to allocate the gas tax to rural municipalities as well, to our public transit, roads and bridges. That is opposed by this minister and opposed by the Dalton McGuinty government. We wanted to see real action on infrastructure in rural Ontario—to you, the minister—supporting that bill instead of these last-minute promises. It's no coincidence that the minister is in Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. We have an outstanding candidate in Chris Savard in that riding. I know they're worried about Chris Savard winning that next election.

Do you know what? When you see Domtar close, 1,000 jobs, when you see Cascades close in that area, when you see United Tri-Tech Corp. close and in a nearby community Hershey's and Nestlé closing down, these last-minute promises are cold comfort to rural Ontario, which has become the poster child for the flight of manufacturing jobs—125,000 manufacturing jobs gone—in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I respond to the Minister of Transportation, and I can tell you that the New Democrats look forward to seeing the legislation she tabled and that received first reading in this Legislature today. We think it's incredibly important to address these issues in the interests of public safety and safer highways. Indeed it is one of those pieces of legislation that clearly has to go through the committee process. As Mr. Klees, on behalf of his caucus, indicated, there are elements that have been addressed, amongst other things, in the Klees bill itself that may well strengthen this piece of legislation and make it far more effective.

One of the issues of course is that people who street race do so clandestinely. They don't do it in such a way that they design the event to be caught. The whole issue, then, is, how do you catch street racers? How do you identify people who are en route to or from a street race?

This raises a somewhat broader issue, and that is the need for a thoughtful, although expedient, legislative process. That's why I wrote to the government House leader today further to the House leaders' meeting this morning. In my letter to the government House leader, I reiterate that there are clearly several government bills that are to be the subject matter of public hearings. I further repeat the NDP proposal that the House rise for two weeks so that public hearings can be held, with travel as necessary. We can then return and complete the government's business to the extent that the government wishes. New Democrats are prepared to sit into the months of June and July, as necessary, to properly deal with the bills that the government wants to move forward.

This bill that has been tabled today by the Minister of Transportation, being one of a number of bills now that

has to be submitted to public hearings, would be ideal for a two- or three-week hiatus—which New Democrats are making quite clear that we will agree to—so that committees can travel across the province, come back and we can then sit. As I say, we're prepared to sit into the months of June and July, as necessary, to the extent that this government wants to pursue its agenda.

I trust that this bill is a priority of the government. If that's the case, let's get to work on it, including adequate committee consideration.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to rise today on behalf of the New Democratic Party to respond to the announcement in regard to infrastructure investments in Ontario. I've got to say that it was very clear: The minister said that this was a "strategic" decision. I say, yes, it was a strategic decision—to have one-time funding in an election year in order to get some photo ops to help some of your members maybe get elected. That's the word "strategic."

There's no long-term funding here to respond to the needs of communities. You know as well as I do, because I and every other member in this House who represents rural communities and medium communities has said it to you, that the current COMRIF program does not work. It is a program that basically pits one community against the other, pits council members against each other at the council table and doesn't allow municipalities to do the kind of strategic planning that needs to be done in order to assist them with their funding as far as infrastructure needs go.

All this is is a pre-election announcement. This announcement says that they will increase the money attributable to the COMRIF program by \$70 million, doubling it. Good for the extra money, but we all know what this is. This is about assisting the government and having a few more photo ops in an election year. Guess what? If they were to be elected—and I'm not sure they would be elected as a government in the next Parliament—they will forget after the election the needs of communities across Ontario to fund infrastructure.

Let me remind you of some. You would know the community LSB, the local services board, in Moose Factory, Moccreebec, has had an application before your ministry for some four years now to fix ruptured water mains that are causing so much trouble that they have to turn the water system off at night in order to recharge the system so water is available during the day. If there was a tragic fire, you couldn't even hook the fire trucks up to the hydrants because that system doesn't work. Why is it they're not getting money? Because the COMRIF program that you talk about in this particular statement today doesn't respond to the needs of the community.

There is far less money available to far too many communities to be able to fund their capital needs across this province. I say we need stable and predictable capital funding for municipalities so that municipal councils

from Hamilton to Timmins to Kenora to Cornwall are able to do the kind of planning that they've got to do in order to be able to assist with funding capital needs in their communities. All this is is yet another Dalton McGuinty photo op.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier concerning the lottery scandal. We've asked 121 questions so far without an answer from the government with respect to what they knew and when they knew it.

We have filed a motion to get this matter into a legislative committee for a quick, open and transparent inquiry into this scandal, something that has been a precedent a number of times before. Specifically, we've suggested that the committee should look into the flow of information involving the Premier's office, the minister's office and the lottery corporation, questions which were not investigated by the Ombudsman and which are not being investigated by the police but which need to be answered, especially given the contradictions that we've seen coming out of the government as to what happened and when. Every day that you refuse to answer questions, for every day that you refuse to refer this to a committee or some other kind of independent investigation, the odour of a cover-up grows stronger. What do you have to hide, and why won't you refer this matter to a committee for an open investigation?

1410

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think that surely if there's one individual who is beyond reproach in terms of how he has addressed this matter, it must be the Ombudsman, and there must be unanimous agreement in this House in that regard, I would suggest.

The Ombudsman spoke to this issue again yesterday. I'm sure the leader of the official opposition will want to hear what he said when he, an independent, outside person, spoke to this same issue again. He said, "These are radical changes"—in reference to the changes that he has proposed—"and I'm happy with the government's response."

I think that's an important opinion, to be weighed carefully by the people of Ontario. I think they remain very much focused on the activities that we are undertaking in order to ensure that they can have confidence in their lottery system. We received some very specific recommendations. We are acting on those very recommendations.

Mr. Tory: Of course the Ombudsman is referring to the activities that were undertaken after the government got caught and after the lottery corporation got caught.

What we're looking for here is: How many people got ripped off? How long did this thing go on after you knew about it and did nothing, and in fact may have done worse than nothing, which was to try to cover it up? People want to know how an e-mail could have gone into the minister's office more than a year ago and the minister could do nothing. The fact is, that explanation is simply not credible, that an e-mail would have gone a year ago and that the minister did nothing. They want to know why your most intimate Liberal insiders, not the people running the corporation, your Liberal insiders—your campaign manager and others, your top spin doctors—are the ones trying to concoct the stories to get out of this, not trying to fix the problem.

As Ian Urquhart wrote in the Toronto Star, "There are still unanswered questions surrounding when the government first learned of the problem and what it did about it. Such questions were not the purview of the Ombudsman's inquiry, nor are they the subject of the OPP probe." That's why we need a committee hearing. Why won't you approve it? What are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: One of the things that the Ombudsman continues to raise is the whole notion of the need for a change in the corporate culture. He specifically raises that in his report. He specifically references the minister's response to that, and he says, "Most importantly, Minister Caplan commented that he has taken to heart our findings regarding the need to change the corporate culture at the OLG."

Mr. Gough, who was unanimously supported in terms of his responsibilities there, says, "We acknowledge the important insights you offered on our corporate culture. Your report provides the focused agenda needed to help drive positive cultural change."

Just recently, of course, Mr. Brown is no longer there. There is a new acting CEO, Michelle DiEmanuele, who has much experience when it comes to bringing about change in the corporate culture.

I think what Ontarians want to see is that we're moving forward in terms of protecting them at the retail level and at the same time making efforts to change the corporate culture, and we're doing all those things.

Mr. Tory: The Premier loves to read his quotes, and of course he never reads this one from the Ombudsman at page 5: "There are disturbing signs the culture that led to the difficulties in the first place is not gone. It was not conscience or self-criticism that smartened the OLG up. It was a public relations nightmare played out on the public airwaves despite its best efforts at suppression. A profound cultural shift has yet to occur." That's what he said on page 5.

The stonewalling, the spinning and the cover-up shows a contempt for this House and its members. Just yesterday, we hear the Deputy Premier saying that people are playing the lottery in record numbers, and yet we see in the paper this morning that sales have been soft the past few months on Wednesdays.

It's that kind of behaviour, always trying to spin your way out of this, that shows why we need a committee

inquiry. Your 2003 election platform said you would give more power to backbenchers and more power to committees. If you meant a word of that, will you keep your promises and decide to refer this lottery fiasco to a committee for an independent examination? What are you hiding? What are you hiding? Call the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I wish to remind members that it's necessary, when we're placing questions or answering them, to speak in the third person and speak through the Speaker.

Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition is mistaking the volume of his presentation for substance.

He makes reference to accountability issues on this side of the House. Just by way of introducing accountability and unprecedented transparency in terms of what we're doing here, he will know that we've made changes to the sunshine law. That's been expanded now to cover OPG and Hydro One. We've given the Auditor General new powers to audit our hospitals, our school boards, our children's aid societies and the broader public sector. We've expanded the freedom-of-information legislation to include Hydro One, OPG and universities. When it comes to fiscal accountability, we've passed legislation to ensure the Auditor General signs off on the province's books, to ensure that nobody ever again can hide a deficit from the people of Ontario. So when it comes to accountability and transparency and making clear to Ontarians what has happened, we're proud of the record.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Tory: My question is to the Premier, and it's still on the lottery scandal. In the event that those measures that you take such pride in—many of which, by the way, have been flouted in practice by your own ministers, in particular freedom of information. But notwithstanding that, if you really believe in what you just said about transparency, if you really believe in improving the power of backbenchers—and the record shows that you haven't to date, but you've still got a chance—if you really believe in increasing the power of committees, and if you really believe we've got to get to the bottom of every single aspect of this lottery scandal, then the conduct of the Premier's office, the conduct of the minister's office, who knew what in the government, when they knew it and what they did about it are not presently being investigated by anyone, nor have they been investigated by the Ombudsman. Why, then, if you have nothing to hide and if you're such a great believer in transparency and in the role of MPPs, will you not refer this matter to a committee where it can be studied there by members of provincial Parliament? What are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The record shows that for eight years, under that member's party, the standing committee on government agencies called not one committee before it. This Premier

and this government empowered that committee, chaired by a member of your own caucus, to look into government agencies, and they did. They looked into Ontario Lottery and Gaming; they looked into the LCBO; they looked into Hydro One.

In fact, the record is quite clear from the Ombudsman himself in his March 26 press conference, where he says, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002"—and the member can turn to colleagues of his who were part of the executive council at that time. "At that point," the Ombudsman says, "the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply." Then it became a slippery slope.

This government takes actions—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Premier—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Brant.
Member for Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Premier, will you call the committee? I'll be there tomorrow. I'll be there the next day. I'll answer every question, and I suspect that any minister under our government, any staff member, will answer every question the committee has.

The question for you, Premier, is, will you do the same for your minister? Will you do the same for your minister's staff, who appeared to have advanced warning? Will you do the same for your campaign manager, Don Guy, and your top spin doctors, Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren?

Premier, we now know what you've got to hide. Call the committee. I'll be there. Get out from under your desk. Call the damn committee. I'll be there. Will you?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

1420

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I say to the member from Erie–Lincoln, why wait? Tell us now what you knew and what you did and what orders you directed.

As the Ombudsman quite clearly indicated, the Edmonds case, which began in 2001 under this former minister's tenure—Bob Edmonds was treated in an incredibly disrespectful manner. I have apologized to Mr. Edmonds for the treatment that he received. I think it was a shameful episode. I would challenge the member: Would he stand in his place and do likewise? Would he stand and issue that kind of an apology? To date he has not.

This government, this ministry, the members on this side of the House look to the Ombudsman and what he says in his report, where he commends "the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to the report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change." Would

that that had been the case when my friend from Erie–Lincoln was in charge—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hudak: There's no doubt that what happened to Mr. Edmonds was a travesty. That's why we need to get the facts to see what could have been done to help out Mr. Edmonds. The problem is, in March 2005, the media blew the lid off widespread abuse in the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. The minister knows there were 60-some stories, countless TV stories about it, and the minister did nothing at all—called up no one on the carpet. A year later, The Fifth Estate took the issue further. It appears his staff had advance notice. Let me tell you this: If my staff didn't let me know about this kind of scandal, they would have been fired, not promoted.

Premier, let me tell you this: You call that committee, and I'll answer every question. I know my colleagues will answer every question. We'll appear before the committee. What do you have to hide? I'll be there at the committee. Will you?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I find it somewhat disconcerting that if the member has some information to share, why has he not shed light on it so far? The Ontario Provincial Police have referred many of these matters to the Toronto Police Service. If the member has some information which is germane, I don't know why any honourable member would not step forward with what they knew, what actions they took.

Speaker, I want to assure you full co-operation with that investigation, with the lawful authorities. This member should do likewise. This member should stand in his place and acknowledge the Ombudsman's quite condemning comments about the need for change back in 2002, when it was signalled that these matters had come to a head.

This government has taken action. Even yesterday, the Ombudsman said that these are radical changes he has recommended and he is happy with the government's response. In fact, he goes on to note that the government chose to move forward to the OPP, and that wasn't a recommendation that—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Under the McGuinty government, working families are being forced to work longer and harder just to pay the bills. Today, despite your government's efforts to hide the facts, we learn that the McGuinty government is making the situation worse once again: The hydro bill is going up once again.

Premier, you promised working families that you were going to freeze hydro bills, a promise that you've now broken not once, not twice, not three times, but a promise you've now broken four times. Premier, did your promise to freeze the hydro bill mean anything at all?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to report that

the price of our electricity has come down now for the third time. When the price of electricity and distribution prices are taken into account, the average Ontario household will pay 5% less starting May 1 of this year. We think that's good news for ratepayers in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, there is the spin. You try to tell people that the hydro rate is coming down, but in fact, when you put in all of the factors, the hydro bill is going up.

For many families, under the McGuinty government, the hydro rate has gone up by 44% since 2003, but more importantly, the big number at the bottom of the bill has in fact doubled under the McGuinty government, and it's going to go up again as a result of what was announced today.

Premier, working families didn't get the \$40,000-a-year pay increase you gave yourself just before Christmas. Many working families aren't getting a pay increase at all. How are working families supposed to foot the bill for your increase in the hydro bill once again?

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I don't know what he's reading, but the OEB announcement today provided for an 8% cut in generation costs year over year. Overall, when you take into account all the other factors—distribution costs, transmission costs—the average Ontarian sees a 5% decrease in their electricity bill year over year.

I'll remind the leader of the third party that the wholesale cost of electricity is lower today than it was in 2002. We have a cleaner, greener, more reliable supply of electricity.

Ontarians have answered the challenge that we set three years ago, and they're better off because the McGuinty government has taken the tough choices to ensure that we see these declining prices.

Mr. Hampton: What it is is another exercise in McGuinty government doublespeak. The figure that matters is the figure at the bottom of the hydro bill, and as a result of today's announcement, the number at the bottom of the hydro bill is going up.

Here's the reality. The Premier gives himself a \$40,000-a-year pay increase. He gives his good friend Tom Parkinson at Hydro One a \$5-million prize to keep quiet. And what do working families get, courtesy of the McGuinty government? A hydro bill that has doubled in the last three and a half years and a hydro bill that's going to go up once again.

Premier, you gave yourself the \$40,000 pay increase, you gave your friend Tom Parkinson the \$5-million gift, and you're giving ordinary working families another increase in the hydro bill. How's that fair?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: There is a complete and utter absence of fact in anything the member just said. The bottom line is, Ontarians are receiving a cut in their electricity bill year over year, and over the life of this government, the price of wholesale electricity is down for large consumers and small consumers.

Let me remind the member that when he was in government, we saw a 40% increase in electricity prices in three years. And do you know when his government announced those increases? New Year's Eve, 1991; New Year's Eve, 1992; and New Year's Eve, 1993.

Lest anybody in the general public think differently, prove that you've given back your 40% raise. You got a big raise; prove that you've given it back—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Sit down, Minister.

New question.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier, and my question is about the McGuinty government's commitment to working people in Ontario.

Premier, scabs cross picket lines and take the jobs of other workers. Unethical bosses like to use scabs to bust unions and to force workers to accept lower pay. Working people get hurt in the process, sometimes very seriously.

Today, some members of your caucus joined New Democrats in supporting a bill to ban scabs in Ontario, but your cabinet ministers opposed the bill. The question is this, Premier: Which side are you on? Are you in favour of continuing to have scabs in Ontario or are you in favour of banning scabs in Ontario? What's your position, Premier?

1430

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): This is probably as good a metaphor as any for the NDP's approach to managing the economy and trying to divide people, pit one group against another. He wants us to choose between workers, working people, working families, and management, the private sector and those who are entrepreneurial.

