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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 23 June 2004

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE
AUXILIARY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Last Friday, June 18, I had the privilege of attending the graduation of the 2004-01 class of the Ontario Provincial Police Auxiliary, held at the Ontario Education Leadership Centre just east of Orillia.

The Ontario Provincial Police Auxiliary program is the top auxiliary program in our country. There are now over 938 auxiliary officers representing 47 detachments across our province. Collectively they contribute over 250,000 hours of volunteer time to their local OPP detachments each and every year.

To show their appreciation of the OPP auxiliary program, a number of high-ranking officials in the OPP attended the event that saw 68 men and women graduate. In particular, Commissioner Gwen Boniface and keynote speaker Deputy Commissioner William Currie attended the graduation.

What is extremely important in recognizing the OPP Auxiliary is the close working relationship of the OPPA and the OPP. They are indeed all part of a larger OPP community. The auxiliary officers assist officers of the OPP detachments at numerous events and patrols through the year. Auxiliary officers come from a wide variety of backgrounds to act as volunteers, assisting police across our province.

I would like to thank Chief Superintendent Terry Harkins for his 36 years of dedication and leadership to the auxiliary program. The auxiliary program continues to be the dominant volunteer police program in our country, and much of its success over the past 45 years comes from the leadership of Terry and his predecessors. I appreciate this opportunity.

HMCS HAIDA

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I rise today to share with all Ontarians an exciting event that's occurring on Friday, June 25, in the city of Hamilton: the

opening of the HMCS Haida National Historic Site and historic naval ship to the public.

You need only visit her Web site to discover that the Haida is the last remaining example of the 27 Tribal class destroyers built for the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy between 1937 and 1945. The Tribals were oft described as "magnificent in appearance, majestic in movement and menacing in disposition." Technologically, they represented the most advanced naval architecture, marine propulsion systems and weaponry of their time.

Today the Haida is an irreplaceable historic artefact. Her significance has been formally recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

She's a cultural asset representing a lifestyle, however transient, of more than a generation of Canadians who served in Canada's navy between 1943 and 1963. The thousands of men who sailed on the Haida represented a total cross-section of Canadian society during that period. She is berthed at the HMCS Star Naval Reserve Unit at pier 9, at the foot of Catherine Street in the waterfront area of Hamilton. I invite people from across the province to visit the great city of Hamilton and to tour this magnificent ship.

ERIC SILK

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): I rise in the House today to mark the passing of a man who committed his life, talents and expertise to the betterment of Ontario, Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Emeritus Eric H. Silk.

Commissioner Silk died on June 8 at the age of 96. Aside from his wife, the late Barbara Silk, and his three children, Robert, Michael and Barbara, you could say that Ontario was his greatest love. He began his long and proud career in the Ontario public service in 1934 and ended it with his retirement in 1973.

He held many posts during those 39 years, including legislative counsel and assistant Deputy Attorney General, but it was his work as the sixth commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police that is probably his greatest accomplishment. Commissioner Silk was the first, and so far the only, civilian to head the OPP. He reorganized the OPP to increase accountability and recognition for all OPP personnel. He improved training, introduced a cadet program and strove to hire more bilingual recruits. His contributions were so great that he was honoured with the

commissioner emeritus title and the general headquarters library is named after him.

A memorial service will be held at Trinity Anglican Church in Streetsville tomorrow at 2 o'clock. I urge all those who can to attend and honour Eric Silk, a man who did so much in his life to honour Ontario.

CONTROL OF SMOKING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I believe everyone in this House would agree that given the importance of a strong economy, it's essential that proper research be conducted to ensure that policies will not negatively impact small business as well as the jobs, the livelihood, that go with that.

However, I find it unfortunate that this current Liberal government continues to deny the tourism and hospitality industry the right to be heard on the issue of designated smoking rooms and ventilation. An independent study recently released for the Fair Air Association of Canada clearly found that the majority of people in Ontario favour ventilation solutions such as designated smoking rooms rather than an outright ban on smoking in bars and pubs. Further, the survey found that a smoking ban will not stop people from lighting up; they'll either stay home or they'll go somewhere else.

What's wrong with ventilation? It seems to be the answer in office buildings with respect to the sick building syndrome, with respect to airborne illnesses, issues like the flu, colds, mould and allergies. There are other solutions, but this government chooses to listen only to the antis. It has turned its back on the tourism and hospitality industry. I wonder if the antis, the non-smokers, will frequent restaurants and bars to help the hospitality industry recover from lost revenue. Somehow I doubt that.

STELCO

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): We are just about to take a break in a day or two for the summer, and I thought it was important that the voices of some of my constituents are heard today and that those voices continue to be heard over the summer months.

Many of my constituents are employees, retired employees or recently laid-off employees of Stelco. The level of uncertainty surrounding the future of Stelco is creating a great deal of anxiety for my constituents, their families and those who rely on Stelco as an economic anchor in our community.

Stelco is currently under court protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. I was quite happy that our Premier took swift action to appoint James Arnett to closely monitor the situation, and I do know that our government is very concerned about Stelco's economic viability and the impact on the Ontario economy as a whole.

My biggest concern, as the member for Stoney Creek, is for the people: the people who work for and with

Stelco, Stelco pensioners, both unionized and salaried, those who were recently given layoff notices, and the impact that the present uncertainty is having on their personal lives and the lives of their families.

The McGuinty government has brought together all the parties. The labour minister filed a motion to have a conciliator appointed, the Honourable George Adams. I understand there have been some meaningful and fruitful discussions among all parties at this point. It is my hope that those discussions will continue over the summer months and that we will have good news come the fall.

1340

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On Monday, June 28, Ontario citizens have an important decision to make: choosing a new federal government. Regardless of what the Liberals would like to you believe, the main issue is trust.

The federal Liberals have won the last three elections on the basis of critical promises they've failed to keep: stopping free trade, cancelling the GST, implementing national day care and pharmacare programs. The list of broken promises goes on and on.

In Ontario we are experiencing the same approach to government by the McGuinty Liberals as their federal cousins: Say one thing to get elected and then do something entirely different when you are in office. It's the politics of deceit, and it defines the Liberal Party of Ontario and their federal cohorts.

On Monday, June 28, I urge Ontario voters to send a message to the McGuinty and Martin Liberals that we are sick and tired of their deceit, betrayals and broken promises, and we are not going to put up with it any more. Out with the rascals.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to tell you today about the little community that can. Health Minister George Smitherman said, "Our government will move decisively on primary care renewal by acting on our commitment to create family health teams that will provide comprehensive family health services around the clock."

The community of Harrow and Colchester South, in the town of Essex, is a little community that can, because they're going to take up this challenge. They've been faced with a doctor shortage. They have a doctor who is 75 years old and one who's maturing, and it services an area of about 10,000 people. So now the people in Harrow and Colchester South have formed a committee. There are some 18 volunteers, headed up by Brian Gray and others, and Dana Howe, a former person in the city of Windsor who is involved in community services, has joined them.

The Ontario government, Roy Romanow and I are in complete agreement on the tremendous benefits of community health centres. A community health centre in

Harrow and Colchester South will be great news for all residents. It has my full support. I know the people in Harrow and Colchester very well, and they are the community that can and will.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to take a brief moment to congratulate our government on taking a big step forward in improving public health for all Ontarians. I know this is something my constituents and many of my colleagues' constituents feel is very important.

Yesterday Minister Smitherman and the chief medical officer of health, Dr Sheela Basrur, announced a new three-year action plan to restore public health in Ontario. This plan will help us move toward our goal of making Ontarians the healthiest Canadians.

Our government is immediately investing \$41.7 million in new funding in public health. This is on top of the \$273 million already earmarked for public health for 2004-05. This will grow to \$469 million a year beginning in 2007-08, as was announced in our budget.

This new money will help establish a new Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency. We will also increase the independence of the chief medical officer of health. We will also immediately establish a Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee.

Finally, we are increasing the number of medical and scientific personnel to establish new surveillance, communications and IT capability. I would like all my constituents to know that the McGuinty government is taking immediate action so that the people of Ontario see real improvements to their public health system starting this year, and that Ontarians can be confident that with each passing year of our plan, the public health system will be stronger.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'd like to take this opportunity today to discourage the Alberta provincial government from taking further steps toward the creation of a two-tiered health care system in the province of Alberta.

It's absolutely shameful for Stephen Harper to support such an initiative. In December 2001, Harper encouraged the Alberta government to take aim at the Canada Health Act. It would seem that this week, Stephen Harper's encouragement has come to fruition. Premier Ralph Klein is proposing health reforms and has admitted they violate the Canada Health Act. Releasing a portion of their plan, frankly, is not enough. We all know there's a hidden agenda out there. Stephen Harper can run from it, but the people of Canada will know. This would give all Canadians a full perspective on changes to health care that may take place in Alberta.

In contrast to the Harper-Klein school of health care delivery, our government is taking steps to stabilize and

maintain a publicly funded health care system within the limits of the Canada Health Act. We've introduced measures to strengthen accountability, especially in our long-term-care homes. This accountability is necessary to protect the health and safety of residents.

The creation of the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency will enhance credibility and transparency by making a distinction between scientific advice and policy-making within the ministry. We will establish high standards of care within the domain of the Canada Health Act. I challenge Ralph Klein and Stephen Harper to do the same.

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2003-04.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the Quebec Minister of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs and Native Affairs, the Honourable Benoît Pelletier. Please join me in welcoming our distinguished guest.

We also have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the recipients of the internationally recognized medal of la francophonie, l'ordre de la Pléiade, for their outstanding contributions to French-speaking communities in the province. Please also join me in welcoming our honoured guests.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 23, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MANDATORY GUNSHOT WOUNDS REPORTING ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR LA DÉCLARATION OBLIGATOIRE DES BLESSURES PAR BALLE

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to require the disclosure of information to police respecting persons being treated for gunshot wounds / *Projet de loi 110, Loi exigeant la divulgation à la police de renseignements en ce qui concerne les personnes traitées pour blessure par balle.*

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

Mr Kwinter?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'll be making a statement during ministerial statements.

1350

GENOCIDE MEMORIAL
WEEK ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA SEMAINE
COMMÉMORATIVE DES GÉNOCIDES

Mr Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario / *Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant la Semaine commémorative des génocides en Ontario.*

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

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This bill proclaims the week beginning on the fourth Monday in March in each year as Genocide Memorial Week, and it follows a bill that was introduced previously by Mr Bob Wood, the member for London.