We think the single most important thing we can do in order to compete in this highly competitive global economy is to put in place the kinds of policies that bring people together. So, for example, tomorrow, when I'm addressing the CAW—and I'm happy I've been invited to do that—I'll be delivering the same message to the CAW that I delivered to the Big Three autoworkers, and Toyota, and Honda and parts suppliers as well.

I'm going to reinforce and re-emphasize how it's absolutely essential that we find a way to continue to work together to build a stronger economy that benefits all Ontarians and not just one particular group.

Mr. Hampton: Apparently the Premier believes that having scabs in Ontario brings people together. I want to disabuse the Premier of his mistaken conclusion.

Premier, the provinces of Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba have effectively put an end to the use of scabs. The result has been fewer strikes, fewer lockouts and people spending more time on the job. More importantly, ordinary working people in those provinces are protected. Workers like Don Milner haven't had that

protection in Ontario. Milner is a worker at Navistar in Chatham who was nearly killed when a van full of scabs ran over him on the picket line.

Premier, do you stand with your MPPs who say that the use of scabs in Ontario is wrong, or are you going to continue to allow scabs to do their terrible work in Ontario?

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

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'm proud to put our labour relations record up against the NDP's record any time, any day. We believe in a balanced approach to labour relations in this province, and we believe in the collective bargaining process.

One of the things that I'm extremely proud of, if you look back at 2006, 97% of all contract negotiations were settled without any strike or lockout. That's a record that's unprecedented in this province. There were 70 strikes and lockouts in this province in 2006, one of the lowest levels in the past 15 years.

We believe in a balanced approach to labour relations. It is an approach that has worked well in this province, and it's an approach that we're going to continue to take in this province.

Mr. Hampton: Apparently the Premier and the Minister of Labour don't think it's a serious issue when a worker at a Chatham picket line is almost killed because scabs decide to try to run him down.

What was interesting today is a number of your backbenchers said it on the record and voted against continuing to allow scabs in Ontario. But the McGuinty Minister of Health and the Minister of Community Safety both voted against banning scabs.

Now, Premier, you tried to duck the issue altogether, but this is an issue that is not going to go away. And my question is this: What is your position, Premier? Are you going to continue to allow companies to use scabs? Are you going to continue to allow unethical bosses to recruit scabs and use them to intimidate workers who are simply trying to stand up for their jobs or are you going to do the right thing and ban scabs in Ontario? What's it going to be, Premier?

Hon. Mr. Peters: The government does not intend to bring back legislation that's going to ban replacement workers. We believe in a collective bargaining process in this province, a collective bargaining process that saw, in 2006, 97% of all collective agreements ratified.

What we will not do as a government is do what the NDP did, and just arbitrarily go like this to collective agreements in this province. We will not do what the NDP did in bringing back the social contract. We believe in a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in this province. It's an approach that has worked very well. We saw the labour unrest that took place under the NDP government. We're not going back to those days of the NDP government—the NDP government that saw thousands and thousands of jobs lost in this province and collective agreements ripped up. We're looking ahead in a fair and balanced approach.

ONTARIO LOTTERY
AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier and again concerns the lottery scandal. We have in this House today one former minister who was responsible for the lottery corporation who says that he would agree to come forward to a committee if it asked him to come forward and answer questions. I talked to another former minister this morning, the member for Lanark–Carleton; he indicated to me that he too, if asked by a committee, would be willing to come forward to answer any questions that would be helpful in terms of what happened vis-à-vis the government and the lottery corporation. I'm sure that those responsible during the time of the New Democratic Party government would be willing to do the same. So the only question we're left with is, first of all, why you and your minister in the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government are refusing to allow such a committee to meet and, secondly, why you won't stand up and say in front of that kind of a committee that you and people from your office and people from your minister's office and your minister won't come forward to talk about the things that are not being investigated at present by anybody. Why won't you call the committee and why won't you have your minister agree to appear in front of that committee to explain what went on?

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

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): In fact, this government has had the standing committee on government agencies meet and call the agency. This particular committee is chaired by a member of your own caucus. We welcomed an independent officer of this Legislature doing one of the most thorough and in-depth investigations of its kind, and have not only accepted the recommendations but are working and committed to implementing them all. We have brought in KPMG, the auditor of the gentleman opposite's party, to do a very thorough review. In fact, the Ombudsman talks about the work and says that their report and recommendations should be posted online and each and every one of those recommendations implemented. We've referred substantive and serious matters to the police.

The real question is, given that the member opposite says that Mr. Hudak will take responsibility, why won't he apologize to Mr. Edmonds? Why wouldn't he stand in his place and do the right thing? I have apologized for the actions that occurred under a previous government. I stand in my place and I take those responsibilities seriously, but the people who were in charge at the time should—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Sit down, Minister.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tory: I can only say that when this minister gets up and says that kind of thing, clearly not paying any

attention to the fact that what we're after here is to look at what was known by the government, by this minister, by his office and by the Premier's office in the period after April and before October—it is insulting for him to get up and give that kind of an answer. It is a disgraceful abdication of any accountability or responsibility whatsoever, and it is an insult to this Legislature and to all the people who he is representing here.

You and your party closed down the very committee that you're talking about and you know it. We asked for more time to ask precisely the questions of you that we want to ask today and that other people want us to ask, and you closed that committee down. It's a total disgrace to stand in your place and pretend that that committee examined these things.

I want to ask the Premier this question: Why, when you have two former ministers willing to come forward and answer questions, do you get this kind of insulting answer from your minister, who not only will not agree to come forward—you won't agree to call the committee—but he insults this Legislature and the people of Ontario by suggesting those questions have been asked when clearly there's been no such—

The Speaker: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I think it's insulting to an independent officer of this Legislature that members opposite will not take responsibility for the fact that they should have acted in 2002, left it to others, swept these matters under the rug. But all members of this chamber and all Ontarians should rest assured that this government takes these matters seriously, is taking the appropriate actions to make sure that the public will have full trust and confidence in their corporation and in the lottery system.

It's regrettable that members opposite chose to look the other way, to put these matters in a closet, to keep it locked away and to do nothing about it. It's regrettable that they refuse, if they do have any information, to share it with us today. It's regrettable, given the shameful, disrespectful treatment that Bob Edmonds received at the hands of the members opposite, that they won't stand in their place and issue an apology to him. I have done so on behalf of all Ontarians, certainly on behalf of the government and on behalf of the members opposite.

1440

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday your Minister of the Environment made representations about the Ontario Climate Change Act that, to be generous, had no relationship to the text before her, and there were lawyers available, Premier, for yourself or for the minister should you have wished clarification.

Today, members of this House voted for the NDP's Ontario Climate Change Act, which mandates reduction of greenhouse gas levels in this province to 6% below 1990 by 2012. Premier, will you call this bill for a final

vote so that this will become the framework within which any climate change plans your government brings forward will be shaped?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): It is broadly recognized by all thoughtful people that when it comes to developing progressive, intelligent climate change plans, an essential ingredient has to be heavy investment in public transit. The question I have on behalf of the people of Ontario, but especially on behalf of the GTA, is, why is this party now standing up against putting in place something that so many have longed for for so long? Why is it that they want to kill the subway?

Interjections.

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

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Premier, that is absolutely silly. Nobody here is suggesting anything of the sort. The issue here is a very simple—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Health. The Minister of Northern Development.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Health, I will not warn you again.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: To the Premier: You're trying to play politics with what is a very serious issue. The issue before us is a very simple one. We need to do something in order to curb global warming. This province today in the Legislature voted to pass Bill 200 at second reading.

You were able, as Premier, to come into this House and in eight days pass yourself a pay raise, and you're saying today that you're not prepared to do what has to be done to protect the environment of not only Ontario but the rest of North America? I ask you again, are you prepared to act in haste and do what needs to be done, such as you did with voting yourself a pay raise, and allow this bill to go forward with speed?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's very interesting to watch the NDP trying to unhoist themselves from their own petard. The honourable member opposite says that his leader said no such thing. Let me just remind him exactly what his leader said: "We don't need another subway mega-project ... extending the subway line into a lightly populated York region." That's his definition of this magnificent, unprecedented, level investment that's bringing together many levels of government to invest in public transit.

One of the things I'm sure I'm going to have to speak to tomorrow when I speak to the CAW—they're very concerned about what's going to happen to the TTC orders for Thunder Bay and the carts and the waggly—

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Subway cars.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: —the subway cars. What they're going to want to know is, why is it that the NDP, who are standing up in favour of a responsible, progressive climate change plan, are not also standing up for

jobs in northern Ontario that are desperately needed by northerners?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question. The member for Willowdale.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Willowdale would like to place his question. Order.

Thank you, to the member for Willowdale. We'll try to get the place calm first.

The member for Willowdale.

Mr. Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance. I listened to the doom and gloom of the opposition as they tried to portray Ontario as dismal as it was during the Harris–Eves years. In Willowdale, what I do see every day with my own eyes is how Willowdale is thriving and how the province has prospered under our government.

Minister, the government is required to table the Ontario Economic Accounts for the fourth quarter by tomorrow. Could you please tell us whether you plan to do so and what the update for the quarter will show?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm pleased with the question. I just want to let my friend know that the Ontario Economic Accounts provides an overall assessment of the current state of the Ontario economy and that the accounts were posted on our website. Just let me check my notes from earlier today. The good news is that these accounts show continuing strength and growth in the Ontario economy.

As members in this House will know, the third quarter of 2006 represented a low-water mark for economic growth, and we've seen since that time increasing strength in the economy. The Ontario Economic Update and the Ontario Economic Accounts are the data and the information that simply show that Ontario's new economic strength continued in the last quarter of 2006. We see that it is continuing now as we move into the spring of 2007.

Mr. Zimmer: I'm sure that the people here in Ontario, in Willowdale and in the businesses and homes in our province are glad to hear this. It's also especially good news that it at last shows we've turned the corner and that the last quarter's flat growth was the low-water mark for Ontario. It sounds to me like our economy is doing quite well, given the pressures that are being felt across North America.

Minister, what is the government doing to sustain this growth and ensure we in Ontario continue to see growth like this in the last quarter?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Let me just tell the member that in virtually all numbers on the Ontario Economic

Accounts we're seeing real progress. We're seeing new economic growth. We're seeing job creation in virtually all sectors, and we continue to see job creation in full-time jobs, and that's very encouraging—well-paying jobs as well. We're also seeing increased purchasing power by individuals.

In virtually every category, we're seeing what I refer to in the budget as new economic strength. It's going to give us the capacity to continue the sustainable surpluses which will succeed the era of deficits that we inherited from our predecessors. We're going to continue to make the investments that are necessary to continue this growth.

Notwithstanding what the leader of the third party said about cancelling subways and keeping people in their cars, we're going to build that subway, we're going to build the infrastructure in every corner of the province and we will not be guided by the nonsense that comes from the third party in this province.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, concerning the lottery scandal. Not a mention from the Minister of Finance about the 124,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the last few years.

Under the lottery scandal, to the Premier: On the Premier's watch, there has been a tiny handful of people who have left the lottery corporation, but there's been no wholesale airing of what has gone on there in the aftermath of the Ombudsman's report or anybody else's report—KPMG and so forth. It's our information that your government, through the lottery corporation, has been insisting that those who have left, this tiny handful, sign agreements where they're prohibited from talking about any aspect of their employment at the lottery corporation, including anything they might have done concerning the lottery scandal.

In the interests of ensuring that all the facts get on the table, as you keep insisting you are interested in doing, even though you refuse to have a committee and refuse to have an independent investigation and so on, are you willing to tell the House that you will give instructions to the lottery corporation board, and through them to the management, that these gag orders will be waived, that they will be cancelled, so that those people can come forward and tell us what they knew, what they did, when they knew it and whom they talked to in your government? Will you cancel those gag orders?

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

1450

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The Leader of the Opposition, as he likes to do, often engages in unsubstantiated allegations. I can tell you that the Ombudsman comments on the matters and on the co-

operation with his investigation. It is my expectation that all individuals, all files will be turned over to the police for their review, and they will take the appropriate steps. I expect full co-operation with the proper authorities to get to the bottom of these matters. They are serious allegations that the Ombudsman did make. I think it is incumbent on these individuals to co-operate, just as I think that if, as the member has indicated, he has at least two members of his caucus who have information to share, they too should co-operate. I don't know why they have not come forward of their own volition. Perhaps they have to be shamed into it.

We know that they refused to do the right thing and issue an apology to Mr. Edmonds for the disgraceful and shameful treatment that he was subjected to under a previous government. I have in fact apologized—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Okay. Supplementary .

Mr. Tory: To the Premier again: I would point out that the Ombudsman says, on page 21, that 2004 was "a banner year for controversial insider prize claims." In 2004, when you were the government of Ontario—there's no question about that.

The only thing you didn't do in that long-winded answer about nothing was to answer the question. If you really want all of these people to co-operate fully—the people who used to work at the lottery corporation, who probably know an awful lot about this, including the role of your government and your personal office, and you and the Premier and his people—then all I asked you was, will you address a concern I'm sure they have, that if they signed a piece of paper that had a gag order in it that you insisted on when they left, you will write them a letter, have your lawyers write them a letter, and say that that gag order is waived, it's cancelled, so those people can talk to anybody they want about what went on in your government and in that corporation during the time of this lottery scandal? All you have to do is stand up and say yes, you will cancel those gag orders. That's all I'm asking. Get up and do it if you have any courage at all.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Once again, the leader of the official opposition traffics in fiction. I've made no such insistence on any such order as he alleges. I can tell you, though, that the Ombudsman does comment on the openness and responsiveness of this minister and this government to get to the bottom of these matters, to take the appropriate action.

The member would know that between the Ombudsman and KPMG there are some 60 recommendations. Seventeen of those recommendations have already been implemented, and 25 more will be complete by the end of June. The other 18 are ongoing and will take a little bit more time. I want to provide assurance to this member, to all members of this House, indeed to all Ontarians, that each and every one of those recommendations, as the Premier has indicated, are ongoing and will be implemented. We will not rest until Ontarians' trust and confidence is in their corporation so that they know when they spend their loonie or toonie on a game through

Ontario Lottery and Gaming that it is a fair one, it is one that they can have confidence in. Members should be fully confident that will happen.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Since 1999, the city of Toronto has been forced to manage downloaded provincially mandated program costs, such as the ODSP and the ODB. It has been worsened by your government's failure to honour your own cost-sharing and funding agreements.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Could we have order so I can hear the question. The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: In 2007, your government's funding shortfall for the administration of Ontario Works, per diem rates for emergency hostel services and child care will cost the city of Toronto \$71 million. The city of Toronto council is contemplating suing you in a court of law for non-payment. My question to you is simple: Will you commit to paying the city of Toronto the \$71 million that you owe, or do you prefer to be taken to court as Ontario's first deadbeat finance minister?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I always appreciate questions from my friend from Beaches–East York. It gives me, in this instance, for example, an opportunity to simply put some facts in front of him and certainly the people of Toronto.

Back in 2003, when we inherited our responsibilities, the provincial government assisted the city of Toronto to the tune of about \$130 million. That was the Conservative support. I don't want to go back to the NDP support. Since that time, four years later, that support has increased by 400%. That is over \$700 million. Those investments go into transportation, housing and the support of social services. They basically go into every single aspect of the great city of Toronto's work for the great people of Toronto.

I am proud of that 400% increase. I believe the city of Toronto can use those resources, and I'm proud to say that we continue to work with the people of Toronto to continue down that track.

The Acting Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Again to the Minister of Finance, Hamiltonians and Hamilton council have slammed your government and your absentee Liberal MPPs. Your refusal to provide Hamilton with sustainable annual funding is causing higher property taxes, higher transit rates and decaying infrastructure in that city. Hamilton got \$5 million less than it needs this year to pay for your social services programs. You fixed the downloading for some 905 municipalities but gave older, established communities, like the city of Hamilton, the back of your hand. Minister, will you listen to what Hamilton and I have been telling you for years and step

up and fix the download, or do you need neon flashing lights and an anti-McGuinty campaign to get the message?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: The sad news in this Legislature is that the members of the New Democratic Party have simply lost credibility in the city of Toronto, in Hamilton and right across the province. Just hours ago, my friend from Beaches–East York was up in my riding, waxing eloquent to the seniors of my riding. Not once did he mention that his leader plans to cancel the subway that is going to that riding.