REMOVING A MEMBER
FROM THE TORONTO POLICE
SERVICES BOARD ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 DESTITUANT UN MEMBRE
DE LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES
POLICIERS DE TORONTO

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act respecting the removal of a member from the Toronto Police Services Board / *Projet de loi 112, Loi concernant la destitution d'un membre de la Commission de services policiers de Toronto.*

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

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I had indicated in this Legislature that after several attempts to get the government to remove Norm Gardner from the police services board, they would not do that, so today I've introduced a bill which gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to revoke the appointment of Norman Gardner to the Toronto Police Services Board, and if this power is exercised, the Lieutenant Governor in Council would be required to appoint a new person to the board. I should be clear that certain rights would be extinguished on the exercise of this power, but this is a power that the government must be given to remove this gentleman from the board. I've got nothing personal

against Norm Gardner, but given the dysfunctionality of the board and the fact that he was asked to leave and is appealing and refuses to step down, I think it is critical that this bill be passed today so we can get on with helping the police services board to go forward.

ASIAN HERITAGE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004
SUR LE PATRIMOINE ASIATIQUE

Mr Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Asian Heritage Month / *Projet de loi 113, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine asiatique.*

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

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): In Ontario, diversity is our strength, and immigrants from many Asian countries have chosen this great province to be their home. It is appropriate to recognize and pay tribute to the contributions that Asians have made and continue to make to the development and general welfare of Ontario. The month of May has been proclaimed to be Asian Heritage Month in the Senate, pursuant to a motion put forward by Senator Vivienne Poy in December 2001, and this follows that.

VISITOR

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce the mother of Olivia Whetung Cole, who is a page from Guelph-Wellington. We're pleased to welcome her today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9 (c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Wednesday, June 23, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1356 to 1401.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion 149.

All those in favour, please rise to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Broten, Laurel C.	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Takhar, Harinder S.
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Van Bommel, Maria
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Watson, Jim
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Wilkinson, John
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Tony C.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Martel, Shelley
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Martiniuk, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Yakabuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 15.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to allow a member of the official opposition to move second reading of Bill 104, with immediate passage, and then a member of the third party to move third reading of Bill 104, followed by immediate passage and no further debate.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

TRANSITIONAL PHYSICIAN PAYMENT REVIEW ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RÉVISION PROVISOIRE DES PAIEMENTS D'HONORAIRES DE MÉDECINS

Mr Runciman, on behalf of Mr Smitherman, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Ministry of Health Appeal and Review Boards Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi de 1998 sur les commissions d'appel et de révision du ministère de la Santé.

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

TRANSITIONAL PHYSICIAN PAYMENT REVIEW ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RÉVISION PROVISOIRE DES PAIEMENTS D'HONORAIRES DE MÉDECINS

Mr Kormos, on behalf of Mr Smitherman, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Ministry of Health Appeal and Review Boards Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi de 1998 sur les commissions d'appel et de révision du ministère de la Santé.

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

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise this afternoon to announce legislation that would, if passed, make Ontario communities safer. The McGuinty government is committed to delivering the real, positive change that will make Ontario communities safer.

Until now, hospitals have been able to use their own discretion on whether or not to notify police when they treat someone with a gunshot wound. Today, I am introducing legislation that, if passed, would rectify that situation by making it mandatory for public hospitals and prescribed health care facilities to report to police when they treat a person with a gunshot wound.

Facilities would be required to report the name of the person being treated, if it is known, and the location of the facility. The disclosure would have to occur orally as soon as it is reasonably practicable without interfering with the treatment of the patient or disrupting the normal operation of the facility.

This legislation, if passed, would put Ontario at the forefront of legislation in this area. Forty-five American states have some form of similar legislation. This legislation, if passed, would make Ontario the only province in Canada with legislation that makes the reporting of gunshot wounds mandatory.

In Ontario, it's mandatory for businesses such as auto body shops to report bullet holes in cars. Why would we require the reporting of bullet holes in cars but not bullet holes in people?

The policy about reporting to police has varied from hospital to hospital, even from doctor to doctor. Emergency medical attendants also have policies in place relating to notifying police when responding to incidents

where a victim has been shot. We're fixing that imbalance today.

Our legislation would minimize the legal and ethical dilemma facing medical staff on whether or not to report such incidents to the police. This legislation would protect health care facilities from liability so they could give authorized information to the police without worrying about their exposure to liability.

The legislation I'm introducing this afternoon, if passed, would remove any discrepancies and standardize the procedure for reporting across the province.

What is just as important is what the proposed legislation doesn't do. If passed, the legislation would not make it mandatory for family physicians to report gunshot wound patients to police, thus maintaining the integrity of the doctor-patient relationship. Nor would the proposed legislation negatively impact on any reporting procedures already in place between police and hospitals. The bill would not prevent a facility from disclosing information to the police if the facility is required or permitted to do so under other legislation or by law.

The policing community supports this legislation. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Toronto Police Service have asked for this legislation. And just last week, the board of directors of the Ontario Medical Association passed a resolution supporting mandatory reporting. The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards recently wrote to the Premier asking my ministry to work with police stakeholders to examine what could be done to make reporting mandatory.

We're sure the citizens of Ontario will welcome this legislation. By strengthening the communities in which we live, we are providing the people of Ontario with a quality of life that is second to none.

WATER QUALITY

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Safe and clean drinking water is essential to protecting the health and quality of life enjoyed by the people in this great province. People deserve safe, clean and liveable communities to call home. Our government understands this, and we are delivering positive change to improve the lives of the people of Ontario.

One of these positive changes is a new emphasis on protecting the sources of our drinking water. Progress has been made in treatment, monitoring and reporting, but source protection has remained the missing link.

Taking the recommendations of Commissioner O'Connor as our guide, we are fulfilling a vision of water protection that provides safeguards from the source to the tap.

1410

In a few moments I will tell the honourable members about a significant new action we are taking today. First, I want to remind the House of the tremendous progress being made by our government. We have increased the number of water inspectors in Ontario by 25%. We have imposed a one-year moratorium on new and expanded

water-taking permits that remove water from watersheds. We are proposing tough new rules for water-takings. We have invested \$13 million toward the cleanup and protection of the Great Lakes. We have announced an advisory council on drinking water quality and testing standards. We created an Industrial Pollution Action Team to make recommendations on preventing spills and dangerous emissions. We set tough new training and certification requirements for water system operators.

Since our government took office in October, we have implemented 23 of the recommendations made by Commissioner O'Connor in his report on the Walkerton inquiry. I believe it is a remarkable record of accomplishment in a short period of time. It is a testament to this government's determination to see the job through.

Today I am pleased to advise the honourable members that the text of proposed legislation for source protection planning has been placed on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for a 60-day public comment period. It deals with the development and approval of source protection plans. The proposed legislation looks at how source protection areas and regions will be established, as well as roles and responsibilities for those developing the plans. It takes a watershed-based approach to source protection, addressing all sources of drinking water, inland lakes, rivers, groundwater and the Great Lakes.

We are also working on the implementation aspects of this legislation with the two expert advisory committees that I established this past December. The two committees will provide guidance on scientific issues, funding mechanisms and implementation tools. Following public comment, the ministry will combine the planning and implementation components into one comprehensive source protection bill. It is my hope to introduce the final bill later this year.

The people of Ontario rely on well-protected drinking water for their health and well-being. Today the McGuinty government has moved a step closer to introducing comprehensive source protection legislation that will help protect our water before it enters our drinking water systems.

VISITORS

VISITEURS

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce my dear friend, neighbour and constituent Gisèle Richer, who tonight will receive l'insigne de l'ordre de la Pléiade for her contribution in the francophone community both in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Sur un point d'ordre, monsieur le Président : comment ne peut-on pas prendre l'occasion, avec cette déclaration, pour dire que M. Philippe Boissonneault, avec sa famille, et M. Sylvain Lacroix aussi, qui vont être conférés avec

l'ordre de la Pléiade, sont ici avec nous aujourd'hui. Merci.

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to welcome the International Seniors Club of Brampton. They're sitting up there in the lobby.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I thought I did a wonderful job of introducing those who are getting the awards today, but thank you for that. That was another point of order.

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today to be able to make a few comments on the introduction of the bill by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I believe that is the minister's first bill introduced in this House, and at the onset I'll tell you that we will be supporting this piece of legislation. It follows quite clearly on the fact that our House leader, Mr Runciman, introduced a notice of motion on December 11 that says, "That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should introduce legislation to require hospitals and physicians to report gunshot wounds and knife injuries to their local police service." He filed that on December 11, 2003.

As the critic for community safety and correctional services, I've met with a number of our stakeholders, some of those mentioned by the minister. Since the beginning of the year, the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and basically all the stakeholders I've talked to have very much supported this legislation. It has been led by the fact that here in the province we've had some gun-related crimes this year, more serious than a lot of years, and it has come to the forefront. I think it's time this bill was passed.

In my opinion, it's unfortunate that we didn't introduce it a little earlier. It would have been nice to see this bill passed into law as soon as possible. The way we're going now, when we come back for the fall session I don't think we'll see it proclaimed until probably around November 1 at the earliest, which is a full year after this government took office.

This bill also brings something else to our attention, and that's the fact that following a disastrous budget, following the fact that police officers in this province were promised by the McGuinty government to have 1,000 new people added to their ranks, the government failed them both in the throne speech and in the recent budget. What's cute about this and what's kind of warm and cozy is that this bill is introduced two days before the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police annual conference in Windsor, which is next week. The minister has got to talk about something very positive at that conference. He can't talk about the 1,000 new police officers that you promised, because that doesn't exist, so this bill will be the topic of conversation. I applaud him for some good political moves in that area.

We will be supporting this bill. It's high time that it was put into legislation. I appreciate this opportunity to respond to this today.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Another day, another slew of ministerial announcements to divert the public's attention from the fact that as of July 1, working families across Ontario will be digging into their pockets to pay the Liberal health tax. It seems that this government feels it can cushion the blow of this cash grab, as they hurry out the door for their summer vacation, by filling the airwaves with legislative proposals and feel-good motherhood announcements—anything to hide the fact that the Liberal broken-promise budget is about to take a bite out of people's wallets and that health premiums are going to pay for infrastructure, sewers, perhaps water now, despite the government's promise that it would go to health care.

Take the source water protection proposal. Where are the dollars coming from? The Liberal budget on page 12 indicates that the Ministry of the Environment is about to see a 12% cut to its operating budget. That's 12% fewer dollars to be spent on environmental initiatives. So I'm interested to hear exactly where this money is coming from. Is it being transferred from other parts of the ministry? Is it a growing list of items funded through the government's so-called health care premium?

On the water-taking issue, I agree that we simply cannot issue permits with no regard for the future of our watersheds. This government must take into consideration water conservation, the impact on groundwater, the impact on surface water. We all know how important it is to ascertain the health of our streams and lakes and the habitat that is so dependent on that health.

However, I must reiterate the fact that as Liberal government moves forward with source water protection, it must ensure that there is a process of partnership with those it is impacting. We need partnerships. Agricultural groups need to determine the impact that proposed source water protection policies may have on our farmers. Agriculture needs to be recognized as a key stakeholder. They need to have their ideas and concerns discussed in a professional, science-based and organized manner.

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats look forward to the debate around the bill introduced for first reading today by the Minister of Community Safety. Clearly, the issue being addressed is the proliferation of guns, especially handguns, illegal guns, that are being used, quite frankly, in no small part by young people shooting each other, most dramatically here in the city of Toronto but elsewhere in the province as well.

We understand that the police have a very clear interest in connecting the dots when it comes to the

illegal use of these firearms, and especially handguns. That means that the police would have a real interest in discovering people who appeared for treatment after having been attacked with a firearm.

1420

However, there are concerns. It's noted that this would be the first province in Canada to implement this type of procedure. I also note, having read the bill, that it purports to compel the reporting of these incidents with no consequences for not reporting the incidents. One question then the enforceability of it. The OMA—I spoke with them earlier today—tells me it supports this legislation. It's easy for the OMA to support the legislation, because it's not doctors who are compelled to report. In fact, physicians are exempted from being compelled to report if a gunshot victim attends at the physician's office.

Of course, guns aren't the only weapons used. Knives are used in attacks upon people. Indeed, we have to consider the obligation of medical personnel, of health professionals to report any crime they become aware of.

There is a concern whether or not this type of regime creates a disincentive for people to attend at hospitals for treatment. I'm not going to make prejudgments about that, but I say this bill has to go to committee. There is a great deal that has to be said about the bill in view of the fact that the bill impacts not just on doctors—as a matter of fact, very little on doctors—but on the broader range of health professionals, who are the ones who are going to be called upon, in hospitals and other similar facilities, to do this reporting.

At the end of the day, the real issue is the fact that we have not come to grips with the growing number of illegal firearms out there on the streets being used by criminals. Two billion dollars spent by the federal Liberals on their phony gun registry has done zip to control the proliferation of illegal handguns being used by kids to shoot other kids.

We've got to make sure that at the end of the day we give the cops the real resources they need—the staffing they need, the tools they need—to go out there to apprehend the people peddling illegal firearms and to apprehend the people using them, and that means resources for police departments. That will be much of the focus of the debate around this bill as well.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): To the Minister of the Environment, this was yet again another diversion announcement to try to get people's minds off the broken promise on tax increases and off the fact there's going to be a 12% cut in the Ministry of the Environment's operating budget starting next year.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Hey, I started to let you know about that.

But even worse, the minister announced today that she is just going to put a white paper out there for discussion,

nothing about implementation and where we go from here. I want to point out to you several things. Listen carefully.

Today is the day a whole bunch of environmental groups have come forward slamming the government for allowing the King City big pipe to go ahead. They say, "It flies in the face of the province of Ontario's post-Walkerton promises to pursue source water protection." That's one. Secondly, I've pointed out in this place before that when it comes to water protection the Liberals are actually lowering standards for drinking water by failing to fix regulation 903—remember that?—to deal with well water. You know what? Another Walkerton could happen if they don't fix that.

Furthermore, there are things that can be done now if the government were clearly committed to source protection; and I pointed these out before. They could bring back CURB—Clean Up Rural Beaches. The program the NDP brought in and the Tories cancelled needs to be brought back to help the small farmers keep their wells from being contaminated.

They should put a moratorium on factory hog farms. I've got a private member's bill I've put forward—no movement. There's evidence that could be a huge source of water contamination at the source. There is one in the minister's own riding and she is not dealing with that.

These are the kinds of things the minister and the government need to be looking at right now, if they are truly committed to source protection.

Let me come back to the big pipe. If they allow that to go ahead, they will lose all credibility when it comes to source water protection in this province.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Earlier I had introduced someone in the Speaker's gallery who had not arrived. I would like now to recognize the Quebec Minister of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs and Native Affairs, the Honourable Benoît Pelletier. Please join me in giving him a warm welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): In the absence of the Premier, my question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, before the election, your Premier, Dalton McGuinty, said that he was going to save our health care system, that he was going to provide significant new dollars. Then, after the election, you and your government said that health care spending was out of control, that costs and expectations had to be reined in, that they were out of control.

On six occasions since May of this year, I have brought to your attention concerns presented by Cancer

Care Ontario and proof that your budget constraints had forced Cancer Care Ontario to stop reimbursement for cancer patients in one drug in particular, and delayed or deferred other life-saving drugs.

On June 16, I raised in this House the case of Mr Doug Henderson, a cancer patient. He's with us in the House. He appeared in this morning's Sun. He considers himself very fortunate that he can afford the \$50,000 for the Rituximab treatments that he received in Indianapolis. Doug Henderson wants to know, why is it, Minister, that you have chosen cancer treatment in this province and its advocate, Cancer Care Ontario, as your battleground for containing your health care budget and its costs?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I ask the member opposite, why is it that you continue to be involved in the campaign to mislead and misinform the people of the province on this issue? Let's be very—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I would ask you to withdraw that. It's unparliamentary.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yes, I will. I want to be very clear. Cancer Care Ontario continues to operate in exactly the way that it has since 1995. That works like this: They make the decisions on the basis of which drugs should be covered, and they base that on the scientific evidence.

What is new is that this year we have already indicated to Cancer Care Ontario that we will make an investment of at least 25% more for the cancer drugs that they deem necessary to provide the utmost of care for the people of Ontario who are struggling with cancer.

On this point, the honourable member has been active in a campaign designed to make it look like there's political decision-making with respect to which drugs are available to people at a time. This is not the case. This is the role of scientists, and this is the role of scientists who are operating on behalf of Cancer Care Ontario.

With respect to the honourable member's assertion that we're involved in some campaign about health care, he's right. It's a campaign that adds 7% to the budget of health care in the province of Ontario, for a total investment of \$2.2 billion in new dollars.

Mr Jackson: Minister, you were warned, and your staff were warned, rather, back in February—and I provided proof to your Premier—that a drug had essentially been delisted for the first time in our province. The fact is, you have not been doing your homework, and you have not been doing your job as the minister. Cancer Care Ontario has cut a specific treatment access to stay within your ministry's rigid budget guidelines. More and more Ontarians are now going to the US for treatment—not just your constituent Mr Henderson, but many, many more.

In the House today is Mr Chris Kuzik. He's aged 59. He sold his home in Oshawa. He moved to Peterborough, where it was more affordable, to prepare for the last years of his life, to pay for his Rituximab treatments in Rochester. The tumours in his neck were so large that he

could barely shave. Yet, after the treatments that he's received, they have shrunk and nearly disappeared. He wants me to ask you today why you have failed to listen to Cancer Care Ontario's recommendations to give treatment to all Ontario residents. This request was given to you months ago.

Hon Mr Smitherman: What is incredibly important to note is that the member will well know that I can't address individual cases, that it's inappropriate for the Minister of Health to do so.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Shame on you.

Hon Mr Smitherman: What? For following the rules?

The role of Cancer Care Ontario remains entirely unaffected by any decisions that this government has taken. What's clear is that we've indicated to Cancer Care Ontario that they have our full support, and we have the full expectation that their drug budget will grow by at least 25% this year. We've indicated to them, and I've indicated to this member in the House on multiple occasions, that the government of Ontario stands by the people of Ontario who need cancer support. What that means on the issue of drugs is that this government has indicated very, very clearly to Cancer Care Ontario that if they believe there's a product that Ontarians need, they should list it and they should use it, and we will work with them to foot the bill.

Let me be very clear on the issue of the bill. We have a full expectation that that will be at least 25% larger than it was last year.

1430

Mr Jackson: Your budget year as Minister of Health is almost one quarter over, and you have not responded. You have not flowed the dollars. You are sitting on this money, and cancer patients are increasingly going to the United States.

The review team—the oncology site team, the haematology site review team—approved this drug months ago. Cancer Care Ontario approved it with their policy department months ago. You are sitting on the money and you are not flowing it to these people. Antonella Artuso of the Toronto Sun confirmed what I raised in this House last week, that Cancer Care Ontario was forced to remove up to \$4 million in discretionary funding that was previously flowing to cancer treatment centres across our province.

Your Liberal government must assure the people who are dying of cancer in this province that you will free Cancer Care Ontario's budget so that they can provide the care and save the lives of Ontarians. Instead of your agenda of capping and controlling health care costs in cancer, let them save lives.

Hon Mr Smitherman: My agenda, with all due respect, is the agenda of our government, and our agenda is clear. It is to make Ontarians the healthiest Canadians.

We've been very, very clear on the issue of cancer drugs. We fully expect, and we have fully indicated to the board of Cancer Care Ontario and to the people who run Cancer Care Ontario, that this government is

prepared to stand by them and to back them up on any scientific decision they make about what product, what drug, should be made available to people in the province of Ontario who are struggling with the challenges of cancer. That means, as a bare minimum, that we are prepared as a government to increase their drug budget by 25%.

But let me go further. We've indicated to them that if they don't find that to be sufficient, they should let us know. The fact of the matter is that the board of Cancer Care Ontario and the decisions around which products will be listed, provided and made available is exactly the same process it has been in this province since 1995.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Attorney General. We are all aware of the recent funding reannouncements of our government's initiatives that were made by your government to fight child pornography. First of all, it was the \$700,000 that was announced to help the Toronto Police Service track sex offenders. That was something you were shamed into. Of course, there was \$1 million announced for the OPP to strengthen their ability to fight child pornography as well.