I want to tell my friend from Hamilton that as her party has decided to cancel the subway, that means that the steel coming out of Hamilton will not build subway cars in Thunder Bay, will not put tracks down to take people out of their cars and get on the subway. They have lost their credibility, not only in Hamilton, Beaches and Vaughan but right across Ontario.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Last week, when you were in Japan participating in this government's aggressive international outreach strategy to build stronger trade and investment ties with key global markets, a member of the NDP stood up in this House and criticized you for not being in Windsor when the regrettable announcement was released that 375 people had lost their jobs at the General Motors Windsor transmission plant. Now that we welcome you back from your very successful trip, I would like to take this opportunity to let you respond to the member of the third party.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you so much for that question. I'm very happy to do that. In fact, I think the best way is to paraphrase an e-mail that the member from Beaches–East York received from the very leaders of the GM transmission CAW and what they said when they saw that he had asked a question, and perhaps he has read the e-mail. It said:

"I want to personally tell you that Minister Pupatello was the first, and only member of the provincial or federal government to have the courtesy to call us to see ... what assistance her office could be.... We have had approximately 36 different meetings that started ... January 26th and continue.... Not one of these meetings have been with any member of the provincial NDP party. I find this extremely unacceptable...."

This is written by Bill Reeves, the president of CAW Local 1973.

I think you want to come for a ride with me to my town because I've got some things to show you, Mister.

Mr. Hoy: Yesterday, the leader of the NDP introduced his motion calling for immediate funding for construction of a tunnelled access route in Windsor. In his motion, he openly attacked you and the Minister of Energy for not doing enough on this file. The NDP and

PCs should realize that, as cabinet ministers, you and the Minister of Energy cannot state preferences for border-crossing solutions prior to the final recommendations made by the binational expert panel.

1500

Since the NDP and the PCs do not have the nerve to ask you questions on this issue when you're actually here in the House, what do you say to this group about the government, in their defence, and their work in your community?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I want to tell you how proud I am, and perhaps it is time we start bragging about how we have defended our community and the investments we have made in the city of Windsor.

Let me say this to the member from Beaches–East York in particular: I will take him on a tour of what we're doing, not just for working people but for our whole city, with investments in Nemak, DaimlerChrysler, Ford, GM and Valiant, all of which created jobs for my community and which that party opposed.

I will take him on any day of the week, but on the way to Windsor, we're going to stop at FAG Aerospace and I think we'll get him some ball bearings so he can ask me a question in the House.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm sure the Minister of Economic Development thinks she's very clever. If a man got up and said something like that in this House, he'd be in trouble for that sort of thing.

My question is for the Premier, concerning the lottery scandal. The Ombudsman wrote in his report, "The danger is too great that the OLG will continue to fall back into its old habits of coddling retailers and dismissing consumers' legitimate complaints."

We see that this continues to happen on a continuous basis. The OLG doesn't act until it gets raised in the House. Just this very week, another complaint was raised with the Premier in the House, and he said, "Let me say ... as a result of raising this matter here today, this has elevated it automatically as a priority, I'm sure, for the OLG."

This is not a sign of a change—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, I want to hear the question. I will not warn you again.

Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: When you talk about how they get attention at the OLG based on whether it's raised in this House or not, this is not the sign of a changed corporate culture. It was the Premier who said that himself. This will only come with a housecleaning, starting at the top and working its way through the corporation.

Will you commit to bringing us a report on exactly what has happened over there in terms of how many people have been disciplined and how many people's

employment has been terminated? As far as we can see, it's less than a handful of people, when the Ombudsman himself said the corporate culture was rotten and needed substantial change. When are you going to report to us on that?

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

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): In fact, I do agree with the Ombudsman's assessment. That's why I accepted his report. That's why I'm committed to implementing his recommendations. That's why the board has hired, on an interim basis, Michelle DiEmanuele, one of the acknowledged experts in change management and in fact in changing corporate culture. We're indeed fortunate to have someone with her expertise both inside the public and private sectors to bring about some of the changes in the corporate culture that the Ombudsman says clearly need to happen.

Of course, the member opposite always wants to ignore what the Ombudsman had to say about that corporate culture: that the crossroads, as he put it, was in 2002—where if he looks to his left and to his right, he will find members of the executive council.

The Leader of the Opposition has said there is information that Mr. Hudak and Mr. Sterling, the members from Erie–Lincoln and Lanark–Carleton, have to shed light on these matters. Why is the leader of the official opposition preventing these members from coming forward, sharing what they knew, sharing what they did, letting the public know and helping us get to the bottom of these matters?

Mr. Tory: I've been travelling for the last couple of days, and people ask, more than almost anything else, "Why have we not seen any kind of consequences? Why haven't we seen anybody lose their job?" It's the same question they ask after the Auditor General's report comes out. They can't believe that the McGuinty government is responsible for wasting hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money and no one ever loses their job. It's just okay because it's the taxpayers' money. It's the same thing here. We have a lottery corporation scandal on your watch, on Dalton McGuinty's watch, with \$100 million ripped off from people in this province, and no one, with the exception of maybe one person, loses their job, no one is disciplined, nothing happens, except a lot of statements from you about good intentions of things to come.

The people want to know what changes have been made, who did lose their job, who was disciplined as a result of this, and I think you have some responsibility to get up in your place and report to them on that, not talk about reports and things to happen in years to come. They want to know now, when they're buying the tickets, what you have done about it, what changes have been made, who's lost their job and who's been disciplined. Why don't you get up and give us a straight answer instead of one of these windy things you pretend is an answer?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, a seven-point security plan has been brought forward and implemented. The Ombudsman comments on this and many other things in his report, where he asks—and I want to quote for the member opposite—“Is the government committed to reforming the system and perhaps making it the best in the world?” The Ombudsman answers his own question. He says, “Certainly I would find that very encouraging.”

Beyond that, I think the responsibility rests here, first and foremost, with the OLG. The Ombudsman calls for this change in culture. I agree. I agree that it should have been done in 2002, as the Ombudsman indicates, but these matters were swept under the rug by members who sit in your caucus today. That is not acceptable to me, and that is not acceptable to this government.

We are acting and implementing the recommendation the Ombudsman has made. He says that if that happens, and he has confidence that it will, in fact Ontarians should have and will have full trust and confidence in their lottery system in this province. That’s—

The Acting Speaker: New question.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Premier: We’ve got 2,000 acres of juice grape vineyards in this province, most of it in Niagara. It’s being farmed by 105 families, most of them in Niagara, some for as many as four generations. With the Cadbury Schweppes beverage plant closing its doors in St. Catharines, we not only lose those 26 jobs, but these farmers—their families—are desperate. Sir, what are you going to do to assist them?

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

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I answer this question because I am the minister responsible for something called the VQA, which is the act that governs all Ontario grape wines.

I would just say that we’re dealing with an enormously important industry here, as I think the Legislature understands but the public may not fully appreciate. We get almost a million tourists a year into our wine areas. We’ve got 12,000 acres of grapes planted. We have almost a \$500-million industry here.

I would say to the member that the issue is intertwined with our wine industry. We are always looking at ways that we can improve the profitability of our grape growers. But we also do that in conjunction with our wineries and our tourism industry. What are we doing? We are continuing to do things to build our wine industry, which will continue to increase the sale of our Ontario-grown grapes.

Mr. Kormos: Premier, the problem is that these people aren’t growing wine grapes; they’re growing juice grapes. It’s a historic agricultural activity in Niagara, and it’s related to the historic industry of bottling grape juice. They can’t convert to wine grape overnight. (1) They

need a replanting program, and (2) there’s always a risk of a glut of wine grape in Niagara region. Stand up, sir, and tell us now that you’re going to make immediate amendments to the Wine Content Act to start accommodating and utilizing more Ontario grape, and you’re going to start to address the issue.

These people are desperate. They’ve still got to pay mortgages; they’ve still got to pay the bills. But as of the end of this year—the end of this season—their income is zero; nothing. Their product has no market. They need your help. What are you going to do for them?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I just say that the solution you’ve proposed is one that I don’t think the industry itself has recommended to us. What is actually going on is that the Ministry of Agriculture, I know, is in active consultation with these people. That’s one thing we’ve done very specifically. Secondly, I know that we’ve provided \$1 million of assistance for Ontario grape growers, to support the industry.

What are we doing? We are continuing to build our wine industry, which will continue to grow the size of our grape crop. The Ministry of Agriculture is meeting with these growers to see what we can do in the short term. In the long term, I would say to all of us, we will continue to build our Ontario wine industry, an enormously important industry, and we as a government are committed to seeing that it prospers and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you. New question.

1510

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Minister, last month you came to London and brought with you \$4 million to upgrade the North London Optimist Community Centre and the Thames pool as part of the McGuinty government’s \$190-million economic stimulus plan. Minister, let me tell you that the city of London and MPPs Matthews, Bentley and Peters, along with myself, are very pleased that the McGuinty government makes these investments. When this recreation complex is complete, London residents will have more opportunity—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Order. Are you finished with your question? Okay. Minister.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): The NDP may laugh at the people of London, but I want to congratulate the effective, hard-working caucus from London, Ontario, who stand up for their constituents time and time again.

I was very pleased to be there, not with one of those famous Tory or NDP rubber cheques but \$4 million from the provincial government for the Thames pool and the North London Optimist Community Centre. I want to thank the member for London–Fanshawe, and I want to thank Mr. Bentley, Deb Matthews and Steve Peters for believing that there is a need for government support of

these recreation complexes throughout Ontario, and warn the people of London that if John Tory and the Conservative Party ever get their hands on government, they will say no to these kinds of community infrastructure investments.

The McGuinty government believes that it's important to invest in a culture of wellness. We're in London. We've been there in the past, and we'll be there in the future.

PETITIONS

NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to save the MNR.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) plays a vital role in the protection and management of the natural resources that belong to all Ontarians; and

"Whereas the MNR budget for 2006-07 is 24% less, in real terms, than it was in 1992-93; and

"Whereas vital programs relating to fish and wildlife, provincial parks, forestry, and other MNR activities continue to be cut back; and

"Whereas the aesthetic, cultural, economic, educational, environmental, recreational and social value of our natural resources far exceeds the cost of protecting and managing them;

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

"That funding of the Ministry of Natural Resources must be increased to a level that will enable it to stop cutting existing programs and provide full funding to all existing programs as well as any new programs that may be required to ensure the effective protection and management of Ontario's natural resources."

I support this petition.

TUITION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I present a petition from the University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council.

"To Stop Tuition Fee Hikes and Improve Access and Quality In Post-Secondary Education

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

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

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

Thousands have signed this, and I'm proud to affix my signature as well.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to regulate zoos to protect animals and communities.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I believe in this petition, and I will affix my signature to it.

LAKEVIEW GENERATING STATION

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a petition from the Lakeview ratepayers association that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas there should be no decisions on the future development of the Lakeview generating station grounds until:

"A full, independent environmental assessment, including air, water, soil samples and a health study of

long-term residents, is completed to determine the historical, current and accumulative impact of industrial pollutants on the existing environment of Lakeview, southeast Mississauga and its citizens; and

“Government includes this assessment and gives its findings equal weight in all mandatory environmental reports regarding future development of the Lakeview generating grounds.”

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

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

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

“Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston.”

Of course I agree with the petition, and I have signed it.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a number of my constituents:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario’s lottery system for months, if not years;

“Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to ‘spin the scandal’ rather than fix the problems;

“Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

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

“That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and

demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system.”

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I have affixed my signature as well.

1520

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I just received a petition from the good folks of Walkerton and Mount Albert. I want to thank Royce Mahood for preparing this petition for me.

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare ... has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its

laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

“Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the impact of such decisions will negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie.”

I support this petition.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

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

“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 agree with the petitioners, so I affix my signature as well.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I just want to thank Don Lindsay of Wasaga Beach for sending me this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 122,000 households across Ontario are on waiting lists for affordable housing, enduring wait times of five to 10 years;

“Whereas housing affordability problems are worsening in Ontario, with one tenant household in five paying at least 50% of its income on rent, and almost 65,000 facing eviction in 2005 because they couldn’t afford to pay their rent;

“Whereas Ontario’s current social housing stock is increasingly rundown, with tenants forced to endure degrading conditions, including mould, cockroaches and mice; and

“Whereas the cost of ignoring the plight of our poorly housed and homeless neighbours affects all citizens of Ontario through increased health costs, emergency shelter costs and other public expenditures;

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

“To ensure there is a major allocation of funding for affordable and supportive housing in Ontario’s 2007 provincial budget, with a commitment to release this funding quickly; and

“To urge the government of Ontario to reassume financial responsibility for the cost and repair of the current social housing stock which was downloaded onto municipalities, who cannot afford repair and upkeep costs.”

I have signed this petition and I agree with it.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I want to thank Jim and Jane Hunter from Flesherton, Ontario, who are very concerned about how we protect animals in zoos in Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I agree with the intent of this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

“Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds place increased pressure on acute care beds; and

“Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

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

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound."

I support this petition.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with lab services, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of the communities served by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) wish to maintain current community lab services; and

"Whereas maintaining community lab services promotes physician retention and benefits family health teams; and

"Whereas the funding for community lab services is currently a strain on the operating budget of MAHC; and

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC needs to reflect the growing demand for services in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

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

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health increase the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to permit continued operation of community laboratory services."

I support this petition.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's that time of the day when I rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week, and page Alex is going to help me deliver this to the table.

On Monday, April 16, we have an opposition day motion from the official opposition; in the evening, third reading of Bill 155, the Electoral System Referendum Act.

On Tuesday, April 17, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act; and in the evening, second reading of Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act.

On Wednesday, April 18, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.

On Thursday, April 19, the afternoon is to be confirmed.

I'd like to hand that to page Alex.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Broten moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario afin d'assurer la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l'Ontario, à apporter des modifications connexes à la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable et à abroger la Loi sur le contrôle des transferts d'eau.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Speaker recognizes the minister.

1530

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of the Environment, Jeff Leal, the member for Peterborough.

Last week I had the privilege of introducing important new legislation in this House in conjunction with my cabinet colleague Minister Ramsay. The proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act is designed to keep our vital water resources protected and plentiful and to support the health and prosperity of our people today and for the future.

Today I am very pleased to have the opportunity to outline for this House some of the provisions of the act in greater detail as we move forward with second reading. As the honourable members know, our government has acted decisively throughout our mandate. We have implemented some of the most rigorous water protection measures in North America. Those actions include important protections for the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin.

The Great Lakes represent the largest single supply of fresh water in the world. Three out of every four people in Ontario rely on the Great Lakes basin for their drinking water. Many millions of people living in communities throughout Ontario rely on the Great Lakes. Our government is determined to provide the Great Lakes ecosystem with the protection and wise management that it needs and that it deserves. Under provincial law, we do not own the water. No one owns the water in its natural state. It is held in common for the benefit of everyone. We have been given stewardship of this valuable resource, borrowing it from our children and grandchildren. It is our fundamental responsibility to pass this resource on to them in better condition than we found it.

There are a great many pressures on the source of fresh water. And while we don't know exactly what im-

pact climate change will have on our water resources in Ontario, we do know that it is going to affect many different aspects of our environment and our ecosystem. That makes our actions all the more timely, and adds an even greater imperative to what we do here and now to protect this resource for the future.

The Great Lakes basin has been a foundation on which we have built our history, our growth and success as a province and the tremendous quality of life that Ontarians enjoy today. I am reminded about this every day, since my family and I are fortunate to live close to the lake in my home riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I am committed to doing what it takes to preserve and protect this rich resource and wonderful gift of nature.

I am very proud to be part of a government that takes our responsibilities seriously as environmental stewards on behalf of all Ontarians. We are deeply committed to protecting, managing and conserving our precious natural resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin to meet our needs today and, most importantly, well into the future.

Je suis très fière de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui prend au sérieux son rôle de gardien de l'environnement au nom de toute la population ontarienne.

Nous sommes profondément résolus à protéger, à gérer et à sauvegarder les précieuses ressources naturelles du bassin des Grands Lacs et du Saint-Laurent afin qu'elles répondent à nos besoins aujourd'hui et dans un avenir lointain.

That is why we have proposed the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. The bill would include even more rigorous protections for our Great Lakes waters so that we can create a healthy, sustainable legacy that can be passed on to our children and grandchildren.

If this bill is passed, it will enable us to implement the historic Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. As members know, that agreement was signed in December 2005 by Ontario, Quebec and eight US Great Lakes states, including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The agreement provides a framework for all 10 participating jurisdictions to manage, protect and conserve the waters in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin using a set of common principles. Under the agreement, the commitments we have made are to be phased in and each participating province and state is required to pass or modify their laws, policies and programs accordingly.

It also creates a framework for decision-making. It allows us to take an integrated approach to management that looks at both water quality and quantity. We can look at where water is taken from, where it's going and how it is going to be used.