You are sitting on a surplus of at least \$40 million in the victims' justice fund. This money could be used to help municipal police services combat child pornography. Tell us now, which police services have received money from this fund as a result of your decisions, not those made by this party when we were in government?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): It is true we have made a number of announcements with respect to the provision of funds under the victims' justice fund. We inherited a significant surplus under the victims' justice fund. We want to make sure the money goes to victims, of course. We want to make sure that it's done in a way that makes sense.

We also want to make sure, and I know the member will agree with this, that we have geographic equality so that no matter where you live in the province of Ontario, a victim is going to get services provided by this government that will not only ensure they are not revictimized, but will ensure that the services they need to get on with their lives are provided. I look forward to providing more information to the member on that, perhaps in the supplementary.

Mr Dunlop: There are a number of municipal police services outside of Toronto that are anxiously awaiting approval for funding from the victims' justice fund to fight child pornography. I think you know about that. It's my understanding that they are tired of waiting for this money; they're tired of your ministry dragging their heels on this. Can you please name the municipal police services that have already been denied funding from your ministry's victims' justice fund to combat child pornography?

Hon Mr Bryant: None, I say to the member. We're working with these police services. We're working with them to determine the best way to spend the money. I know that they've been extremely co-operative. I just want to take this opportunity to thank those police services for the work they are doing and for working with our ministry so that we make sure we get this done right. I know that will have the support of this member as well.

Mr Dunlop: The minister should know that I'm aware of at least one municipal police service outside Toronto that has already been flatly denied funding from the victims' justice fund to fight child pornography. I've been told that the unit that deals with child pornography in the Toronto Police Service is the third-best in the world. Our government had provided \$2 million over two years for this unit, but its funding runs out at the end of this year. This again is money from the victims' justice fund. Minister, are you going to leave the Toronto Police Service on pins and needles until the last minute, or will you stand in this House right now and tell us exactly when their funding to fight child pornography will be renewed?

Hon Mr Bryant: The member is wrong. In fact, we are working with these police services. As you said, there are some pilot projects that run out at the end of the year. Obviously we want to give them plenty of notice. They should probably expect to get some final word within the next couple of weeks. We've got plenty of time. We're working with the police services, and it is actually working extremely well, I'm happy to report. Really, it's a period of collaboration and co-operation. We're doing some things a little bit new, but more on that to come. Of course the victims' justice fund has got to be used in a way that serves victims, prevents revictimization, and that's what we're going to do.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, your Premier keeps trying to claim that he is the champion of health care, but every claim he makes turns out to be false. First, he said he would never impose health care premiums on working families because they're regressive and unfair; then he did just that. Then he tried to pretend that your \$2-billion tax grab from working families is progressive, but a single-parent mom with an income of \$25,000 a year will see her provincial income tax go up by 24%. He said that every penny of your regressive and unfair tax grab would be spent on health care services. We now know much of it will go for sewer pipe. He said the health tax would fund a vaccination program for children, but then we discovered that was false as well. The federal government's paying for the vaccination program.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, given all your Premier's broken promises on health care, why should anyone believe any promise Liberals make on health care?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member perhaps doesn't want to take it from me. Just let me talk about the issue of public health from yesterday.

Here's what Dr David Walker said about our initiatives with respect to public health: "Operation Health Protection comprehensively addresses the recommendations of the expert panel on SARS. I commend the minister for his response to our work. Implementation of this plan should restore public health and the confidence of the public."

Dr David Naylor said, "These are very important steps forward in renewing public health in Ontario. The plan unquestionably covers several important areas that needed urgent attention."

Doris Grinspun said, "The report is good news for Ontarians and a great step forward to recognize the vital role of nurses in public health in this province."

I think what's really going on here is very clear: The honourable member has taken such a healthy dose of cynicism that he remains unable to separate his fiction from the fact of the matter, and the fact of the matter is that all across Ontario community organizations related to long-term care, home care, primary care reform, mental health supports and public health renewal are celebrating elements of our government's budget.

Mr Hampton: I recognize that you and your Premier are very good at making speeches and boastful announcements and getting a day of headlines, but then later it turns out it's all false.

I heard and saw your boastful announcement yesterday that you are showing smart leadership on public health, but then I discover a letter from you to the medical officers of health across the province where you tell them that you're going to cut their budget for fighting West Nile virus by 22%. Behold another boastful announcement. You spin it for the media and then, while everyone's looking at the announcement, you send out a letter saying, "Oh, by the way, we're going to cut your budget to fight West Nile by 22%."

Tell me, Minister, is cutting the budget to fight a virus like West Nile by 22% smart public health policy?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I think is incredibly smart public health policy in this province is, at the end of a year, to gather around the scientists, the people in our public health branch and the people in the public health units across Ontario to evaluate the program we've had in place with respect to West Nile and to make changes that people agree are necessary.

1440

So what you see in our West Nile plan are alterations from 2003. Let me give you—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Finished?

Hon Mr Smitherman: No. There are two points that I think are incredibly important to note. The first is with respect to the changes we've made: more mosquito testing, not less, and secondly, because we know that the campaigns that have been run on television have had the

effect of giving more information to people over time, we have been able to have a reduction in the amount of money we're spending.

Mr Hampton: We have a new Liberal vocabulary for a cut. It's called an alteration.

Here is the truth, Minister. You're telling municipalities that are already out there engaged in the fight against West Nile that halfway through the fiscal year you're cutting their budgets by 22%. For the city of Toronto, for example, that's a \$700,000 cut, and the only way they can find that is to go out and cut other programs drastically. Minister, maybe you are not aware of this, but people can die from the West Nile virus. People can become very seriously ill from it. So while you claim to show enlightened leadership on public health policy, why are you slashing the budget for this dangerous virus?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member, in such a flurry of hyperbole, misses a few points. Firstly, we're nowhere near halfway through a fiscal year, which began on April 1. In fact, West Nile virus surveillance in this province only began on May 12. So I don't know where the honourable member gets his information.

The fact of the matter is very, very clear. At the end of a year, we get involved with the people who deliver the program and we make changes to the program, no doubt, to reflect the best information we have. I don't apologize for this; I champion it. I say it seems appropriate that when there is a health risk that changes or is altered or where we find new information about the way to fight it, of course we should make appropriate changes.

I'm pleased to say that one of the other things that has resulted in a reduction of spending on this file is that we have been able to not move forward, to save money for the hiring of seven additional people in the Ministry of Health.

The Speaker: New question.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The minister illustrates he is not really aware of what is going on. The municipal budgets begin January 1. They're halfway through their fiscal year, and you're telling them to cut 22% from their budgets to fight a serious virus.

Eighty-nine people in southern Ontario became ill from the West Nile virus last year. You say it's not serious. According to your own ministry Web site, "Symptoms of West Nile virus can vary from illness such as West Nile fever to serious neurological illness such as encephalitis." That's what your own Web site says.

But apparently, in all your boasting, this is not a priority for you. You'd rather give speeches and hold press conferences. But when it comes to fighting West Nile virus, you quietly try to cut the budget. Are you going to retract this 22% cut, or is your word as good as your Premier's?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm not going to retract it, but what the honourable member ought to do is retract the stream

of misinformation he just presented. The fact of the matter is that he makes it seem like the lion's share of the expenditure we make related to West Nile virus is done at the municipal level. It is a partnership. Most of the reductions came from the savings to be found at the ministry end, like a reduction in television advertising from \$7.2 million to \$4 million.

If public health officials in the land are so riled up by this, then why was it that yesterday the associate chief medical officer of health in York region said this: "This action plan marks an important turning point for public health in Ontario. I am pleased to support this plan and look forward to working with the provincial and municipal partners to strengthen public health across the province"? Why is that? Because he knows we just put \$25 million additional into public health units in the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Well, I can hardly wait until that medical officer of health sees this letter, because the letter is very interesting. You're going to cut the budget by 22%. In the summer, when we should be focused on West Nile, when the mosquitoes are becoming a serious health hazard, you're going to cut the budget. But you also say this: If they contracted out their West Nile effort, then they keep the money. It's OK if you privatize it; you won't get cut. But if you are doing it in-house, as a public service, then you want to cut the budget by 22%. This also breaks your government's promise that there wasn't going to be more downloading on to municipalities, because municipalities will have to go elsewhere to find the money. That's downloading.

Are you going to retract this? Or is your promise on public health about as good as your Premier's promises—not worth anything?

Hon Mr Smitherman: There goes the honourable member talking about his party's record on auto insurance again. The fact of the matter remains incredibly clear to the people involved in this on the front lines. Because of the paramountcy of protecting the public interest, we have enhanced our capacity to do surveillance and more mosquito testing. That is clearly noted in our initiative this year. This program has been re-profiled this year because public health units and the public health officials that represent the government of Ontario have determined that there is a more appropriate way to run the program. The honourable member—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Please give the member from Nickel Belt a question.

The fact of the matter remains very, very clear. We have a program in this province with respect to West Nile. When combined with the additional resources that we are today delivering to public health units across this province, it enhances—does not diminish, but dramatically enhances—our capacity to protect the health of the people of the province of Ontario and—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Hampton: I want the people of Ontario to know this: While people can die of West Nile; while people can

become debilitated, lifelong, from West Nile; while people who are frail and elderly are especially vulnerable to West Nile, what does this minister talk about? He talks about "re-profiling." He says, "We're slightly going to amend the budget."

Why don't you have the courage to stand up and say what it is? You're cutting the budgets of medical officers of health by 22% in their fight against West Nile. Why don't you have the honesty to stand up and say what you're really doing instead of pretending it's something else?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Why don't you have the honesty to present the facts as they are? The fact of the matter is that there's no truth whatsoever to your allegation about a 22% cut. Your blacked-out letter is a bunch of BS—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I have the minister respond, please.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member is attempting to distort the facts to back up his argument. It is an unsettling situation. For the member's—

The Speaker: Order. Could I have a new question, please.

COURT RULING

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Attorney General. It deals with the recent acquittal of former child actor Tyson Talbot on charges related to the death of Christopher Shelton, a 23-year-old pre-law student. I think it's fair to say that the acquittal has outraged the victim's family and many Ontarians. As you know, the trial judge refused to let the jury know of Mr Talbot's relevant criminal history, that at the time of his trial he was also facing a charge of attempted murder in another attack and that he had a significant number of previous convictions for violent crimes such as assault, assault causing bodily harm and assault with a weapon.

Minister, will you assure Christopher Shelton's family today that this blot on our justice system will be challenged and that you will direct the crown to appeal this verdict?