One of the critical features of the agreement is that it provides for a ban on the transfer of water out of the basin. While Ontario has had a regulation in place since 1999 to prohibit such transfers, the agreement makes this provision common to all 10 Great Lakes jurisdictions.

We heard concerns before introduction that the proposed legislation covering water transfers between watersheds did not go far enough. We heard these concerns and we acted on them. That's why we've strengthened provisions on cumulative impacts.

The bill would also introduce new regulation-making authorities so that regulations can be made for further protections that are consistent with the agreement. As well, the new municipal working group and the annex advisory panel will be looking into addressing transfers between watersheds and providing advice for the government on the development of regulations.

The bill would enable us to reinforce basin-wide environmental standards while improving science-based decision-making throughout the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region. At the same time, it would strengthen Ontario's existing ban on water diversions by enshrining it in statute while promoting greater water conservation efforts by all the signatory jurisdictions.

Another important reason for this bill is that it would enable us to bring Ontario's approach to water-taking permits into the 21st century. Under the current provisions of the Ontario Water Resources Act, subject to certain exceptions, water takings that began on or before March 29, 1961, are not required to obtain a permit to take water. What worked more than 40 years ago does not meet the needs of Ontario today. We need to bring our management of these resources in line with the times and take a modern, science-based approach to water protection and conservation.

The proposed legislation would allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to pass regulations requiring that such historical water takings obtain a permit. That would enhance our ability to manage Ontario water resources effectively by giving us additional scientific and qualitative information on how our water resources are being used.

We will be consulting with the public as well as those organizations that will be affected. We plan to work closely with those organizations on grandfathering as well as discussing what is an appropriate transition process so that we can make it work and work well for everyone.

In addition—and this is a first for Ontario—the proposed act would give the government a new regulation-making authority to develop and implement water conservation charges. It is fair and reasonable to ask Ontario's commercial and industrial water users to contribute their fair share toward the cost of managing the resources they use. Until now, large commercial and industrial water users have not been paying anything towards the cost of managing the quantity of the water they use in their businesses. The proposed legislation would enable the government to introduce water conservation charges for these high-volume users.

Let me be clear: This will be quite easy for water users to adapt to. Most of these users already have an annual reporting requirement, and this will line up with what they are already doing. Revenue from the new charges

would cover some of the significant costs the province incurs in managing these resources and also promote water conservation.

Let me also be clear: The proposed new water conservation charge is a management measure. The revenues from this initiative will all go directly toward the costs of water quantity management.

As members may know, there are significant costs associated with managing Ontario's water resources, and they will only grow in the future. Under the proposed legislation, the amount of a charge must relate to the goal of water management and conservation. By law, the charges would not be allowed to generate more revenue than is needed to achieve these goals.

Many commercial and industrial users in Ontario are currently benefiting from the province's water management efforts because they rely on access to clean, safe, abundant water supplies. We believe that it is only fair that these users contribute to the cost of managing these resources. We also believe that introducing a water conservation charge will encourage more companies to make greater efforts to conserve the amount of water they use. We are committed to ensuring that proposed charges are fair across all commercial and industrial sectors and equitable within each of the sectors affected. To this end, we have initiated a consultation process to work out the details of the proposed charge with our stakeholders.

1540

The proposed legislation provides further proof of our government's deep and abiding commitment to protecting Ontario's water resources. From the beginning, we have made protecting and conserving the province's water supplies a high priority. Indeed, it is one of the hallmarks of this government, and that strong focus continues with this bill.

Le projet de loi est une nouvelle preuve que notre gouvernement est profondément résolu à protéger les ressources en eau de l'Ontario. Depuis le début, la protection et la préservation des ressources en eau de la province sont pour nous une haute priorité. En fait, c'est un des traits distinctifs de notre gouvernement. Cette grande priorité est manifeste dans ce projet de loi.

As the House knows, we made a commitment to implement all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations in his report on the Walkerton inquiry, and I am proud to say that all those recommendations have either been implemented or are under way. Last year, we passed the historic Clean Water Act, based on the fundamental principle that prevention is the critical first stage in protecting Ontario's water sources. The Clean Water Act provides for the management of Ontario's drinking water sources on a watershed basis. It empowers hundreds of local communities to manage their own drinking water sources in a more scientific and effective manner than in the past, and that represents a major step in protecting the future of our vital water supplies for future generations.

The Clean Water Act is an excellent example of how our government has demonstrated strong leadership in water protection. But, as members know, there are

numerous other examples. These actions include bringing in more stringent requirements for the training of water treatment plant owners and operators. They include increasing the inspection requirements for water treatment plants and drinking water testing labs. And they include the hiring of more water treatment inspectors and enforcement specialists.

These measures are all designed to protect and maintain the quality of our water resources and ultimately to ensure the continued good health of our people in Ontario.

Ces mesures visent à protéger et à maintenir la qualité de nos ressources en eau—et, finalement, à préserver la bonne santé de notre population.

Our proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act is building further on the significant progress we have made so far.

I am pleased to say that the proposed legislation before us today has received strong expressions of support from a number of key stakeholders, including the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Environmental Defence, the Sierra Legal Defence Fund and Pollution Probe. Support has also been expressed by high-volume water users such as Molson Breweries, which called the bill "a proactive and balanced initiative that will help protect Ontario's water resources for generations to come." Toronto Mayor David Miller has also expressed his support for this initiative, pointing out that "cities have a great interest in preserving, protecting, and restoring the ecosystem health of the Great Lakes," and that the "binational agreement is an important first step in ensuring that all governments around the Great Lakes basin work together to protect this invaluable resource."

By signing the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, this offers us an important new opportunity to take further decisive action to protect and preserve Ontario's valuable water resources.

Promoting water conservation, both through water conservation charges as well as requiring proponents of large transfers in the future to incorporate cost-effective conservation measures, is a vital element in our plan to protect these resources.

The proposed bill is further evidence that our government takes its environmental stewardship responsibilities very seriously. It is evidence that as a green government we are committed to demonstrating strong leadership and taking strong action with respect to the environment.

This proposed legislation will help us build on the success of the Clean Water Act and our many other water protection initiatives. It will further strengthen the protections that are already in place for the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River basin and our other water resources. Perhaps most importantly, the bill will take us closer to our goal of building stronger, healthier communities and a brighter, more prosperous future for people throughout Ontario, and that will be a legacy we can all be very proud of.

I look forward to the rest of the debate, and will now pass my time to the member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is indeed a pleasure to follow the Minister of the Environment and have the opportunity to speak today. The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore is acknowledged across this province as a leader on Ontario's environment, and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to be her parliamentary assistant and to have a chance to speak on Bill 198 this afternoon.

I am pleased to stand before the Legislature in support of the proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. Today we are debating an excellent piece of legislation that has an important contribution to make to the future we all want for our Ontario. We want an Ontario that is strong, healthy and prosperous and an Ontario where our children and their children can grow and thrive in clean communities. It's impossible to overstate the necessity of safe, well-protected water to help create the future we envision for this great province.

Ontario's environment minister, the Honourable Laurel Broten, has already spoken in detail about the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. She has clearly articulated the fundamental role the Great Lakes have played in our past and will continue to play in our lives going down the road. Ontario's communities are founded on these waters and thrive because of them.

My home riding of Peterborough is a perfect example. It sits on the Trent–Severn Waterway, which begins at Lake Ontario and supports the health and economy of communities throughout cottage country. The province's waterways are equally important to communities throughout this great province.

In the Great Lakes and the water resources of this province, all Ontarians have inherited a great natural wonder, and we have inherited a great responsibility to protect and sustain them. The worst thing we could do is deny future generations like my son Braden, who is nine, and my daughter Shanae, who is seven, the great benefits of these waters that we have enjoyed and that are a basis of our high quality of life.

The point was not lost on those who came before us. Starting about 40 years ago, communities on the Great Lakes basin started waking up to the damage we're inflicting on those world-renowned waterways. They saw that short-sighted disregard for the lakes would be detrimental to Ontario's future.

They took decisive action, and we've seen the results and reaped the benefits. We have seen steady improvements in the Great Lakes in recent decades. There has been a major reduction in discharges and in levels of some pollutants. There are healthier fish and wildlife populations today, and some recreational uses have been restored.

Good progress is being made in addressing areas of concern throughout the Great Lakes. But even with these improvements, we realize today that much more needs to be done. Report after report has told us that, yes, we've made good progress, but also that Ontario's waterways continue to face great threats.

Today, we face the same situation that was faced by previous generations: There is a problem, and we need to act decisively. Are we up to this historic challenge? Are we going to meet our responsibility to future generations? I am proud to belong to a government that answers these questions with a resounding yes, and I'm prouder still that we're backing our words with action, and action is always louder than just words.

We're not hiding behind continued growth and prosperity as excuses for allowing our waters to be misused. We are taking bold steps this afternoon to protect Ontario's water resources and the well-being of future generations.

1550

I believe the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act represents a new pinnacle for water protection in this great province. It builds on the solid environmental record of the McGuinty government. We took office with a promise to ensure that Ontario's water is protected from its source to the tap. We are delivering on that key promise.

We have passed the Clean Water Act, giving communities unprecedented ability to protect their local drinking water sources. There are more stringent requirements in place for facilities, laboratories and personnel that Ontarians rely upon for the protection of their drinking water. More water inspectors, investigators and compliance staff are working to ensure that our tough standards are being met. We're investing in source protection planning. We're working with the agricultural community and small rural businesses to help them better protect the waters that are the source of their livelihood. These actions reflect the determination of our government to ensure that clean, healthy and well-protected water will be a part of Ontario's bright future.

The legislation we're considering today will help us to significantly advance our efforts. The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act will protect against two challenges: threats from beyond our basin and unsustainable water management practices within the basin itself.

If passed, the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act will elevate to statute the ban on transfers of water out of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River, Nelson and Hudson Bay basins. It is true that this ban was contained in regulation, but by elevating the ban to the level of legislation, we're giving the people of Ontario the protection they need and deserve. This bill will also prohibit new or increased transfers of water from between watersheds in the Great Lakes, with only strictly regulated exceptions.

The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act will also give Ontario the ability, for the first time ever, to establish water conservation charges for commercial and industrial users of water. This will bring Ontario up to speed with other jurisdictions in Canada and indeed around the world. Conservation charges would help Ontario fund water management activities while encour-

aging conservation and discouraging wasteful practices in the industrial and commercial sectors.

We are also proposing much-needed improvements that would modernize our program for issuing permits to take water. The bill would include a regulation-making authority to require permits for historical water takings that have not had to obtain them in the past.

What we have proposed is a fair and modernized approach designed to protect and sustain Ontario's water resources for the benefit of all Ontarians. And we will be consulting with the public and with stakeholders on the regulations as we move forward with this legislation.

By introducing water conservation charges and updating our permit-to-take-water regime, we're bringing Ontario's water management practices into the 21st century. If passed, the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act would strengthen the ban on diversions of water from our basins, implement the agreement's prohibition against new and increased intra-basin transfers, promote the conservation of our precious water resources, reinforce consistent standards throughout these vital waterways and ensure that the decision-making is based on the best available science.

I urge all members of this House to work with us to pass legislation that will help ensure better-protected waters and a stronger, more prosperous future for Ontario.

Ontario is commissioned to take the lead on this piece of legislation. I am proud to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 198 this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): We're very supportive of the concept, except for one little bit. There's one little bit that gives me concern. The devil is in the details, I suppose, but giving yourself the right to tax or to charge for water is a departure from the history of Ontario. Never before in Ontario have we charged for water. When you get your water and when you pay your water bill, you're paying for the delivery and treatment of water; you're not paying anything for the cost of the water itself.

Once you have that piece of legislation in place, it would be a rare event that over a period of time that, first, the large users would be taxed—and what effect that has. I know the large water bottlers work on extremely small margins. That's why most of them that have survived have absolutely huge volumes, because the only way you can make any money in that business is with a huge volume, because the margin on each individual bottle is so very, very small. Putting a tax on that product could very well see those companies become uncompetitive very quickly.

The Liberal philosophy, of course, is: If it moves, you tax it; if it still moves, you regulate it; and if it's still moving after all that, raise the taxes a bit and just see how much you can take out of the industry.

So, when water starts to be taxed, is it possible with this bill—and I think it is in this bill. If you wanted to start metering home wells, for instance, private wells,

could you meter a home well and charge somebody on a sideroad in Ontario for the water they use out of their well? Is that possible under this bill? I think it is, and that would be a terrible mistake. Other than that small part of the bill, we're pretty supportive of the rest of it.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): With this bill, I'm not sure if the glass is half full or half empty, but I do know there are some pretty serious cracks in the glass.

I think we can all agree in this House that protecting our drinking water is vital. Indeed, you could make a pretty strong argument that it is an issue of paramount importance. Without water, you can't have life. Yet we have before us a bill that appears to have been slapped together in a rather hasty fashion that has some glaring omissions.

I know that later this afternoon my colleague from Toronto–Danforth will be expanding upon some of these omissions and the concerns we have, but what strikes me is that this is something the governing party campaigned on in 2003. They've had three and a half years to bring forward something substantial and something that covers all the bases, shall we say, and they haven't done that. But they have found the time to pursue other things, and we know what one of those was. It's not one that the members opposite like to talk about, but it's one where four days before Christmas they were able to ram through a raise for themselves fairly quickly. Yet on protecting our drinking water, we have to wait three and a half years and what we get is a bill full of holes.

Among the omissions that we see in this bill is that there's no guideline for quality of water that is to be returned to the basin. There's no mention of adaptation to permits and transfers with respect to the current science on climate change and the effects on water levels. There are no standards for consumptive use and no indication of how average consumption will be calculated. I know that the member opposite is going to be limited in his response, but perhaps he could try to answer some of these concerns, some of these omissions.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to compliment the Minister of the Environment, Ms. Broten, and the parliamentary assistant as well, the member from Peterborough, for the good work they have been doing in bringing this piece of legislation to this House.

Perhaps we don't realize the importance of the wonderful natural resource which is our north, the wonderful lakes and rivers that we find—grandiose, I would say—especially in the north part of Ontario. Probably we have been too complacent in the past in not addressing this particular issue. We are addressing it today in second reading format, and I hope we can get on with a good, healthy debate on this particular item that deals with the water we drink, the water, the rivers and lakes, we would very much love to enjoy ourselves in, not only bathing in the summertime or even fishing, which is also a huge sport among Ontarians, as well as people from all over the world. As a matter of fact, people come over here to really enjoy our lakes and rivers. But it's time, and I

think the minister is moving in the right direction and it's never too soon. I think this is an area that must be addressed. Negotiations, I know, keep going on, and discussions with respect to regulations—and yes, regulations are part of the bill we are dealing with now. I do hope that indeed the House can move on quickly to give direction to the minister and come up with regulations that will address the importance of our natural resource—water.

1600

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I am pleased to just spend two minutes and comment briefly on the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.

Interjection.

Mr. Wilson: I'm glad the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal just spoke up, because one of the criticisms I have is, you took a very cheap political shot at me last year when you issued a report criticizing the pipeline that I had put in place when we were in government—a 57-kilometre pipeline between Collingwood, Georgian Bay, and Alliston—and you guys are talking out of both sides of your mouth.

This particular law says you can't, with a few exceptions—you shouldn't and you can't, and I agree with this—divert water from one watershed to a different watershed. You're also protecting the Great Lakes basin in terms of diverting water out of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin, which is something Mike Harris did, by the way, by regulation. You're codifying it now in the act.

But I say to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, with the cheap shot of these Liberal hacks that you hired to do a report of a perfectly good project that was put together—it was the first P3 put together, and the major criticism was that we didn't let Bradford come on the pipeline. Well, I specifically told Collingwood council, who was in control of this at the time, "That's another watershed and we're not going to divert water from the Nottawasaga River watershed to the Bradford-West Gwillimbury watershed." Yet your ministry spent several pages in the report saying that because I didn't do that, it was a bad deal—because I didn't bring Bradford-West Gwillimbury and allow water to be diverted out of the Nottawasaga watershed, it was a bad deal. So you're speaking out of both sides of your mouth and I tell you, everyone should read this report—this scathing report—just to try and ruin my reputation in the area.

I tell you, Honda couldn't have expanded, with the 1,200 new jobs in Honda with the new engine plant, if we didn't have new water from Georgian Bay. The water was so bad in the Alliston aquifer that we had no other choice. We did it in an environmentally sound way, and you criticized us for it.

The Acting Speaker: Time for a response.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know that we will have time to further debate the issue here in the Legislature, and I know that others will have time for more extensive comment with respect to a number of the fearmongering comments that have been made. Absolutely no way can

this legislation allow for the metering of homes. That is clear in the act, and I would urge my friends opposite to read the act.