1450

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for raising these concerns and these facts. You will appreciate that the matter is still in a period in which we have to exercise some independent discretion here. I can tell the member that we are looking at this very closely, and that as soon as we have some information I'll undertake to provide it to him. But, for now, it is something that we have to look at closely before we announce any decision on it.

Mr Runciman: I appreciate that the clock is ticking, as the Attorney General knows. This is an all-too-familiar incident for those of us who can recall the Alison Parrott murder as well: the practice of a judge not allowing the person charged to be cross-examined on their relevant

criminal history. In effect, the jury is denied the truth. Too often, the exercise of judicial discretion allows a distorted and inaccurate picture to be presented to a jury.

Minister, I understand your situation with respect to announcing an appeal, but will you today commit to raising this issue at the next federal-provincial-territorial justice ministers' conference to put a stop to this judicial practice and ensure that those charged can be cross-examined on their relevant criminal history?

Hon Mr Bryant: I know you appreciate the situation here, and I don't want to say more than I have said, because we are talking about a specific matter that is before the court. I hear you, I do. I would appreciate any suggestions that the member may have with respect to this particular matter and whether reforms are needed. I will pursue that. You've asked me about a case, and you know I can't speak to it. But I'd appreciate any information you may have on this, so that if it's something that can be taken to the justice ministers' conference in the fall, I will.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Last Friday, I held a press conference with the Sudbury and District Chiropractic Society and three patients. All three make extensive use of chiropractic coverage and none has any private insurance. The Tucker family, for example, paid \$250 last year out of their own pocket to access chiropractic care. With no OHIP coverage, they would now pay \$750 to get the same level of care. Leeann Tucker says there's no way her family can afford that cost, not to mention the new cost the family will be forced to pay with your new health tax.

Minister, chiropractic care is essential for Leeann Tucker, her husband and two children. Will you do the right thing now and reverse your decision to delist chiropractic services?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I've had many opportunities to make the point about the priorities that we've chosen to support in our government's most recent budget. As would be well known to many in Sudbury, but apparently not to the honourable member, Sudbury is a very significant beneficiary of our government's direction. The fact is that as a result of the priorities we've chosen, we're moving forward on significant primary care reform to help a community like Sudbury, 30,000 people from which, as a result of that party while they were in government and that party when they were in government, don't have the benefit of a doctor.

In addition, we are significantly supporting the Northern Ontario Medical School, and I was pleased to announce recently that our government is moving forward with a strong commitment to the Sudbury Regional Hospital to make sure that it's there to provide that vital role for health services for the people of northeastern Ontario.

Ms Martel: The question was about chiropractic care and people in my community who are now going to have to pay out of their own pockets for that. You see, before the election, Minister, your government said you would not cut health care services. Your Premier said you would never bring in a new health tax, and you also said that you would stop two-tier health in Ontario.

After the election, you're the government that's cutting services from OHIP, you're the government that's brought in an unfair, regressive health tax, and you're the government that's reinforcing two-tier health, where, if you have the money you can buy quality care, and if you don't, you just do without.

Minister, cutting chiropractic services will cost the health care system more, because people in pain will end up in the emergency ward. That will cost a whole lot more than a visit to the local chiropractor. Your cuts to health care hurt patients and they're not going to save a dime. Why don't you do the right thing now and reverse your decision: Continue to cover chiropractic care through OHIP?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased to acknowledge that there were tough decisions associated with this. The decisions we've been able to make do give us the chance in this province to transform the health care system by driving resources to the community level where they haven't been seen in quite some time. Northerners will be the beneficiaries of a strategy that enhances, as an example, our capacity to deliver long-term care.

The fact of the matter remains that the budget contained choices, and it reflected clear priorities on our part. As a result of the initiatives we've taken, the people of Sudbury will have the benefit of dramatically expanded health care services in a wide variety of ways, as has been outlined by our government. While I recognize that these choices are difficult, we very much stand behind them.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My question today is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Since my election to the Legislature last October, I've been inundated by people in my riding of Niagara Falls who are on a waiting list for an excessive period of time for affordable housing. In fact, people who are considered as homeless have had to wait for up to a year before housing becomes available, and others who are on the list sometimes wait for two to three years. This situation has caused a severe problem in my riding, but also throughout the Niagara region and probably across Ontario. Minister Caplan, what is our government doing to ensure that affordable housing is available to Ontarians who need it?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member for the opportunity to inform the House about our government's commitment to delivering real, positive change when it comes to affordable housing. I'm pleased that our budget contained \$85 million to build affordable housing. This

commitment signals a significant increase in funding, which will actually get spent to build affordable housing. The previous government spent some \$6.3 million on affordable housing last year, yet they budgeted \$121.6 million mainly federal dollars in the fictitious Magna budget.

We're going to turn that around, and we already have. I am very proud that since we took office, we have unlocked millions of those dollars. To date, 2,389 units for 41 projects across 13 communities in Ontario have been announced, resulting in a total commitment of \$56 million. Through our investments in affordable housing, our government is committed to supporting stronger communities in Ontario.

Mr Craitor: Minister, these plans are necessary to eliminate the unacceptable waiting lists for people in Niagara and across Ontario who need affordable housing. How do you plan on meeting the government's commitment to provide 20,000 new units of affordable housing?

Hon Mr Caplan: The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal is developing a comprehensive, new affordable housing strategy that will meet the challenge head-on. We are undertaking and have engaged extensively with stakeholders across this province. We are redesigning the affordable housing project. We are improving the tendering and project selection process. We are creating an innovative merit-based application process. We also intend to match the federal contribution over the life of our government to create more housing in those areas of need, and we will do so in a fiscally responsible manner.

In the meantime, we have extended the existing pilot project. We will continue to take applications from both high-needs areas and from other communities that have expressed an interest so that we can build on the momentum we have already created. I'm pleased to say that we will have some very exciting announcements of innovative new projects in the days, weeks and months ahead.

ABATTOIRS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, last Wednesday you finally made the announcement that \$7 million from the mature animal abattoir fund would go to four abattoirs in the province. Front-line farmers still reeling from the effects of the closed border went without funding so you could invest in the slaughter capacity for the surplus mature animal. At the time, at least one of the four abattoirs awarded the funding was licensed to slaughter animals for export and thus could not process mature animals. Minister, were you aware at the time of the announcement that the money you awarded was going to a facility that didn't qualify, or did your staff just keep you in the dark about that fact?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I find it very interesting coming from a member who is quoted on March 5 of this year in the Tillsonburg News that if we had enough capacity, the border being

closed to the US market wouldn't be such a hardship. This process we developed was developed in consultation with the farmers in Ontario: the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, along with many others. What we wanted to do was to try to increase capacity.

1500

We have a backlog of 60,000 animals in the province. We had a competitive process; 33 bids were reviewed by ministry staff. We're very aware of the situation that exists with one of the abattoirs and that they're going to be making an investment to create a dedicated line to deal with culled animals.

I think you should be standing up and supporting this, because this is an initiative that is genuinely going to help farmers. This is a long-term, good news initiative for farmers.

Mr Hardeman: From what I understand, your ministry knew this facility could not slaughter mature animals and continue to export beef. As a matter of fact, when I spoke to a representative of the abattoir after the announcement, the facility didn't even want the contract because they could lose the licence they presently have to ship their slaughtered animals for export. Yet your news release said you had signed agreements with four abattoirs valued at just under \$5 million. Surely you wouldn't give taxpayers' money to a facility not qualified to fulfill the contract.

So, Minister, did you give a bogus award to an unqualified facility, or was it a partisan decision that needs to have detailed specs to truly qualify?

Hon Mr Peters: I think it's very important—and this government recognizes, and I would hope the honourable member would, as the former Minister of Agriculture—that we need to do everything we can to help the agricultural industry in this province. We need to make investments in agriculture—something you refused to do.

We could have just followed through with the federal cow cull program, provided our 40% share and put some dollars into a farmer's pocket that would have quickly flowed through that farmer's pocket. But in consultation with the industry, the decision was made that we need to find long-term solutions. We have made investments in four facilities right now. We have approximately \$2 million left to make further investments in facilities. As well, we've allocated \$3 million to the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to help create new markets for this product.

I think the member should recognize as well that of that \$7 million that has been allocated to create new capacity, 25% is repayable. Those are dollars that are going to be coming back and reinvested to support further marketing in this province.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): A question to the Acting Premier: You're paying a company \$11 million to administer compensation claims for the

people of Walkerton. This company is scraping huge fees off the top while less than half the compensation claims—less than half—have been settled four years after the tragedy.

John Al, whose wife died, said this: “It annoys the hell out of me. While people who lost loved ones have to beg for compensation, they are divvying up all this money. They got theirs but no one cares what happens to us.” Mr Al still has not been compensated.

Acting Premier, why are you paying this company so much when the people of Walkerton are still suffering?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Attorney General.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I say to the member, as she knows, the compensation plan is a court-approved plan whereby the people of Walkerton said they did not want government administering the plan; they wanted the court to supervise and administer the plan. That was their choice. That was not our choice. They wanted government to be at arm’s length. In March 2001, then-Chief Justice LeSage approved the settlement, calling it fair, reasonable and in the best interests of the class. It is something the people of Walkerton want administered by the court. If there is information we should be bringing to the court’s attention, of course the government will do that.

In this case, I think the court’s fully aware of what you’re talking about and the amounts we’re talking about. I know the court has powers of audit and otherwise to revisit that. So it is in the hands of the court, and it’s not just what it said in the court order; that’s what the people of Walkerton wanted, and we respect that wish.

Ms Churley: Minister, that is a shocking response. Your Premier said back in February, when this issue was raised, that he would try to fix it then. Your Premier went to Walkerton about eight months ago and tearfully told the people of Walkerton that he would do everything he could to help them.

Your Premier and your government are quick to take credit for what you perceive as good action, but you don’t take responsibility for your failures, and this is a failure. You’ve been in government for eight months and these people are still suffering.

This company is being paid \$8 million to administer costs alone, and people are still waiting to get their compensation. I’m going to ask you again. You are the government. You are responsible to these people. Do something about it. No more excuses.

Hon Mr Bryant: The member is raising a couple of issues. One is the recent disclosure of information around costs involving the adjuster. The other issue was one where, yes, indeed, the Premier and the Minister of the Environment heard concerns from the people of Walkerton. We listened to those concerns, and we brought the people’s concerns to the court.