I would also urge my friends in the third party to carefully read the act. It is thoughtful, it is comprehensive and it has received support from many whom I take extensive guidance from when I want to do good work in the province with respect to water protection.

Let me quote Sarah Miller, the coordinator and water policy researcher from the Canadian Environmental Law Association: "These reforms to the Ontario Water Resources Acts are long overdue. These steps will move Ontario and the Great Lakes region away from destructive water wasting practices to sound conservation practices. Living within the natural water budget given to us is crucial to sustaining water resources for current and future generations."

Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence: "Water conservation charges will ensure that commercial and industrial water takers who use water for profit will now be contributing their share to Ontario's management of our exceptional water resources. Sustainable water management is essential as we look forward to a legacy of well-protected lakes, rivers and groundwater for the future."

Support was also received from Rick Findlay, the director of the water program at Pollution Probe, and from the editorials of a number of daily papers, including the Toronto Star, and I have the Sault Star in front of me. I would urge my friends in the opposition, do not abandon Ontarians as you did when you voted against the Clean Water Act. You can't turn back the clock, but you don't need to make the same mistake twice.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to—

The Acting Speaker: Did you—

Mr. Miller: Oh, yes. Our environment critic, Laurie Scott, is away today, so I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead for today, and she'll speak another day.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

The Chair recognizes the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for reminding me to ask for that unanimous consent. I'm sure that if Laurie Scott got back and found out I had used up her hour, she wouldn't have been too happy.

It's my pleasure to speak today to Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002, and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act.

Water is certainly our most precious resource, and I can tell you, as the representative for the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, that is made very clear to me with the beautiful lakes that we have that are so important to the economy and the quality of life in Parry Sound—

Muskoka. Of course, we have one of the natural wonders of the world, the Georgian Bay shoreline, as part of the riding as well.

The McGuinty government claims that this proposed legislation will strengthen the management, protection and conservation of the Great Lakes and all of Ontario's water resources. However, stakeholders who are concerned with the limitations of this bill argue that the proposed legislation will not accomplish its stated objectives. The bill will not properly protect our water resources because, while it proposes to ban diversions out of the basin, it will still allow for large-scale diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin. Also, despite the enforcement of a new tax on water taken or used for industrial or commercial purposes, the bill does not strengthen or encourage the practice of water conservation.

This government has had four years to put together strong and comprehensive legislation to properly protect our Great Lakes and Ontario's water resources, but all we see with this bill is a very small first step in that direction. In fact, this bill represents a rushed attempt by Premier McGuinty to throw something together that will look good, with the fall election in mind. Ontarians want to see strong legislation that will effectively protect our precious water resources, not a last-ditch attempt by this government to develop pseudo-green election platform material.

Let me talk about the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin agreement.

The proposed legislation would implement the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement signed by Ontario, Quebec and the eight Great Lakes US states on December 13, 2005.

I would like to give some history on that. It was actually Mike Harris who signed the original Great Lakes agreement. Also, as the minister stated in her speech, the ban on diversions of water out of the basin has been in effect since 1999. It was in regulations. Their background material, which I'll quote from, says, "Subsection 1(8): This section continues a ban on transfer that has been in place in Ontario since 1999. The proposed amendments to the Ontario Water Resources Act would place that prohibition in legislation." So, just to be clear, it was the PC government of Mike Harris that put the ban on diversions out of the basin into effect in 1999.

The agreement requires each province and Great Lakes state to incorporate the terms of the agreement into its own laws. In order to accomplish this, Ontario and Quebec must amend their laws and each state must adopt the compact, committing them to the same terms as the agreement. The proposed legislation, Bill 198, will amend the current legislation in order to implement this very important agreement.

The waters of the Great Lakes basin are a valuable natural resource, and certainly I support this part of the legislation. Together, the lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and underground waters of the basin make up a single, interconnected system. The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence

River basin is the watershed of the Great Lakes and of the St. Lawrence River upstream from Trois-Rivières, Quebec.

The Great Lakes contain 20% of the world's fresh surface water and 95% of North America's fresh surface water supply. Protecting the waters of the Great Lakes basin is an important objective that should be addressed and reflected in the laws of every one of the jurisdictions that share the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. This is especially true where we have the effects of global warming and also development in places like the southwest of the United States, putting further increased demands on our most precious resource: water.

1610

This bill also contains a water conservation tax. Bill 198 includes a proposal to charge commercial and industrial users for the water they use to help conserve, protect and sustain Ontario's water resources. The government claims that this new tax is not a tax at all, but rather a regulatory charge for water use. You can spin it any way you want, but the fact remains that the proposed water tax is just that: a water tax. I might remind the government that in the election, of course, Premier Dalton McGuinty had his famous ads where he promised not to—I think the line was that he wouldn't increase taxes, but he wouldn't decrease them either. So he did make a promise not to raise taxes. He has, of course, had the huge health tax, a very significant tax that broke that promise. This is another breaking of that promise not to bring in new taxes.

One of the stated objectives of this newly proposed tax is to provide a financial incentive for companies to practise conservation when it comes to their water use. The reality, however, is that this tax will simply provide the government with more revenue rather than really encouraging conservation. Charging water bottlers, canning companies and other heavy commercial water users \$3.71 per million litres will not work to force them to conserve water. The tax will not provide companies with a significant financial incentive to practise water conservation.

In an article published in *The Toronto Star* on April 4, Ramani Nadarajah, executive director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, was quoted as saying, "It's not going to have a huge impact in terms of actually resulting in water conservation."

In addition to the concerns with the new water tax itself, there are also concerns among interested groups with the fact that the tax will not apply to all water users. The proposed water tax will not apply to private domestic wells or water used for domestic and other non-commercial uses on municipal supplies. The new tax will also not apply to institutions such as schools and long-term-care homes, and environmental uses such as wetlands projects or hydro power and agricultural uses will also be exempt. These exemptions have left stakeholders who will be most impacted by this new tax with feelings of disappointment as a result of the unfair treatment.

The concerns of the Canadian Bottled Water Association were published in an article in the *St. Catharines*

Standard on April 8. The bottled water association is reluctantly willing to pay for this new tax, but strongly believes that there should not be any exceptions. According to this group, all water users should be subject to the same treatment and should have to pay this new water-taking tax. That's certainly something worth considering, treating everyone the same.

I think that points to the fact that this legislation certainly should have public input and should have public consultation, so I would expect after second reading that this bill would be going to committee. I hope there will be ample opportunity for both the stakeholders affected by the new tax and others who may have concerns about the water diversions part of the bill to get their say on the bill. I'm sure there will be lots of different opinions. Hopefully this government is not going to just rush this through and have flawed legislation.

Certainly, we've seen other environmental bills, like the Endangered Species Act, where the government seems reluctant to be willing to host public hearings. As I've stated very clearly, as the critic on that bill, I'm very pleased to participate in public hearings, whether it be through constituency week or any Fridays when the Legislature isn't sitting so there can be public hearings on that Endangered Species Act.

Getting back to this bill, there is also a troubling loophole in this bill that is the cause of significant concern to many stakeholders. Even though the proposed legislation bans diversions out of the basin, it still permits large-scale diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin.

Allowing these types of diversions to continue is dangerous because of their potential effects on the water levels of the upper Great Lakes, such as Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Diverting water out of the upper Great Lakes and into the lower Great Lakes will work to compound the possible and projected effects of climate change. These effects will have a profound impact on Ontario, degrading ecosystems and destroying fish, bird and wildlife habitat.

While the government claims that it prohibits in-basin diversions in the proposed legislation, there are a number of exceptions to this supposed ban that are currently vague and open to wide interpretation. I can tell you, as the representative for Parry Sound–Muskoka, which contains, as I've already stated, the beautiful Georgian Bay, that we've had record low water levels on Georgian Bay, and it's a significant concern to the many communities along Georgian Bay. People who have cottages and the First Nations along the Georgian Bay coast are very concerned about the lowering water levels on Georgian Bay.

York region is currently leading the way with respect to municipal pressure for in-basin diversion opportunities, as the region currently has a big pipe proposal on the table. York region wants to draw water from Lake Simcoe and send its sewage to a treatment plant on Lake Ontario via an extension to the big pipe: a classic example of an intra-basin transfer.

An exception for York region under the proposed legislation will almost certainly open the door for other regions to follow the same path and request exceptions for intra-basin transfers of their own. Various stakeholders and interested parties, such as the Georgian Bay Association, are concerned about the long-term impacts of this big pipe proposal and the general in-basin diversion exception because of the precedent that it sets. Other municipalities will also request, and likely be awarded, exceptions under the legislation for similar in-basin transfers.

The Georgian Bay Association is made up of a volunteer group of concerned citizens who form a 23-member board of directors. Most of the work done by the Georgian Bay Association is on issues like water quality and water levels that impact everyone from the Bay of Islands in the north to Honey Harbour in the south. I've had the pleasure in the last years, pretty much once a year, of spending a day out on beautiful Georgian Bay with representatives of the executive of the Georgian Bay Association. It's my annual day on the bay, and I look forward to it and go out with them on the bay to someone's residence, where they go over all the various issues they're concerned about, most of which relate to water.

As the only organization solely devoted to the specific and distinct concerns of Georgian Bay, the Georgian Bay Association has become a vigilant watchdog on issues that could have a lasting negative impact on the unique Georgian Bay ecosystem.

The Georgian Bay Association funded the undertaking of the Baird report, which was prepared by W.F. Baird and Associates in June 2005. This report confirmed the association's water levels committee findings, which stated that ongoing erosion and shoreline alterations at the outflow of Lake Huron into the St. Clair River is increasing conveyance capacity and lowering Lakes Michigan and Huron. The Baird report found that changes for seaway navigation lowered Michigan-Huron water levels by approximately 80 centimetres. The ongoing erosion is resulting in a daily diversion of 845 million gallons.

The findings of the report were presented to the International Joint Commission, Environment Canada, shippers and agencies on both sides of the border. The IJC said that this level of work by such a small non-governmental group was unheard of. I would certainly like to congratulate the Georgian Bay Association on that important work. I don't remember the exact cost of that report—I believe it was something like \$220,000—and they did it on their own. It's been very useful. Now we need to see some action to see some remediation take place at that drain on the St. Clair River to stop the outflow of water from Lake Huron and the upper Great Lakes. The IJC has since announced that as a result of the Baird findings, it is revising its upper Great Lakes plan of study to investigate the Michigan-Huron outflow and determine the best mitigation methods. That's something that needs to be done as quickly as possible. The Baird

report and the wonderful work done by the Georgian Bay Association should change how the government monitors and manages water levels in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence water basin.

1620

In an article published in the Toronto Star on April 10, the concerns of the Georgian Bay Association with respect to the continued ability for water diversions within the Great Lakes and the proposed big pipe by York region were outlined. The article included the views of Mary Muter, spokesperson for the Georgian Bay Association. She's actually the vice-president of air, water and environment. Mary Muter said, "Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water levels have been close to record low levels for the past six years. We are concerned that allowing the York region transfer out of the Lake Huron/Georgian Bay basin in Ontario will set a precedent that others will follow and cumulatively will lower lake levels even further. This will result in even more dried up wetlands and loss of fish habitat."

I recently had the opportunity to hear from Ms. Muter, who informed me that the lawyers who drafted this legislation feel that proposed in-basin water transfers will be decided in the courts rather than by the legislation. Furthermore, she informed me that seven municipalities currently want to divert water from Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. If the York region big pipe proposal is allowed, the result will be a series of such proposals by other municipalities that are also interested in diversion, including Waterloo, Hamilton and London. Waterloo has already announced plans to put a water pipe into Georgian Bay, with treated sewage going into Lake Erie. London, which already has an intra-basin permit, wants another one.

By allowing for continued diversion of water between individual Great Lakes within the basin, this proposed legislation will fall short of its intended purpose. It will not ensure that healthy water levels in the Great Lakes are maintained. It will not encourage conservation and can, in the long run, lead to a series of environmental concerns, including dried-up wetlands and loss of fish habitat. If these regions were committed to a culture of conservation, then these diversions would not be necessary, as municipalities would not be facing local water shortages. Allowing for in-basin diversion will work, in fact, to discourage water conservation as municipalities will simply bring water they need from other jurisdictions with the aid of a pipe rather than work to conserve and make do with their local water supply.

Several environmental groups, including the Friends of Earth Canada, the Ontario chapter of the Sierra Club and Great Lakes United are all concerned that this legislature does not ban in-basin diversions. They are calling on the government to show some leadership on this issue and provide measures that would in fact ensure water conservation is in place. These environmental groups are asking the government to follow up with further legal measures that ban these dangerous diversions and implement mandatory conservation measures.

In the short time I have left, I'll just highlight some of the media on this bill since it has been introduced. The Toronto Star, Wednesday, April 4, had the headline:

"Commercial Fees for Water Use Too Low, Critics Claim;

"Environmentalists: Proposed Levy of \$3.71 per Million Litres Won't Promote Conservation."

There's a good article on the agreement in the April 10 version of the Toronto Star: "Great Lakes Agreement Could Spring a Leak."

On CKNX radio, AM 920: "Great Lakes Water Agreement Has Loophole." I won't have time to read the whole thing. But it states that "it allows something called intra-basin movement, which means a city in southern Ontario could take water out of Georgian Bay.

"And he says that could have a serious impact on the complexion of the Great Lakes."

Another article states: "The latest on the annex agreement: dangerous precedents. Withdrawing water from one and sending the sewage to another is proving a very attractive option to burgeoning municipalities." That's the point that I was making many times.

In conclusion, Premier McGuinty and his colleagues are not showing leadership on this issue. This bill simply represents the government's last-ditch effort to develop legislation that will provide the Premier with a pseudo-green election platform. We've had four years to develop comprehensive legislation that works to effectively protect and manage our water resources. Instead, this Premier has done nothing during his four-year mandate and is now trying, just months before a fall election, to throw together water protection legislation that, as I've already revealed, falls remarkably short of its intended objectives.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm glad to rise again and offer some brief comments to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I actually happened to be in his riding a couple of weeks ago, where I spoke at our party's nomination meeting. I hope we give him a good challenge in October with what I think is an excellent candidate.

He said something early in his comments which I wanted to follow up on, where he talked about this being perhaps an electioneering stunt on the part of government. I tend to agree. We have a government that is trying to reinvent itself and to colour itself green in the lead-up to an election. Certainly, this bill is just the latest in a list of them that tries to do that. I personally think it's too little, too late.

In my earlier interjection, I talked about some omissions and some difficulties we have with the legislation. I want to go back to a couple of those. The legislation is littered with some fairly vague definitions in some of the terminology that's used. Consumptive use: We're not quite sure exactly what that covers. The next speaker from the government perhaps can expand and let us know.

The bill refers to many details that will be set by regulation, such as conservation charges and the returning of water flow to the basin, which is also to be set by regulation. But there's no indication of what funding mechanisms will be put in place to fund this regulatory framework. Again, that's another glaring omission, and perhaps we'll get some more light shed on this. Perhaps the member from Parry Sound—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I listened with great interest to the speech from my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I realize he shares a particular passion for this issue, representing the riding that he does. I think all members of the House share a great passion for the environment.

Although I appreciate his comments, I don't agree with the negativity about either the bill or our government's environmental record. I think Bill 198 builds upon a very impressive record that includes measures such as the Clean Water Act, which includes our renewal of a commitment to work co-operatively with the federal government to improve and protect the Great Lakes basin; and our first biodiversity strategy, which was recently launched. I think we have a very proud record.

I want to take issue with his use of the word "tax" when it comes to the idea of charges for diverting water from the lake. I just want to go on the record to explain to those who are watching at home that the proposed charge is a regulatory charge for water use; it's not a tax. The primary purpose of the charge would be to recover a portion of the costs of the program required to manage water from commercial-industrial operations, with a secondary objective being to provide a financial incentive for companies that use water more efficiently.

This is a question of fairness. When I think of my constituents, if you said to them, "Is it fair that large commercial users should be charged in order to pay for their share of the water they take out?" I think they would recognize that that's an issue of fairness, that in essence to protect the water that's in the system to make sure that our ecosystems are preserved, we have to make sure that there is proper funding. By using this, not only will it help to fund the program, it will also provide a financial incentive for companies to regulate how much water they take out.

1630

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Let me begin by congratulating my colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. I think throughout his time here in the Legislature he has certainly demonstrated his passion for the environment and the protection of our natural resources. He has the privilege of representing a community that has some beautiful inland lakes and Georgian Bay. I appreciate the contribution that he has made since becoming the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and his focusing on the issues that are important to people not just in his riding, but the outstanding

job he's done in making sure that the issues important to the people in Ontario are brought to the forefront.

I would agree with my colleague and certainly some of the other speakers. I think that this particular government, the Liberal McGuinty government, has a very disappointing environmental track record, and I would agree that this piece of legislation is more or less a last-ditch attempt, a last-ditch effort, to somehow try to fool the constituents in Ontario as we approach the October 10 election that it does care. I think the evidence is to the contrary, and one good indication is the fact that when you take a look at their commitment to close down the coal plants by 2007 and see that date moving further and further out, you realize that these individuals do not have any comprehensive plan whatsoever to protect the environment or to deal with the whole issue of climate change. So, again, this is an attempt, as I said, to try to fool the public into thinking otherwise.

I heard someone on the other side say that this isn't a tax, it's a regulatory charge. Well, I'm sorry, but it's all the same. I'm paying money. I would have thought that they would have learned from their health tax. They weren't going to introduce taxes, and they did.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka in response.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to respond to the members from York South–Weston, Kitchener Centre and Kitchener–Waterloo.

I would just like to reiterate that the issue of water diversion, particularly out of Lake Huron, is very important to me as a representative for the area that has the eastern shore of Georgian Bay, a big part of the riding. In fact, in 2004, the eastern part of Georgian Bay was named the Georgian Bay Littoral Biosphere Reserve and recognized as a globally important and national reference point. That's the near shore of the outer islands and the mainland shore through to about Highway 69/400. That was recognized by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in 2004. So that gives you some idea of just how important this—what I view as a natural wonder of the world—is, not only to the people of Parry Sound–Muskoka but to all of Ontario and the surrounding states as well.

The member from York South–Weston said that this is an election stunt. I feel that the government seems to be rolling out a lot of green bills with the idea that the election is going to be in October and it wants to have these pieces of legislation on its election brochures. I just hope they will take the time to hear from the people who will be affected.

The member from Kitchener Centre got into whether their new tax is a tax or a regulatory fee. As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo pointed out, it doesn't really matter; it's still something that people have to pay. I should also note that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo does come up to her summer residence at Lake Manitouwabing, and has for many years, so she knows first-hand the beautiful area of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Legislation dealing with water is inherently important legislation, and I want to start off by talking about the context within which this legislation should be framed.

As we all know, the Great Lakes are essentially a non-renewable, finite resource. The water that's in those lakes does not turn over more than 1% per year; 99% of what's there has been there for a long time, will be there for a long time, if it is treated well, if we treat it with respect, if we treat it understanding entirely how valuable this resource is to us here in Ontario and to all of the population around the Great Lakes.

In fact, the Great Lakes hold 20% of the world's fresh water. We're extraordinarily blessed. We're extraordinarily lucky to have this resource at our doorstep. It's entirely right that this province and the states that surround the Great Lakes should come together and try to work out a method for protecting these Great Lakes from interbasin transfers. We all know—the other jurisdictions know, the people in this Legislature know, our civil service knows—that the Great Lakes are under tremendous pressure and tremendous threat, very directly, from climate change. Increased temperature means evaporation from the lakes. Increased evaporation and increased heat mean fewer ice-cover days. The reality is that Lake Superior is increasingly non-ice covered in winter. Lake Superior, the coldest, the largest of the Great Lakes, is warming up faster than the land around it, and thus the upper Great Lakes are losing more water to the atmosphere. That matters because we depend on that water being there. It's crucial to us—crucial to our economy, to our well-being, to our enjoyment of the world itself—that those lakes are healthy and well taken care of.

Indirectly, the lakes are threatened by climate change because of processes that everyone in this House is familiar with. As the climate changes, the interior of continents is heating up and the demands for water across the western and southwestern United States are growing. In the United States, large sections of the Great Plains are dependent on the Ogallala aquifer for water for household use, for cattle, for agriculture, and that aquifer is depleting rapidly. There are proposals in the United States that water be diverted from the Great Lakes to refill that aquifer. It's crucial for those people who depend on that aquifer; it's disastrous for us. We have to defend the Great Lakes comprehensively, thoroughly. We have to understand the political dynamics in the United States and make sure that those political dynamics operate in our interest.

There are interests in the United States talking about providing pipelines to the American southwest so that they can benefit from the water that is our birthright, a shared birthright with the millions of people who live around the Great Lakes. There are proposals to divert water from the Great Lakes to refloat, they call it, the Mississippi; to increase water flow in the Mississippi. Again, a disaster for us because we cannot replace the water that is in those lakes. When it is gone, to all intents and purposes, in our lifetimes and the lifetimes of our children, it will be gone completely.

A lot is at stake here. A lot is at stake here in terms of transportation. We already run into situations where low water levels affect lake freighters. Moving goods and people by water is highly energy efficient. We're affected because low lake levels and low water flow affect hydroelectricity. We're very dependent on hydroelectricity. It's crucial to our development of renewable power. For us, we have to maintain those lake levels; we have to maintain the health of those lakes.

To have an agreement with the American states around protection of the Great Lakes is for our advantage and, in part, the bill addresses that. But there are weaknesses. There are loopholes in the bill that I would ask the Minister of the Environment to plug when this bill goes to committee, because there is an opportunity here to actually deal with fundamental problems, to safeguard the Great Lakes in a way that the bill does not currently provide.

I'm going to go through what's in this bill. The province is proposing to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act as well as making some amendments to water-taking and transfer regulations under the Ontario Water Resources Act. The purpose of the act is stated, "to provide for the conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters and for their efficient and sustainable use, in order to promote Ontario's long-term environmental, social and economic well-being." I don't know if anyone can argue with that. It's pretty straightforward. We need the protection, and this act purports to provide it.

1640

The weaknesses in the act start with definitions: "Consumptive use ... the portion that is not ... returned to that basin." I'll come back to that again in my comments.

This is the problem we've had with a number of acts that have been brought forward to this House by the Liberal government on water. When we went through the Clean Water Act, we had a variety of undefined terms that were central to the power of that bill, central to the power of that act, and yet definitions weren't provided. All of that was left to regulation, so that we, as legislators, didn't have an effective say on what ultimately was going to be in place. We had to write a blank cheque. Again, in this bill we are given vague definitions that are problematic for people trying to make a decision and frankly problematic for the public trying to understand what we're doing or not doing with regard to the protection of the Great Lakes.

The act speaks to water taking, well, surface source, diversion, storage of water or a combination of all three.

It has a section on the instruments that will actually be put in place to make sure the bill is able to deliver what it's supposed to deliver.

Then we start getting into the more substantive elements. It's not permitted for anyone to "take more than 50,000 litres of water on any day by any means except" with a permit, and then there are exceptions:

"1. The taking of water for domestic purposes ... by a municipal drinking water system" or "public utility." The

amount taken must be “less than 379,000 litres ... per day.” Generally speaking, I think most people would support that. We know we need to have water for municipal drinking water. Public utilities are serving our interests, our purposes.

Taking of water for the “watering of livestock or poultry”: Again, no one in this Legislature would argue that the agricultural sector for carrying on its normal, day-to-day operations should not have access to that water. It is part of what they need. It’s a necessary ingredient or tool in actually producing what they have to produce—no argument.

“The taking of water for firefighting or other emergency purposes”: fair enough.

Section 34.3 talks to the prohibition of interbasin transfers. This is the most substantial part of the bill. This is the part where we talk about setting in place the framework that we hope will safeguard our interests and the United States’ so that those American states that border on the Great Lakes will see their interests protected by us and we will see our interests protected by them.

There are some exceptions. Historical interbasin transfers, which commenced prior to January 1, 1998, provided that the amount of water transferred out of the water basin does not exceed the highest amount of water transferred out of the water basin by the undertaking in any year after December 31, 1960, and before January 1, 1998.

I assume that that’s been going on for a number of decades, that we have not seen a substantive deleterious effect on water supplies or water quality. I assume that at some point a member of the government will speak to that notice, to what exactly those are. I have a suspicion that it has something to do with a water transfer canal and Chicago. I could be wrong. I look forward to hearing about this.

Another exception to an interbasin transfer: by “order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council dated October 2, 1913 respecting the Greater Winnipeg water district.” Who knew? Winnipeg seems a bit of a distance from Ontario, from the Great Lakes. I don’t think we’re going to go any distance against that.

Water in containers of 20 litres or less: fine.

“[W]ater that is necessary for the operation of a vehicle, vessel” on which the water is being transported, including water that’s used for people or livestock in the vehicle or vessel: again, non-controversial.

Water incorporated in products such as beer or canned fruit: That speaks to the spirit of Ontario, I’d say. Again, I don’t think there would be any opposition to that.

In addition, there will be a new exception to the interbasin prohibition for firefighting purposes to be consistent with the existing exception in the OWRA in the requirement for a permit for firefighting.

Again, this is fairly straightforward stuff. This act does not allow new, large-scale taking of water out of the Great Lakes into another basin. It respects the historical conditions that exist and allows things to go forward without generating a wide range of political fights that

would relate to eliminating or setting aside those historical agreements. There are some fairly practical things here.

Next, section 34.6: prohibition of intra-basin transfers. Place a prohibition on the diversion of water of 379,000 litres per day or greater from one Great Lake watershed to another Great Lake watershed unless the applicant meets certain criteria, which include the exception standards and is granted a permit to take water—PTTW.

Between 379,000 litres a day and 19 million litres a day: consumptive use. Nineteen million litres a day is a fair amount of water. If you’re talking 100 days, you’re starting to talk in the billions of litres. That’s a lot of water, and at that level I have concerns. I’ll get into that further as we go through the act. That’s very substantial, and that’s one of the problems that exist with this bill.

The bill goes on. These exceptions must meet the exception standard and ensure that the water withdrawn is returned to the source Great Lake watershed, less an allowance for consumptive use—I’ve already talked about the difficulty with vagueness on definition—if the taking is for a municipal drinking water system; or must meet the exception standard, except that the water withdrawn less the consumptive use may be returned to another Great Lakes watershed rather than the source watershed, provided that the applicant provides information to the director demonstrating that there is no feasible, cost-effective, environmentally sound alternative within the Great Lakes watershed to which the water will be transferred. That’s including conservation of existing water supplies.

Ontario must provide notice to the other parties, the states that are around the Great Lakes, to those who have a direct interest in the amount of water that’s taken out of the Great Lakes and where the water comes back, because where the water comes back has an impact on water flows, lake levels, hydro power, natural habitat, boating opportunities and commercial freight. Where the water goes is of consequence.

These requirements will apply if the taking is for a municipal drinking water system. The act allows for transfers greater than one million litres per day or greater consumptive use. We’re talking about more than several billion litres of water per year if the bill as written goes ahead.

The water withdrawn shall be returned to the source Great Lakes watershed, and the applicant must provide information to the minister demonstrating that there’s no feasible, cost-effective, environmentally sound alternative to the water withdrawal. The applicant must also provide information to the minister to demonstrate that the proposal satisfies the exception standard before the minister makes a decision whether or not to approve the proposal.

The proposal shall undergo regional review by the regional body, and the minister shall consider any declaration of finding made by the regional body following regional review before a decision is made to issue the permit. The exception standard proposes as per the

agreement, which set out six criteria that must be met by this permit-to-take-water applicant for proposals of new and increased intra-basin diversions of 379,000 litres per day or greater.

Again, a need for the water can't be avoided through water conservation. The amount of water is limited to reasonable quantities. All water withdrawn must be returned to the source watershed, less an allowance for consumptive use. There must be no significant adverse impact to water quantity or quality. The proposal must incorporate water conservation measures and must ensure compliance with all applicable laws—all levels of government as well as the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909.

1650

What I don't see there and what I think should concern the minister and the legislators in this House is that there's no assessment of the aggregate impact of taking several 19-million-litre-per-day withdrawals from one lake system and transferring them to another. When you start talking 19 million litres a day—let's say they come in at 18,999,999; they're just below that threshold. You start getting three, four or five of these and then you start having significant water basin transfers from one of the Great Lakes to another. That can have significant ecological impacts and it can have significant political impacts. If you're in Ohio, Michigan or New York state, and you're seeing that the water that's coming into the lakes that touch on your boundaries is being affected by Ontario, first of all, you're seeing a bad example. You're seeing that another jurisdiction is substantially affecting your water interests and you can't actually intervene. You in turn may get involved in that race to the bottom, that tragedy of the commons, where everybody tries to get as much as they can before it's gone.

That's a substantial concern with the intra-basin transfer and the lack of clarity—may I say, beyond the lack of clarity, the lack of commitment—when looking at the aggregate health of the different watersheds. That matters. That issue alone is one that should give the minister pause and should give every legislator in this House pause, because that is going to put us in a position where, if our water interests are threatened in the future, we will not be able to deal with American jurisdictions with what could be called clean hands. We will be criticized; our position will be undermined.

Just the other day in the Toronto Star, an article was published called "Great Lakes Agreement Could Spring a Leak." I think the commentary in this article is useful, and those who are following the debate would best be aware of what's been said. It's by Tim Morris:

"Last week, Ontario's government introduced legislation in support of a regional agreement to oversee large-scale water use in the region. Significantly, the regional agreement prohibits siphoning Great Lakes water to thirsty regions in the American southwest."

We all have common interests there. We all understand the importance of that. We all understand the consequences of failing to protect that diversion to the southwest.

"Known as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, the pact is between Ontario, Quebec and the eight US Great Lakes' states"—a fairly powerful political grouping, one that has common interests and one that I think has to be held together by Ontario taking a leadership position.

"This is an important piece of legislation"—no question. If you have legislation dealing with the centre-piece of the environment for a big chunk of Ontario's population and a big chunk of Ontario's economy, there's no question it's important. "Preventing long-range diversions out of the Great Lakes basin is critical for the protection of the lakes and their dependent ecosystems.

"But there is a worrying loophole: Even though the proposed legislation bans diversions out of the basin, it still permits large-scale diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin." That's a loophole this government needs to plug. This is a loophole that a government saying it is a protector of the Great Lakes needs to take action on.

"One proposal of this type"—an intra-basin transfer; in this case we're talking about taking the waters from Lake Huron and Georgian Bay and transferring them to the sprawl north of Toronto and transferring that water in turn to Lake Ontario—"is already in the works and several others could follow."

Nineteen million litres a day: Remember, it adds up. We're not talking about one transfer; we're talking about a series of diversions from the upper Great Lakes that can affect Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie, a hydroelectric dam, hydroelectric production at Niagara. This is consequential to our economy, our ecology, our environmental well-being.

Tim Morris continues: "Allowing these types of diversions to proceed is dangerous given their potential impacts on water levels of the upper Great Lakes, such as Lake Huron/Georgian Bay.

"We already know about predictions that global warming will cause a substantial drop in Great Lakes water levels, especially the levels of Lake Huron/Georgian Bay."

Some of the predictions—and I'm leaving the article aside for the moment—that were made in the late 1990s, when we were looking at predictions of lower levels of climate change, were talking about Lake Ontario's shoreline going out about half a kilometre from the shoreline that we have now here in Toronto; Lake Erie, the shoreline going out half a kilometre to a kilometre. We're talking about very substantial changes in shoreline, we're talking about very substantial changes in wetland habitat, we're talking about very substantial changes that will affect the quality of water that's available to us for drinking, for leisure, for our economy. What we have now is an act that does not take that into account, but that would actually facilitate the reduction in availability of water in the upper Great Lakes, in Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie.

"Diverting water out of the upper Great Lakes into the lower Great Lakes will only compound the effects of

climate change and these effects will have profound impacts for Ontario's environment and economy, degrading ecosystems, destroying fish, bird and wildlife habitat, and costing billions in lost shipping, hydropower generation, and industrial production."

So the question I have for the government: In putting forward this legislation, in assessing how we will deal with these intra-basin transfers, has the government looked at the cost? Has it looked at the impacts on those lakes and on our economy when it contemplates allowing exceptions, saying that they won't allow the transfer of water if in fact it can't be proven that the transfer of water is cost-effective etc? Do they take into account the larger economic cost of transferring that 19 million litres a day out of the upper Great Lakes into Lake Ontario? I think that as we go through this legislation, that point should be addressed by the government, because if we're talking one, two, three, four, five, maybe 100 million litres a day—that would be five of these pipelines at that limit—we're starting to talk consequences for the lakes.

"The Ontario government says it prohibits in-basin diversions in the proposed legislation but there are a number of exceptions to the ban.

"The devil is in the details and currently these exceptions are vague and open to wide interpretation."