The court made an order on February 27th of this year, and released supplementary directions to that order. I

won’t have time in my answer to go through what Justice Winkler ordered, but that was a circumstance where we received information from the people, we brought it to the court’s attention, and then the court exercised its discretion and acted. In this particular case, if the member has any information that she believes we should be bringing to the court’s attention, I would encourage her to send it over our way. We will bring it to the court’s attention. They have responsibility for administering it. That’s what the people of Walkerton wanted, and we respect that. We will continue to listen to the people of Walkerton and bring their concerns to the court where appropriate.

SARS

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I don’t have to tell you that last year SARS hit Toronto very hard. Since then, there have been reports from the Ontario expert panel on SARS and infectious disease control and Commissioner Archie Campbell on the investigation into the outbreak.

Residents of Toronto need to know that our government is taking action on this important public health issue. I know you came out with a plan yesterday, and I’m wondering whether you can inform this House how this plan will move our province forward on the fight against SARS, amongst other public health crises.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I did have the privilege yesterday of participating in the launch of Operation Health Protection. This was a comprehensive response to the work of Dr David Naylor, Dr David Walker and also the good work of Justice Archie Campbell, who have given our province an extraordinary advantage based on their quality of work.

What we moved forward yesterday, with respect, were significant enhancements on our public health. Renewal of the public health system is at the heart of it. The Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency will be launched and built by 2006-07. We’re expanding the capacities of the ministry’s health and emergency management unit and creating a provincial infectious disease advisory committee.

Because I think it’s incredibly important to say so, the Ontario Public Health Association, which is the organization that represents public health officials in the province of Ontario, had the following quote to offer: “This plan shows the commitment of the government to strengthen Ontario’s public health system and the understanding that public health is a crucial service in need of support.”

Ms Broten: I’m sure that the people of Ontario find comfort in the fact that we are taking action to protect the public from threats to our health. One common thread and theme that was reported during last year’s SARS crisis was the perceived lack of independence from the chief medical officer of health during that crisis. How will Operation Health Protection improve this situation?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think one of the critical elements that people were concerned about during our challenges with SARS was the idea that Ontario's chief public health officer had the capacity to speak freely. The fact is that, as a result of the direction that we were provided in the interim report by Justice Campbell, we've moved forward with an approach which follows exactly, to the T, the recommendation that we've been given by Justice Archie Campbell.

I think responding to the direction given by Justice Archie Campbell, an esteemed judge who has been asked to provide advice to the government, is entirely appropriate. What that means is that we will institute legislative changes to dramatically increase the independence of the chief medical officer of health, to give the Legislature the opportunity to be playing a role in helping to nominate future chief medical officers of health, and to make sure that the chief medical officer of health in this province enjoys the legislative protection and power to be able to offer up all of the necessary information to Ontarians on the state of public health and to highlight any risks that the chief medical officer of health feels are necessary.

One last point: The chief medical officer of health will be presenting an annual report to the Legislature of Ontario on the state of public health in the province of Ontario.

1510

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question today is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. You'll know that on Easter weekend, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services announced the closure of the Pembroke jail. Since that time we've been trying to get answers from the minister. We have had many communications with him and we're hoping that we're going to get some answers in that regard fairly soon.

Since that closure, the conditions that these prisoners are being held in while they're awaiting bail hearings or trial are quite deplorable. I want to get that in there because it goes to my next point, which is that there is another issue in Pembroke, and that is the courthouse renovations. They've been renovating the government services building to accommodate temporary courthouses so that the permanent work on the courthouse can proceed—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The question is?

Mr Yakabuski: —and nothing has happened for weeks. It's at a standstill. What I'm asking the minister is this: Has there been a stop-work order issued? If so, when will it be lifted, when will that work begin again, and why does your government place a lower priority on justice—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member for the question. I

think it highlights a significant problem that we have in this province. Because of the actions of the previous government, quite frankly, you have left us with an enormous infrastructure deficit. It is going to take us considerable time to dig ourselves out of the hole that your government has left us in, whether it's in the justice sector, in the transportation sector, in health care, in colleges and universities or in public secondary education.

It is, as the finance minister indicated in the budget, our intention to put together, for the first time ever, a 10-year capital infrastructure plan for Ontario. We are working not only with our ministry partners but with all regions across this province to make sure we are meeting the legitimate needs of Ontarians to be able to improve the public services through the infrastructure investments that we're making. I know that I'll be able to count on this member's support in developing that plan going forward.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): No, supplementary.

The freeze in the infrastructure seems to hit all ministries. In my riding, the province has already invested \$12 million in the building of a new hospital, and now the hospital board is waiting to get the green light from you to send the project to tender. They have stated publicly that they feel the facility may have fallen off the minister's radar screen and are concerned that they may not have final approval in place to have shovels in the ground this year. I've asked your colleague Minister Smitherman about this and have had no answer.

I ask you, Minister, can the Woodstock General Hospital board expect to hear from this government soon on the approval to go to tender, or should they consider themselves part of the infrastructure freeze?

Hon Mr Caplan: The member opposite is sadly misinformed; in fact, there is no freeze on capital. The budget we introduced on May 18 saw a 17% increase in capital and infrastructure spending in the province, one of the most significant increases in our budget. It is a very good news item, although I must admit that the magnitude of the deficit, as far as infrastructure and capital left by your government, is astounding. It is going to take some significant work on behalf of this minister and on behalf of this government.

It is fully our intention to bring innovative tools like the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, like the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority and innovative infrastructure renewal bonds. We have some truly creative and innovative ways that we are bringing forward to meet some of the challenges that, unfortunately, that member, when he was in government, didn't have the ability or the wherewithal to make happen. Thank God, we have a new government in Ontario today.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Children and Youth Service. Minister, 145 youth workers at the Syl Apps Youth Centre

have been out on a picket line since April 15. Syl Apps, as you know, is in Oakville. It's an 80-bed government-funded secure-custody detention and treatment facility that houses severely disturbed adolescents whose crimes include the most heinous, murder among them.

Their employer, Kinark, has shown no interest in bringing this labour dispute to an end. From the outset, Kinark has shown contempt for the bargaining process and, in fact, has refused to bargain.

This program is still being fully funded by your government even though they're down to 40 inmates. What are you going to do to get Kinark to the bargaining table so this labour dispute can end?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for his question. I'm extremely concerned about the situation there. As you know, I can't get involved in the negotiations between the employer and the union. I can say that my ministry is monitoring the situation, however, because the safety of the youth and the adults there is very important to us. We hope they come to the table very soon.

Mr Kormos: To the minister: The community of Oakville has become a far less secure place, because as you know scabs are doing the work of these trained professional youth workers. The employer has shown no interest in bargaining in good faith. The employer offers zero increase and demands concessions, even though it just gave its executive director a \$37,600-a-year salary increase. The lives of children in the community are at risk. You are funding this program, all 80 beds of it, even though 40 are all that are being occupied. Surely you can express your concerns and the concerns of the community to Kinark around the risk that community is being exposed to, and call upon them to start bargaining at the bargaining table.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'm extremely concerned about the youth and the adults in that facility. I have to say that the child advocate has also committed to visiting the facility on a regular basis. The only thing I will say about that situation is that whatever monies are saved now, as a result of this disruption, will be applied to the new contract.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a question addressed to the Honourable Sandra Pupatello, the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today your ministry delivered on a significant budget commitment to help up to 1,000 more Ontarians with disabilities. How? By helping them to pay for home and vehicle modifications that let them live safer and more independent lives. This is great news, an encouraging initiative for the many families with children, because this is the first time the program will be extended to include children with disabilities, another sign of the betterment of Ontario under a McGuinty government. Can you please tell the House

what else your announcement today means for Ontario's families?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question very much. Minister Bountrogianni and I were very happy to make an announcement today that added \$10 million to the home and vehicle modification program. The wonderful news about this program is that, as this member rightly mentions, we have expanded access to the program. It was a program that was launched in 1999, and at that time was used exclusively by adults. For example, you needed to be the owner of the car in order to benefit from a sales tax rebate. That's what it was. We've now rolled this into a home and vehicle modification program to have much better access for parents, for children and for adults.

Mr Qaadri: My constituents in Etobicoke North and the people of Ontario appreciate your considered reply and your efforts to create a more just society. Previous to the May 18 budget announcement, the Ministry of Finance provided families with a rebate of retail sales tax paid on motor vehicles to transport persons with permanent physical disabilities. Has this program changed in today's announcements, and what will that actually mean for Ontario's families?

Hon Ms Pupatello: The program that was used for vehicles was a rebate program. That program has been rolled into this home and vehicle modification program, and then we've enhanced the funding for the program. So over \$7 million that used to be prescribed through this tax rebate has been rolled in, along with \$3 million more to the existing program that was \$2.62 million. So it is a significantly larger program.

We are using the Ontario March of Dimes, which has done a tremendous job for us, to deliver this program across the province. It is a much broader program. We're very happy to see that.

The parents we brought to Queen's Park today brought their son Tyler, and we were able to show Tyler a van that had been modified so he could roll his wheelchair right into the van. We're very pleased to see that it is an across-Ontario program now, and we encourage people to call the Ontario March of Dimes to see if they in fact can be helped by this.

1520

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Minister, in the next couple of days you're asking members of the assembly to vote on Bill 27, the greenbelt legislation. As you know full well, especially if you were there at the public hearings in St Catharines a couple of weeks ago, the farmers in the affected area are angry about their loss in equity, they're worried about encumbrances on their ability to do business and they're concerned about restrictions on value-added operations. Ray Duc, chair of the Grape Growers of Ontario, said, "An injection of

support will be required from the provincial and federal government.”

Before this bill is called for a final vote, can the minister guarantee to the House today that there will be appropriate compensation—directly, for infrastructure, for marketing—for farmers in the affected area?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I’d like to thank the member for the question because today we’re starting the debate on third reading of the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, which is a very positive act for the people of Ontario. What we can definitely guarantee to the people of Ontario is that they’re going to get the best greenbelt protection that we, the people of Ontario, want: to make sure that farmland is going to be protected; to make sure that environmentally sensitive land is going to be protected; and to make sure that that part of Ontario made up of the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt that connects them is going to be safe and protected for generations to come.

Mr Hudak: Minister, you’ve been using the same lines the past nine months. Farmers in the affected area are tired of these platitudes. They want answers. They want detailed answers. Minister, you set the tone. You call the shots. You can direct the funding. So today, let’s set that tone. Can you guarantee for the House today, before you call this bill for a vote, that you’ll put aside funds, put aside the dollars, to make sure that there’s compensation appropriate for farmers in the affected area, whether for infrastructure, whether for marketing, whether directly? Set the tone. Show some leadership. Show you care. Will you make that guarantee right here and right now?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: This government is showing leadership in greenbelt protection, and complete confidence as well in making sure that this greenbelt protection gets passed. It’s interesting to note that, from a Hansard that appeared not so long ago, one of his own members stated—and listen to this—“because we had an incapable, incompetent minister handling it in Minister Hudak. He shouldn’t have been the minister. He was the minister, and that’s unfortunate.” We are trying to correct the errors that were made by that government, by making sure that the people of Ontario have the best greenbelt protection possible for future generations to come.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): A question to the Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I’d just like to recognize, after he has waited so patiently, the member from Trinity-Spadina. We can start the clock now.

Mr Marchese: The question is to the Minister of Education. Tonight the Toronto board of education meets to consider an exclusive, \$6-million, five-year contract with Pepsi-Cola at its secondary schools. Despite its reserv-

ations about selling what amounts to liquid candy in our schools, the board feels it has no choice but to approve the contract because of your government’s refusal to provide adequate financial resources to our schools.

Day after day, members of your government stand up in this House to talk about the social determinants of health. Here’s something very concrete that you can do about the social determinants of health. You can get on the phone, call the Toronto District School Board and commit to them the \$5.8 million they need to say no to this terrible contract. Gerard, are you going to do that?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I hate to say to the member opposite, we have all watched and strained with him to get this question up here today, and we wanted it to be about something that mattered in the public interest.

In fact, the companies that are dealing with the school board today are not putting junk food in schools. They’re abiding by the ban we put in place, finally, to protect kids in this province. There will be no junk food put in any elementary schools.

As for the school board and its financial condition, this is the selfsame board that declared an \$8-million surplus this year for the first time in six, seven or eight years, including many under the previous NDP government’s jurisdiction.

The students in Toronto, for the first time in a number of years, can look forward to a stronger future, can look forward to a future with a board back in charge of its affairs but, more importantly, with funding for those affairs so they get the same chance at an education as every other student in the province.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the

May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

It is signed by some 200 people. I am in agreement and affix my signature thereto.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): “Whereas the parents and residents of Summerside Community Association in London, Ontario, are concerned, due to the number of children attending schools outside the Summerside subdivision; and

“Whereas the number of children projected to be residing in the Summerside community is approximately 1,400 children under the age of 19 by 2009 (as backed by Census 2001), therefore request the support of building a public elementary school, a separate elementary school and a high school;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature as follows:

“To build a public elementary school on the proposed public school site fronting on Meadowgate Boulevard ... city of London;

“To build a separate elementary school on the proposed Catholic school site fronting Chelton Road...;

“To build a high school on the proposed high school site on the north side of future Evans Boulevard between future Meadowgate Boulevard and Jackson Road...”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): “Whereas property reassessment occurs now on an annual basis; and

“Whereas higher housing markets increase assessment, leading to higher property taxes; and

“Whereas property values are not related to the cost of municipal services, nor to the ability of taxpayers to pay; and

“Whereas the assessment system is a provincial responsibility;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to initiate a review of Ontario’s property assessment system that would lead to reforms that will protect homeowners from excess increases in assessments due to hot housing markets.”

1530

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): “To Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and affix my signature thereon.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here.

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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

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

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

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

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

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

It has thousands of signatures. I add mine to the list, as I totally agree with it.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): “Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member’s bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

“Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instru-

mentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

“Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

“Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP—Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

“Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill.”

I support the petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I’ve been asked by constituents in my Niagara Falls riding to submit the following petition:

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

I’m pleased to submit this petition on their behalf.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My petition concerns water testing in a rural community.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the riding of Simcoe North is made up of many small communities; and

“Whereas not all citizens live in large cities such as Toronto, where access to municipal water service is taken for granted; and

“Whereas smaller communities have little, if any, access to municipal water services; and

“Whereas Ontario’s smaller villages and hamlets are home to many community buildings such as churches, community halls and arenas; and

“Whereas those responsible for halls, churches, arenas and other community facilities take pride in ensuring these buildings have access to the highest quality potable water;

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

“That the implementation of regulation 170/03 as it relates to community halls and similar facilities be delayed; and

“That the province of Ontario ensure that the halls, churches, arenas and other public facilities on private wells comply with water standards that are reasonable and appropriate.”

I’m very pleased to sign my name on behalf of these 300 names.

OHIP OFFICE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): “Whereas more than 800,000 people live in the downtown core; and

“Whereas the only OHIP offices in the entire GTA that service non-homeless clients are at 47 Sheppard Avenue East, 4400 Dufferin Street, 2063 Lawrence Avenue East, or 3300 Bloor Street West; and

“Whereas OHIP is an essential service to all the people of this province; and

“Whereas taking more than one day off work to stand in long lineups at OHIP offices located in distant parts of the city is detrimental to a worker’s productivity and the economy as a whole;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately locate a suitable building for an OHIP office in the downtown core and have the office ready to receive clients by the end of 2004.”

I support the petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to present this to the page Samuel, who will deliver it to you immediately.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): This petition has been signed by literally thousands of people in my riding and, I presume, millions across the province of Ontario. It’s unbelievable how many people were upset about and will continue to be upset about this decision.

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I sign my name to it.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

This is signed by 1,757 residents from the greater city of Sudbury. It was sent to me by a chiropractic assistant. I agree, of course, with the petitioners and I affix my signature to it.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of social services workers in Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada’s sixth-largest city,

and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

“Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak-period road commuting impractical and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

“Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to ‘commute to commute,’ driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga.”

As one of those residents, I am pleased to affix my signature and to have Logan carry it down for me.

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CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I’ve been asked by my constituents in London-Fanshawe to read this petition:

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

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

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

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

Therefore, I submit this petition on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion to be decided without debate or amendment respecting this afternoon’s debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 27.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, be apportioned equally among the recognized parties and that, at 5:55 pm, the Speaker shall put the question on the motion without further debate or amendment.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Just on that point, I thought we had decided that we would defer the vote—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: OK, I misunderstood.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved that debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, be apportioned equally among the recognized parties and that, at 5:55 pm, the Speaker shall put the question on the motion without further debate or amendment. Agreed? Agreed.

GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Gerretsen?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I am very pleased today to commence, and I guess finalize today as well, the third reading of this very significant bill. Perhaps to give the people who may be watching, and certainly those of us here today, a better understanding as to what this is all about, I will commence by reading the preamble of the bill, which I think sets out the purpose of the act and what the government is trying to accomplish here. It states:

“The government of Ontario recognizes that in order to protect environmentally sensitive land and farmland and contain urban sprawl, there is an immediate need to study an area in the part of Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe.

“The government recognizes that clear limits must be set on development in order to protect this valuable resource as a greenbelt for the long term.

“The government recognizes that good planning for environmental and agricultural protection and sustainable development will result in economic benefits to the residents of the Golden Horseshoe area.

“The government recognizes the environmental and agricultural significance of this area and its importance as

a source of food, water, natural heritage systems, green space and recreation, resulting in an enhanced quality of life.

“The government recognizes that it is important to continue to protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine and to protect a broader greenbelt area.”

Therefore, the government wishes to enact a bill that we know as Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001.

Speaker, in the 40 minutes or so that we have left, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, Maria Van Bommel, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who has shepherded this bill through committee and who has attended the various public meetings that have been held by the legislative committee and some of the public meetings that we've held on the greenbelt as well.

By containing sprawl, encouraging growth management and creating a permanent greenbelt, our government will enhance our quality of life. The lands on the outer ridge of the developed areas of the Golden Horseshoe are the most threatened in Ontario today. This proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is a significant step in the right direction and is real, positive change. This act would provide for a time out for the discussion of important issues and factors that must be taken into account when proposing greenbelt protection.

Some of the most pressing issues concern agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe. We need to ensure that truly key rural and agricultural lands are protected. We need the help of our farmers, because, after all, when farmers are supported and farm operations remain viable, farmland is protected. That's what Ontarians want and it is what farmers have always wanted. But once farmland is lost to urban development, it is gone for good.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act has achieved so much in so little time. Why is that? It is the way this government does business. It's because this government talks, discusses, consults, listens and acts. Ontarians are smart and they know what's important in their lives. They have much to say and much to contribute in the process of government. We've had the privilege to listen to Ontarians in the course of the legislative processes of the proposed act. The public have come to our standing committee to offer their concerns, ideas and support, and they have gone out to the meetings of the Greenbelt Task Force around the Golden Horseshoe.

I must say that the Greenbelt Task Force, which has been chaired by Mayor Robert MacIsaac of Burlington, with 12 other individuals from a variety of different backgrounds—agriculture, the development industry, housing, the building industry, the aggregate community, planning and the environmental community—have had meetings on almost a weekly basis to develop the criteria that are necessary to actually put this greenbelt protection area in place.

As well, the standing committee on general government sat to discuss this proposed act with Ontarians for

four days in four different localities in the Golden Horseshoe area. The committee heard from a number of stakeholders representing municipalities, the farming community, the environment, the aggregate industry and home builders. The committee continued its work, spending another three days going through clause-by-clause of this bill right here at Queen's Park to ensure that we got it right.

We have heard what the public and our stakeholders had to say and we have proposed amendments to the bill in response to that. Some of these amendments have expanded the definition of urban settlement areas to better reflect the various local circumstances in municipalities around the Golden Horseshoe. Now, for example, urban settlement areas in all official plans will be included. This will eliminate the potential for confusion over what type of official plan is affected. In addition, development in the late stages of approval at the municipal level would be allowed to continue through the normal municipal planning processes. For example, developments with draft approval could proceed to final approval without delay.

1550

Bill 27 will now clear up confusion as to what are considered urban and rural uses of lands. Aggregates, forestry and conservation uses are now clearly identified as rural uses in the proposed bill. These uses will be discussed further as we proceed with planning for an approach to permanent greenbelt protection that will come out of this act.

Responding to the concerns of the environment, we have added additional protection to the Niagara Escarpment in areas slated for greenbelt protection. New urban expansions on the escarpment will be prohibited. In addition, the government will have the power to stay hearings on such matters if necessary.