So it isn't just myself and my colleague Mr. Ferreira; it isn't just the official opposition that has questions about what actually will be in the details and questions about the vagueness, the specificity of this act.

"An example of an in-basin diversion is the current proposal by the regional municipality of York, which has told the public that it meets the exception standard."

Well, I find that extraordinarily convenient, because the reality is that sprawl continues, sprawl requires water, sprawl requires a place to dump water.

It's interesting to me, a number of years ago I saw the film *Chinatown* by Roman Polanski. That film was a fictionalized account of how Los Angeles diverted water from the agricultural areas around it so that the city itself could grow. You may remember that the impact of those water diversions on the local farms was staggering—staggering. The film is an exploration of how one traces the water, who benefits from the water, and who loses when the water is diverted to a new home—a fictionalized account, but an interesting picture of what happens when people start to play around with water supplies and the forces and issues and interests that are in play.

1700

Mr. Morris goes on: "York region wants to build a big pipe to divert waste water from growing communities in the Lake Huron-Georgian Bay watershed to Lake Ontario. For Lake Huron-Georgian Bay, the impacts of the in-basin diversion would be just as harmful as if the water was being diverted outside the Great Lakes basin."

Absolutely right. If you have a cottage on Georgian Bay, if you're in a small town on Georgian Bay and you find that the shore is moving out, if you're running a marina, you're going to notice it. If it went to the southwestern United States, it would have the same effect

as having it go to Newmarket, Aurora or Holland Landing and then ultimately going to Lake Ontario. You will be hit.

So again I say to the government, when it brings this bill forward to committee, as I expect it will, it has to look at this question and answer: How will it deal with the aggregate impact of multiple withdrawals? Will it act against sprawl that will ultimately affect the health of the upper Great Lakes or will it not, and will it address it in this bill?

"Mary Muter"—and, Mary, if you're watching, I hope I didn't mispronounce your name too badly—"spokesperson for the Georgian Bay Association, a citizen-based group that works on protecting the waters of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, is concerned by the potential impacts of the York region proposal.

"Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water levels have been close to record low levels for the past six years. We are concerned that allowing the York region transfer out of the Lake Huron/Georgian Bay basin in Ontario will set a precedent that others will follow and cumulatively will lower lake levels even further. This will result in even more dried up wetlands and loss of fish habitat," Muter says."

Who would argue with this citizen? Who would argue with the association she represents? If she sees dropping lake levels, if she sees a six-year low—and I'll speak a bit to that later—why are we not ensuring that we do everything to protect those water levels?

Again, to the extent that within our jurisdiction we lower the lake levels that affect American jurisdictions, we undermine their political commitment to the agreement that we have to have. Our hands have to be clean on this. Our hands have to be shown to be doing the good work, not the destructive work.

Mr. Morris goes on to say, "There is a more sustainable alternative for York region.

"It could build a local sewage treatment plant within the Lake Huron-Georgian Bay watershed so that no water would need to be diverted.

"But York region"—now, this is interesting—"says it is cheaper for it to flush Lake Huron/Georgian Bay water down to an existing treatment plant on Lake Ontario."

I've got to tell you right now, I bet they're probably right. I don't have any doubt that it's cheaper. I think they've probably been quite honest with us all. For them, it's substantially cheaper, but for the communities in Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie, along the Niagara River, it isn't cheaper for them. It's going to be more expensive for them. It's going to have an economic impact which is of consequence. It's going to have an environmental impact which is of consequence. What it says to me is that if this bill is not protecting the upper Great Lakes, this bill ultimately will lead to undermining the protection of the Great Lakes as a whole.

"If the York proposal succeeds, it will be difficult to turn off the leaky tap;"—not a bad analogy—"several municipalities are considering diversions, including

Waterloo, Hamilton, and London.” I don’t know why Hamilton, to tell you the truth. You’d think they’re right on the lake, but nonetheless. “Waterloo says it needs to divert water from Lake Huron-Georgian Bay because it is running out of local water supplies.”

That’s three. I don’t know if those will go through, but let’s say all three. Let’s say York is successful and Waterloo comes to the provincial government and says, “Well, you let York do it. We need to do it. What are we, chopped liver? What about us?” What if London comes and says, “You know, you used to like London. You used to like our jurisdiction. You gave it to York. Why not to us?” I came from Hamilton. It’s a good city. I don’t think the good citizens of Hamilton would be quiet if someone else was getting a great deal on water and they weren’t.

So let’s say that’s York, Waterloo, Hamilton, London. You’re talking about four times—you’re getting up to 75 million litres a day. You’re talking impact. So when we look at this situation, we know that once that tap is turned on, it’s exceedingly difficult to turn it off.

I’m not suggesting that the experience of the Aral Sea is going to be replicated here, because I think too many people depend on the water of the Great Lakes. But it’s an interesting parable. In fact, in the old Soviet Union, the Aral Sea was a thriving inland body of water that had a very sophisticated, rich fishing industry that supported a thriving economy, and all the water that used to supply that inland sea was diverted for growing cotton, for irrigation. Politically, it was impossible to turn off the tap once the spigot had been turned. That’s it. It was over. What we should learn from their experience is that turning on that tap, allowing that drain to happen, means that you are committed to something that you may never be able to reverse, and its impact on all of us can be quite substantial.

Mr. Morris goes on to say these places like Waterloo can say that they’re running out of—did he say Waterloo? Yes, he did. He says that, yes, they are facing water difficulties. He says, “This would not be the case if the region were committed to a culture of conservation.” I honestly don’t know what the policies and programs are in Waterloo, but I’ll accept what he has to say for the moment.

I think this is, without a doubt, correct: “Water users in the Great Lakes basin are some of the most profligate in the world.” Do we have a provincial program for water conservation? When we debated the Clean Water Act, did we include water conservation as one of the goals, one of the tasks that the conservation authorities had to carry through on? We did not. The NDP put forward that motion to include water conservation as one of the tasks, one of the goals of the Clean Water Act, and that was turned down. In this act today, we see no commitment to water conservation programs, no announcement of action on water conservation, no action to take the steps that would make these diversions unnecessary.

He goes on: “But allowing in-basin diversions discourages water conservation instead of conserving. Municipalities will just pipe in water from elsewhere.”

Absolutely true. If you can pipe it in from elsewhere and then dump it in Lake Ontario, why would you spend money on water conservation?

“Banning in-basin diversions would send a clear message to municipalities that they have to do a much better job of saving their water supplies.” It would change the economics. We wouldn’t have York region saying, “Man, it’s a lot cheaper for us to dump our sewage in Lake Ontario rather than cleaning the water we use and returning it to the basin we took it from.” It would change the economics, and it would protect our interests.

“Friends of the Earth Canada has consistently campaigned for improved water management in the region.

“It promotes an approach that relies less on large engineering solutions and more on effective conservation to stay within natural hydrological limits.

“Christine Elwell, senior campaigner for FOEC, explains: ‘There is clearly no need for these invasive transfers given the unlocked potential of water conservation and better land-use planning to provide for more sustainable alternatives.’

“If Ontario allows in-basin diversions, there is also a danger that this will give US jurisdictions a reason to approve more diversions out of the basin.

“‘It would be hypocritical of Ontario to divert water over hundreds of kilometres between Great Lakes because its geographical advantage allows it to benefit from this loophole, while telling US jurisdictions they cannot transport water from one end of town to the other because these communities straddle the edge of the basin,’ says Dan McDermott, director of the Ontario chapter of Sierra Club.”

1710

Dan is right. He was there at the announcement made by the minister. Dan spoke to the press. He said, “Yes, I think it’s a good thing that we’re taking action on inter-basin transfers, but I’m profoundly worried about intra-basin transfers, the impact they have ecologically immediately and the political impact.”

“So the legislation,” Mr. Morris says, “while a step in the right direction, needs to be followed up by further legal measures that ban these dangerous diversions and implement mandatory conservation measures.

“This is a view shared by Derek Stack, executive director of Great Lakes United, a coalition of groups dedicated to preserving and restoring the Great Lakes ecosystem.

“He is calling on the province to show leadership ‘by banning Great Lakes diversions in Ontario.’ As a first step, he envisages ‘a moratorium on all in-basin diversions.’”

Tim Morris, who wrote this article, is national water campaigner for the Sierra Club of Canada. I have to say that Mr. Morris has done a great service. He’s done an analysis of the bill. He’s looked at what is useful and identified, in part, one of the great problems with the bill: the interbasin transfers.

Before I go on to the other issues with the bill, I want to talk about what is happening in Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Great Lakes United put out a press release last fall about a funding announcement by the federal government for an upper lakes study of water levels. They note that “Water levels in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron are largely impacted by increasing flow of water out of those lakes. In the 1960s, the US and Canadian governments contracted with the US Army Corps of Engineers to dredge a shipping channel in the St. Clair River but the corps neglected to build mitigating structures to prevent resulting erosion despite commitments and assigned monies. It is clear the St. Clair section of the seaway channel is eroding thereby increasing flows downstream and impacting the water levels upstream in Lakes Michigan and Huron.”

So there are already substantial pressures on Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Georgian Bay. They’re there. It’s our duty not to add to those. And you should know that within the American states there is tremendous pressure to draw off that water.

The National Wildlife Federation, in a piece talking about the need for this agreement, listed some of the local water shortages around the Great Lakes. The Lower Fox River watershed in Wisconsin and growth in cities such as Green Bay are raising concerns about future water supplies. Chicago, Illinois: Suburban growth around the city of Chicago is outstripping available water supplies. Northwestern Ohio: Large-scale dairy farms are impacting nearby homeowner wells. Rochester, New York: Expanding water infrastructure is raising concern on future water supplies due to urban growth and drought.

The reality is that our southern neighbours are engaged, like us in some ways, in a water rush. To the extent that we undermine our political standing and our moral grounds for objecting to their water rush, we undermine protection of what is vital to us in this province, in this community.

I want to add to some of the comments about shortcomings in the bill, going back again to the question of definitions. “Consumptive use” has been defined as any portion of the water not returned to a basin through evaporation, incorporation in a product or any other process. There is no definition of “consumptive use” with respect to diversions. That could mean removal from the watershed alone or the water that was used from that removal. For instance, if 50 million litres were removed from a watershed and only five million were consumed, which is the consumptive use? For the Ministry of the Environment, that definition needs to be clarified so that when we go to committee and we go through this debate, we know what we’re voting on.

This whole question of demonstrating feasibility for water transfers—the quote here says that it has been demonstrated that conservation of existing water supplies is not a feasible, environmentally sound and cost-effective alternative. That’s one of the criteria you have to meet for having one of these intra-basin transfers. So who’s determining the feasibility? Will it be an authority

internal to the ministry? Will there be an external authority that will be looking at this feasibility? What’s the standard or benchmark for feasibility? In my mind, if you’re taking part in a transfer that substantially lowers the lake level or has the potential to lower a lake level, that’s not feasible, even if you, a developer or a municipality, conclude that for you it’s extraordinary feasible to take that water and dump the waste into Lake Ontario.

Many of the details in this bill are still left to be set by regulation. Conservation charges are to be set by regulation; return flows to basins are to be set by regulation—talking about quantity. There are some omissions from the bill. There’s no guideline for the quality of water that’s to be returned to the basin. Let’s say you take that water and you use it in an industrial process and what you’re returning may not be toxic but silty, contaminated with fine particles. It doesn’t have to be really grim, but are we saying that the water that’s taken in has to be returned in at least as good a condition as it was found? Not said. No mention in this act about adaptation of our water regime to climate change. This is a problem that I’ve found in other operations of this government. During estimates, I had the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal speak about his budget and how he approached the \$30 billion to \$100 billion worth of infrastructure that Ontario is going to have to carry out over the next few decades, and I asked him directly, “What are you doing with these mammoth investments?” What are you doing to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases? Are you making sure that every courthouse you build, every school you fund, every hospital that you underwrite is built at the highest level of efficiency so that its impact on our atmosphere is minimized? No. It’s not part of the guidelines or directions. Do you make sure that every road, every bridge, every wharf, every structure that has to withstand the weather is built for the climate conditions that are coming at us, rather than the climate conditions that prevailed 30 years ago? No.

I have to say that part of what I found extraordinary about that is that the World Bank, which is not particularly known as a progressive, cutting-edge institution—it’s pretty stodgy, pretty conservative—in fact has set out guidelines for all of the development projects it funds, because it knows that what’s coming could wash away those investments, just as Finch Avenue was washed away a few years ago, just as the member from Peterborough saw the flooding in his city. Is our infrastructure ready for that? No, the old infrastructure isn’t ready. It can’t be; it wasn’t designed for it. But is our new infrastructure being designed to withstand the downpours, the droughts and the heat waves? There are different things you have to do as an engineer for those different conditions. I’m not talking about high-cost stuff. I’m just saying when you engineer it, engineer it so that it can withstand the change. That is something that should be incorporated in our guidelines. It doesn’t have to be legislative. The government can do it on its own hook. In this act, when we talk about water and the regime that we have for managing water, we have to understand the

water situation we're going to face in the next few decades. That should be recognized in the act. It wouldn't be a big amendment, but that should be taken into account in all planning to deal with water.

1720

There's no mention of standards for consumptive use and no indication of how average consumption will be calculated. Will it be across an industry? Across a region? It's a detail, but sometimes those details can be quite important, quite substantial when you get down to a practical proposal to deal with a problem.

There's no indication of a funding structure for the implementation of this framework—and we'll get into the water charges shortly.

I would say that when you look at the bill, the diversions out of basin are prohibited but large-scale diversions between lake watersheds aren't. That's a problem. It sets a precedent for approval of future interbasin transfers; I've talked about that. Because of those interbasin transfers, water conservation is not assisted, and it may well be undermined.

One of the leading examples of this problem is the big pipe. That whole sewage and wastewater system should have been subjected to a full environmental assessment, because even before this act was brought forward, there's no question that it had environmental consequences. The cumulative impact of that diversion, the cumulative impact of the de-watering of the Oak Ridges moraine, should have been assessed. We're already seeing negative impacts on the streams and tributaries that flow into the Rouge and Humber rivers. We're seeing that the flows going to the tributaries have not come back in the way that they were predicted to come back. Those who pushed through the pipe said, "Everything will be fine. We'll de-water, we'll put the pipe in, and then it'll all come back." That's not happening.

One thing that's very important and that speaks to the whole sprawl agenda is that part of the big pipe involves expansion to Holland Landing and Sharon. That expansion means more sprawl. It feeds more climate change; it feeds more greenhouse gas emission. By making sure that we provide water on an easy-as-you-go, low-down-payment, more-to-come basis, we are undermining the other environmental goals that people in this province expect us to reach.

We are seeing a lot of pressures on water aside from what's addressed directly in this bill, but I think they have to be taken into account because when you put forward a bill, when you implement legislation, you have to take into account all the other contextual elements. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority recently did a Rouge watershed strategy, and they found that urban development in the Rouge watershed was degrading water quality and increasing flooding and erosion risks, even with best management practices. We are doing more damage through sprawl than simply polluting our air; we are damaging water sources and our rivers.

We know that those river valleys are incredibly sensitive. Toronto is a city that has many river valleys.

They're very important in terms of leisure; they're very important in terms of water management. When we expand hard surfaces, when we reduce the amount of grass and the amount of forest, when we build sprawl rather than intensify urban areas, we change the flow of water and the temperature of water going into those river valleys. That undermines local ecological diversity. We change the water temperature. Species are driven out of existence. That is of consequence to us. So when we're talking about a water bill to protect all of the Great Lakes, let's not forget the need to protect local water sources, local water issues.

I want to talk about the water conservation charges. No surprise to you and no surprise to others, the NDP has supported water charges. We think that the Liberal promise made in 2003 should have been fulfilled earlier. We agree with the exemption for agricultural uses, we don't think there should be a charge for hydro power uses, but what we do need is a system of water charges that will actually pay for the steps necessary to protect the water resources that we depend on. When we talk about the importance of the Great Lakes, the rivers and the groundwater in Ontario, we know that without those resources we're in deep trouble.

It was interesting to me in the course of the Clean Water Act hearings—and the member from Peterborough was there—asking some farmers what would happen if the water they depended on for their agricultural operations were contaminated to the point where it couldn't be used or simply extracted to the point where it wasn't available to them. They know what it means. It means the end, shutters, closure, gone.

So we do need to protect our water sources and we need to have a source of income to protect them. And \$3.71 per million litres is going to generate, we've been told, \$18 million a year, essentially the cost of administration—not the cost of a water conservation program, not the cost of water quality protection, not the cost of water quality surveillance. It is not going to make a financial difference at that end and, frankly, at the other end it's not going to change anyone's practices when it comes to taking water. It's just too little—\$3.71 per million litres. I think it's a fabulous deal if you can get it, but it ain't going to change what needs to be changed.

The other thing that I found very interesting at the press conference given by the Minister of the Environment is that in fact no one will actually pay until 2009. So this is perfect: You get to announce it in 2007 and get green points, but you don't actually charge until 2009, so no one gets cranky until midway through the next term, if you're successful. I see the political utility but I don't see the ecological utility.

During the debate on the Clean Water Act, during the period when the Clean Water Act was introduced, this conservation charge could have been introduced then. I have to say that I find it ironic that in the course of debating the Clean Water Act, I proposed that water conservation be incorporated into the duties that were to be carried out by those source water protection agen-

cies—off the books, not accepted, set aside. Something that could have been put in place and could have been effective by now wasn't, yet we're having tremendous claims for virtue in environmental protection by bringing something in just before an election that won't take effect for two years down the road. I don't think that's good environmental policy.

When the minister first introduced this bill, my comments in the House were not complimentary. I have to say to the minister and the parliamentary assistant that it's not that I think it's a bad thing to try to stop the water diversions outside the Great Lakes basin. But I find a frustration with the legislation that comes before us in the environmental field because regularly what we see, and we see again in this bill, is vagueness in definition; a leaving of large amounts of the bill—in fact, substantial operative phrases, clauses, sections—to regulation; a lack of funding; and ultimately, in my mind, thus a lack of commitment.

This came up when we went through the Clean Water Act. I asked conservation authority after conservation authority if they could afford to actually implement source water protection with the resources that they had at hand. They were very, very clear with me: They said no. So if we're talking about protecting the environment, you have to have before the legislators—us, the people in this chamber—specific definitions. You have to have clarity in what's being done, you have to have resources and you have to have authority.

1730

I'm going to wind up. I won't even go to the full 60 minutes. I want to say that a bill is necessary. This bill needs work. Its loopholes need to be plugged. The government has to recognize that it's playing with fire when it does something that harms the water resources that the other signatories to this Great Lakes agreement are going to depend on, and when Michigan, Ohio and New York are unhappy that we're affecting Lake Huron, Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, when we're affecting the hydroelectric output at Niagara, we're going to have difficulty mobilizing them for what is going to be the very difficult task ahead, and that is to stop other American interests from grabbing as much of that Great Lakes water as they can possibly get because they are going to be dealing with profound ecological problems in their jurisdictions.

They have used their water far beyond their means. They have mined the aquifers that their agriculture depends on. They have taken steps that frankly aren't that different from ours. Because they're deeper into the continent, because they're further south and thus it's hotter, they've taken steps that are going to put them in a real jam in the years to come.

We have to protect our water. If we continue to pursue a strategy of sprawl, notwithstanding a greenbelt that is leapfrogged over for development in south Simcoe, a greenbelt that's leapfrogged over so that water can be piped here, there and everywhere to feed growth, notwithstanding any statements against sprawl, any statements about trying to ensure that we have a sustainable

community in southern Ontario, we're going to find ourselves in deep trouble.

To the government, to the minister: Take this bill to committee. Before you go to committee, look at the loopholes that have been pointed out by other environmental groups, not just by my comments here in the Legislature, and plug those loopholes because this, in the next month or so, will be your last shot. I don't know what's going to happen in the election, but the only thing that is certain about any government is that it exists up to an election and then all bets are off. If you want to leave a legacy for us, those of us here, our families and our kids, make sure that this act actually protects the Great Lakes and protects the long-term environmental and economic interests of people in this province.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Leal: At the onset of my two minutes, I'd like to recognize the member from Toronto–Danforth, who provided a very thoughtful presentation today on Bill 198.

Certainly we understand that Bill 198 is about Ontarians finally understanding the consequences of turning on the tap. We're just now at second reading stage of the bill. There will be the opportunity to take this bill to committee and an opportunity to discuss it further at committee and look at a series of amendments that will be needed for any piece of legislation. I look at the Clean Water Act; that was amended over 100 times. Those 100 amendments reflected detailed and thoughtful presentations that were made at committee hearings across Ontario.

But I must say that the issue of intra-basin transfers is a very important issue. The government has been engaging a stakeholder advisory panel in developing the proposed legislation and has responded to requests by some members for stronger restrictions on transfers between the five Great Lakes and the watersheds in a number of ways. The draft legislation was modified to authorize stronger intra-basin transfer controls by regulation, for example. The bill does provide regulation-making authority to lower the threshold, required return to the water source, the Great Lakes watershed, and to introduce additional environmental criteria to respond to cumulative impacts and climate change effects.

It may be that through the committee process we'll hear representations that will certainly allow us to make further amendments to this particular area. We recognize that this is a very important issue. It's something that has been highlighted not only by the member here but others who have made comments on the introduction of Bill 198.

Mr. Wilson: I want to compliment the member for Toronto–Danforth for his excellent comments. I agree with most of what he said, and I particularly appreciate the comments he made at the end of his remarks today, talking about the leapfrog effect of the greenbelt into south Simcoe. We have tremendous water pressures in south Simcoe, so much so that we ran a pipeline—I said

this in my last two-minute hit—from Collingwood to Alliston to bring clean water to Alliston. My mother and her friends always say that now they don't have to shine the dishes after they come out of the dishwasher because the water is so much better.

In fact, under the NDP, rather than allow us to do a pipeline, we built Ontario's most expensive well in Beeton, called the McKelvey well. When I was energy minister, I remember being out in Alberta and they said, "Wilson, how could you in Ontario know anything about flare gas?"—the gas that comes off pipelines. It's burned off. I said, "Oh no, I have flare gas in my riding. There's so much sulphur in the Alliston aquifer at Beeton that our \$8.8-million well actually has a flare gas doohicky on the roof." You go by at night and you can see the blue gas coming off, being burned off. It's now shut down because of the Collingwood–Alliston pipeline. That pipeline was in the same watershed, the Nottawasaga watershed. In fact, it basically parallels the Nottawasaga River. Water comes from Georgian Bay down to Alliston. It's consumed by the other customers along the route like Baxter, Essa township—perhaps Base Borden, Angus and other players. Of course, the Nottawasaga River then flows all the water back into Nottawasaga Bay.

But in the short time I have left, I want to remind the government that they're speaking out of both sides of their mouth. They criticized me for the pipeline and told me I should have more customers, particularly customers from other watersheds. Now this legislation pretends that they're now green and they won't allow that.

Mr. Ferreira: It's always a privilege to listen to the member for Toronto–Danforth. He's one of the leading environmental lights in this province. I thought his comments this afternoon were very articulate and provided quite a thoughtful critique of this legislation. The government would be wise to listen.

Early in his comments, he referenced the agreement that was signed between this province, eight of the US states and the province of Quebec back in 2005, the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. I think it's worthwhile to point out that that agreement is non-binding. US states do not have jurisdiction or the ability to sign, to entertain foreign agreements. Since 2005, it's useful to realize that only one of the eight states has followed through with legislation, and that's the state of Minnesota. There are two other states—I believe it's Illinois and Michigan—that are thinking of legislation in the short term, but the others have not. I asked myself, how serious are our friends in the United States about this issue and is Ontario going at it alone here? One of the reasons—and I pick this up from an Associated Press story—could be the legal implications. The story was entitled, "Turmoil Over Great Lakes Water Pact." That was the headline. I picked out this paragraph which I think is important to consider: "Some communities ... say the compact's"—and they refer to the agreement—"strict limits on water diversion could leave them high and dry. Critics fear a torrent of

lawsuits." I pose the question, what are we opening ourselves up to?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I want to tell the member opposite, the member of Toronto–Danforth, that I have the greatest of respect for the legislative process and the debate that we're having in this House. I'm encouraged by the tone that he has brought forward today, which is one that I think reflects an earnest desire to be part of this process. That is a good tone compared to ones we've heard in the past perhaps, where we were simply accused of politics and that we would never pass this bill. So we're here, we're debating the bill and we look forward to a continued debate with respect to the contents of it.

1740

I would urge him to take a second glance at the bill because he will see that a number of the concerns that he raises have been addressed in the context of the legislation. Consumptive use is defined in subsection 1(3). It's a definition that's well understood, well regarded and comes directly from article 103 of the agreement. Cumulative transfer is set out in subsection 34.6(3) and it refers specifically to article 209 of the agreement, which provides for the assessment of cumulative impact takings from the Great Lakes. Future water supply, similarly 34.6(3), referring to article 209. Thresholds, for example, are established as part of the agreement for the 10 states, and over 19 million litres in consumptive use must be returned to the source watershed, and it's specifically set out in the bill.

With respect to the conservation charges, I think it is imperative that the member opposite take a look at the water conservation charges proposal, which is posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights, 010-162 posting, for 60 days of comment period, and it sets out in very extensive detail how we would propose to move forward with a regulatory charge, something that has never happened before in the province.

My last point is, I look forward to continued debate and hearing more.

The Acting Speaker: The time for questions and comments is over. The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto–Danforth for response.

Mr. Tabuns: My appreciation to all the members who commented—the members for Peterborough, Simcoe–Grey and York South–Weston, and the Minister of the Environment.

I appreciate the comments from the member for Peterborough. I look forward to seeing what amendments are brought forward and seeing, in fact, what their fate is when they're actually put on the table.

In response to the Minister of the Environment, I have to say that I have found that when I approach these things in a constructive way, as I did with the Clean Water Act in my first week or two here, nonetheless the crucial amendments that I felt needed to be adopted were set aside. Conservation was not included. Incorporation of the need for permit taking, which was originally put forward, was set aside. The bill was weakened. Incorporation of the precautionary principle, which generally was

seen as something that needed to be in the act, was set aside. So I don't have tremendous hope in simply a constructive or reasoned approach getting us somewhere. We will see what happens with this bill.

I hope that the minister actually considers all of the matters that I've put forward: the need to have clean hands, the need to deal with intra-basin transfers, the need to make sure that when we set up a water regulation regime we take into account the changed world that we are in today and the changed world we will be in in the next two, three, four, five decades. Failure to actually do that means that this bill will not deliver what the people of Ontario require, will lead to acrimony and debate because we legislators—this legislator—will feel frustrated that the environment is not being protected. Madam Minister, we look forward to seeing whether you actually produce the goods in committee. If you don't—raucous debates.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on the debate today. I want to start off by congratulating the minister for bringing forward this bill. Its first reading was just a few days ago, April 3, and here we are, April 12, already doing second reading. This bill, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario's water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act, I think is probably one of the more important bills that we'll be debating in the next few weeks because every day now we hear, on the news and on the television, the importance of the environment, the importance of our planet and how delicate the balance is becoming. Many of us are familiar with the recent movie, narrated by Al Gore, that was done in the United States, *An Inconvenient Truth*. I had an opportunity to watch it and also to just do my own reading and observe some of the changes that are happening on the planet. The changes, although they may seem subtle, are quite serious. We as legislators have a responsibility to try to keep our planet as safe and as clean as possible.

An interesting little anecdote or side point they were pointing out in one program was that a certain type of whale that used to migrate within the warm Pacific water is now going under the North Pole cap to look for water because it needs to feed and the water there has become warm enough now to go up into that area. It has a chain reaction, because as the whales go into that area and begin eating the food and the plankton there, it results in other changes or chain reactions. As there's less plankton, there's less food for other species and so on and so forth. We've all seen those scenes on television as well of icebergs or glaciers that are collapsing, almost on a daily basis, and the seriousness of these changes which are becoming almost irreversible.

We know that the environment more than ever has become, if not the most important issue, one of the most important issues that this government can deal with. This bill in front of us today basically protects and says that

the Great Lakes water and the water that comes down the St. Lawrence basin needs to be protected. The good thing about this bill, a hallmark of our government, is that we continue to co-operate and work with others. We've put this together as an agreement with surrounding states that are also affected by the Great Lakes. We've come together to do an agreement or a charter regarding the use of the water and the transfer of the water within the Great Lakes. The agreement makes it clear that you can't just take water out of there without certain conditions being met. One of the things about this act, if approved, is that it will implement the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. This would be something unique, an agreement among Ontario and the states that touch on the Great Lakes. It allows a certain set of standards and reinforcement of basin-wide environmental standards, improved science-based decision-making, strengthening the ban on transfers out of the province's three water basins, prohibiting new and increased intra-basin transfers of water consistent with the agreement and promoting water conservation, which is something very important.

There's only so much water out there, and the population in this area, in the Great Lakes region, continues to grow—not just here in the GTA but throughout the Great Lakes area. We see large cities in the United States that are getting larger. In Ohio, you've got Cleveland on the lake. You've got other cities that are affected as well on both sides of the border. This bill recognizes the importance of that water and of having some rules in place in dealing with that water. Imagine if there weren't rules in place, what kind of situation we'd find ourselves in in the future if one of the states decided they wanted to take out so many millions of litres or gallons of water to use for certain reasons. How would it affect the water levels in those lakes and, as a result, affect the animal and plant life and other environmental conditions in those lakes?

1750

It's important to realize and to grasp the importance of this bill and why we need to debate it. Of course, as was mentioned this afternoon by one of the earlier speakers, we're in second reading right now. If second reading were to pass, this would be sent to a committee. At that committee it would be discussed further and brought back here after that and discussed for third reading. So we are beginning the debating process of what is a very important bill.

One part of this bill I wanted to talk about that I think is really important is the need to conserve, protect and sustain Ontario's water resources on behalf of all Ontarians. We've learned to conserve our electricity. When we talk about conservation, we talk about conservation in other parts. For example, let's say in a house, you think about conserving the electricity you use, or the amount of gas you use, either in your car or in the house. But we must also realize, jointly, the importance of conserving the use of water and whether or not we need to use as much water as we do.

It's the largest element on the planet. When you look at a globe, you see the size of the Pacific, the Atlantic

and the Arctic Oceans and you see how much water we have, but then you come to think of what we've done to our water in some of these places and how bad it's become, or how bad it became. Lake Erie was one example. When there weren't rules in place, Lake Erie became highly contaminated, back in the 1970s, if I'm not mistaken, or the 1960s. There was a problem also in New York state with Love Canal and all sorts of pollutants being put in the water that affected people's health.

We need to look at this really carefully and decide what type of priority we're going to give to our environment, and one important area of our environment is our water. Clean, safe, drinkable water, water available to all, is the birthright of every Ontarian and the birthright of every person on this planet. We're conserving and protecting water in this Great Lakes basin for future generations of Ontarians.

A few years ago this same government and this same Legislature passed the bill that created a greenbelt around the GTA. The purpose of that again was to conserve and protect green space around Toronto, so we wouldn't see urban sprawl. It may not be seen as being beneficial today or next week or next year, but 30, 40, 60 or 100 years from now, future generations will look back and say, "This was a thoughtful decision made by the government of the day." I think the same will be said of this bill in years to come, that it was a thoughtful decision for the minister and the government to work co-operatively with the governors of American states to bring forward a bill or an agreement that will benefit all of the different jurisdictions on both sides of the border.

There is always going to be some controversy with a bill that is brought forward. I noticed that some members of the opposition were concerned about the fact that there

was going to be a water conservation charge. When you hear the words "water conservation charge," you think, "Oh, there's the government again digging its hands into taxpayers' pockets." I think the act makes it clear that it would enable the province to charge commercial and industrial users for the water they take and use. That's only fair. Water is a resource. If you're going to use that water, then you should pay for it.

I remember my days as a Scarborough councillor. We had water meters which measured the amount of water we used in our households, and we were charged accordingly. I was surprised to find out—and I remember my friend Mr. Balkissoon, who's also from Scarborough, sort of led the fight at the time—that the city of Toronto, which amalgamated with Scarborough and the other jurisdictions, didn't have meters in its homes. People could keep taps on all the time. If you wanted to run your tap, you could run it all day and all night; you would be charged a flat rate for that. I think that in those days, when those houses were built and meters were not placed on those homes, the priority was not to protect the water.

Mr. Speaker, I just noticed that the clock has reached 6 o'clock. There's a lot more that will be said on this bill, but I'm just pointing out some of the key areas that I'm concerned about. I think it's an excellent act and, hopefully, will be an excellent law when it comes into place. There will probably be some amendments when it goes to committee, and we look forward to hearing more from the opposition on this.

The Acting Speaker: The member has made the point that it's approximately 6 p.m. of the clock. This House stands adjourned until Monday, April 16, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Boutrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron–Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
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Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Erie–Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
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Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean–Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
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Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
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St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		

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

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

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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Ernie Parsons, Khalil Ramal
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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