We heard from members of the opposition parties making motions for changes as well. Members of the official opposition, for example, would have liked landowners to be compensated for loss of profits they may have seen if their land was available for development. Mr Speaker, we cannot compensate people for speculating on what lands might have been developed. Agricultural land will retain its value as agricultural land and can be sold as such and used as such. The opposition should understand that these exact same provisions, such as compensation not being offered to landowners, are included in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act of 2001, when the opposition party that now complains about the lack of those provisions was in power. They used exactly the same provisions that we have in this act here.

On the other hand, the third party advocated freezing sewer, water and highway infrastructure projects in the moratorium. What has to be understood is that this is a short-term bill. It expires on December 15 of this year, when hopefully the permanent greenbelt protection area will be in place, and it's certainly our aim and plan to make sure that will happen by that date.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Concerns about major infrastructure projects cannot be dealt with in this extremely limited piece of legislation, as the member of the third party well knows, Speaker. They are, in fact, best dealt with through our other government initiatives, such as the growth management strategy and the GTA transportation strategy, which are currently being worked on by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Minister of Transportation. Highways and other infrastructure projects, as we all know, are extremely important, but they must be dealt with through other government initiatives that are more appropriate. The growth management and transportation strategy initiatives will ensure that these topics are covered thoroughly, more thoroughly than could be done in an interim piece of legislation about protecting green space.

The third party also advocated extending the greenbelt study area to include Simcoe county, Kitchener-Waterloo and beyond. Simcoe county's concerns, and planning for areas beyond the greenbelt study area, will be dealt with through the growth management strategy, because, were we to grow, how to service that growth is an issue in Simcoe, and we totally realize that. Our ministry staff continues to work with officials in Simcoe to determine how to manage growth and protect the environment.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is about fulfilling our promise, as contained in our election material for the last election, to protect green space. In our platform, we said that we will link the Oak Ridges moraine to the Niagara Escarpment and will protect the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands, and we are taking steps to do that with this bill.

As we move forward, however, using the time out this bill affords us, we must gather information about one of the more complex issues facing us, and that is how to protect farmland in the Golden Horseshoe. Permanent greenbelt protection would extend to include the farmland that feeds us. In central Ontario, farmland makes up almost 45% of the area's 9.2 million acres. Some of the best, most productive agricultural lands lie within the Golden Horseshoe. Prime agricultural areas are therefore located where development pressures are the greatest. A myriad of urban uses have consumed some of Ontario's best prime agricultural land, and some members of the official opposition ask that key agricultural lands, where development pressures exist, be exempted from our moratorium. They asked that municipalities, where growth management studies have been initiated, be allowed to take steps to allow development on that land. We are doing the right thing by taking a time out now to study how agricultural lands will be protected for the long run. Ontario's agricultural land is some of the best farmland in North America. We cannot afford to pave it over with asphalt and concrete.

Agriculture creates jobs, generates revenue and benefits the environment. It employs more than 600,000 people, directly or indirectly, in Ontario alone. It removes carbon dioxide from the air and provides linkages that

wildlife species need to survive in urbanizing areas. It provides sources of fresh produce for Ontarians and it helps to buffer natural green space from urban areas.

The issue of food security and the benefits of supplying food to an increasing population should never be underestimated. This point was made by a member of the public at the Greenbelt Task Force meeting in Burlington just this last Wednesday night.

Some of the best agricultural land in the Golden Horseshoe is in the Niagara area. The Niagara area's good tender fruit and good grape lands have long been regarded as a nationally unique agricultural resource. Half of Niagara's land base is farmed. But economic development activities have brought prosperity to the region as well, and these activities have also brought non-farm development and urbanization pressures. This land, and other key agricultural lands in the Golden Horseshoe, simply must be protected.

Only 5% of Canada's total land base is classified as prime agricultural land, and more than 50% of the best soil in Canada is in Ontario. These lands are a finite resource. Once lost through conversion to non-farm uses, they can never be replaced. Long-term viability requires careful management and protection from other land uses.

The province has many options available to protect farmland. The provincial policy statement under the Planning Act outlines the province's policy and gives direction on the protection of agricultural resources of the province, for example. Other existing pieces of legislation contribute to the protection of farmlands and farm uses. The Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998, and the Nutrient Management Act are but two, to cite some examples.

But as with much of the legislation designed to protect our environment, these exist in isolation. Farmers understand that examining single issues in isolation is no way to understand the challenges of farming. Farmers have used the voices this government gave them over the course of our discussions on greenbelt protection. They have told us they need something more. They told us at the standing committee meetings and at the meetings of the Greenbelt Task Force that agriculture is suffering. More and more farm operations are losing their viability. The costs of running farm operations are far outpacing revenues. This, as farmers are well aware, is linked not to one single issue, but to a number of issues. They range from BSE, or mad cow disease, to drought, to NAFTA and the World Trade Organization.

Yes, farmers do have concerns about permanent greenbelt protection. We knew that they would. That is why we have two members of our agricultural community, including a representative from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, sitting on the Greenbelt Task Force. It is why this government, under the leadership of the Minister of Agriculture, Steve Peters, has struck an agricultural advisory team, on the recommendation of the task force. This team will look at these issues and issues of farm viability that affect farmers across the province. As a matter of fact, former federal Minister of Agri-

culture, Lyle Vanclief, and Bob Bedggood, past president of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, have agreed to provide the government with advice as the government develops its growth management plan.

The team will comment on issues that affect agriculture, such as the identification of prime agricultural land and land use planning policies. They will also suggest strategies to strengthen agriculture in protected areas. The team will ensure that Ontario's growth management strategy addresses the concerns of agricultural stakeholders and will help to ensure the agricultural community's continued strength.

1600

But agricultural land in the Golden Horseshoe is at a crossroads. It is valuable for the fresh quality food it produces, but farmland has become a valuable commodity in the Golden Horseshoe due to the population growth. People are moving here and, if and when they come, where will they live? If we continue to build and develop as we have for the last decade, they will live on our farmland in sprawl.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act will give us the time to develop an approach for protection of the green space and the time to identify prime agricultural land for protection, because protecting hundreds of thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland within the Golden Horseshoe will enhance our quality of life. That's real, positive change.

It's with great pleasure that I now turn the floor over, as I mentioned before, to my parliamentary assistant—oh, you're giving me the sign that we'll go in rotation. She will be speaking later on this bill as well, Speaker. Thank you very much for your attention.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, it's whoever stands up.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I thought we had made an agreement that each party would use up its time in terms of people's plans to be here or not. Is your parliamentary assistant here?

The Deputy Speaker: All the member for Toronto-Danforth has to do is sit down. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I am proud to speak today in support of Bill 27, the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, as an important piece of legislation. The reason is clear: We know that protecting green space will improve the quality of life for the people who choose to live in the Golden Horseshoe. Protecting green space is one part of protecting the health of the land we live on. The health of this land affects the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe. Protecting green space means a high quality of life. But this protection is only a part of the equation. Quality of life also depends on things like encouraging good development and investing our infrastructure dollars strategically.

We are taking steps, through a number of growth management initiatives, to look at the big picture. Water source protection is a key initiative that will help ensure a

supply of clean water for people in the Golden Horseshoe and across the entire province of Ontario. A GTA transportation strategy will help free the Golden Horseshoe from paralyzing gridlock, and it will free commuters and those who drive for a living from traffic jams that take away time from family and add needlessly to environmental pollution. The waste management plan will help to protect the environment by encouraging practices and setting standards for the diversion of waste from landfills.

This government is working on further defining and protecting natural heritage systems across the province. This includes creating more parks and public open spaces through a number of different ways. Work has begun to support agriculture and agri-food industry that will protect our high quality of food supply and enshrine the wise use of prime agricultural lands in the GTA.

But the initiative that is most complementary to greenbelt protection is this government's growth management plan, now in development. This government understands. We get it. The establishment of a permanently protected greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe will tell us where we cannot grow, and the growth management plan will tell us where we can grow. We must be ready to grow, because we are expecting another 3.5 million people to be living in the Golden Horseshoe by the year 2031. The way we plan for that growth now is key. It is key to the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe for us now and for future generations.

We need a time out for discussion. That is why we need the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004. We need the time out that this legislation provides so that we can provide the proper consultation and discussion needed.

The proposed act would prevent land that is now designated for rural uses from being redesignated to urban uses. Urban uses, without good planning, can mean sprawl. The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act of 2004 would maintain the status quo to give us time to plan properly.

This time out is crucial because lands on the outer edges of the Golden Horseshoe are some of the most threatened in our province today, and we need the time to consider the many elements of growth, particularly in the Golden Horseshoe. These are things that this government has already identified through the many initiatives that I have outlined.

This government's members—my friends and colleagues—are not the only group of dedicated Ontarians that recognizes the complexity of the job we have before us. The Greenbelt Task Force was struck by this government in February to consult with stakeholders and the public on greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe. The task force consulted for over a month in May and June.

Before heading out to talk to the people of this province, however, this task force put their own thoughts and ideas on paper. These dedicated and knowledgeable individuals understand, as the government understands, that many elements of growth in the Golden Horseshoe are interrelated and interdependent.

We understand that there are many issues to discuss. The government is taking steps to address issues where there is more pressing need, but the task force has helped us by bringing issues and items together in the context of protecting green space in the in the Golden Horseshoe. Their discussion paper has given us and the people of Ontario a head start on what we must think about and what we should discuss.

The Golden Horseshoe task force discussion paper outlines what the task force calls the "layers of the greenbelt." These layers, or broad topics, that the task force has identified as particularly important for consideration made up the framework for that consultation.

While this government will await the task force's final recommendations this summer, I want to take a moment to discuss what the task force calls the "layers of a greenbelt."

The first layer is environmental protection. The task force has discussed approaches to environmental protection that include the identification of a natural heritage system in the Golden Horseshoe, including major natural features and functions, such as the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. They also include the consideration of regional features and functions and the identification of public parks, open spaces, waterway links and the connections between those features and functions; and, finally, the identification of sensitive areas and less sensitive areas within the greenbelt.

These considerations would be key to the protection of source water in the Golden Horseshoe. We all know how important clean water is to the quality of life for all Ontarians. For the agricultural community, it is particularly key to their business.

Agricultural protection is the second layer that the task force has discussed and identified. Agricultural protection would include, as they have explained, stopping further urban expansion on tender fruit and grape lands in Niagara and the Holland Marsh; stopping further non-farm-related severances on agricultural land; and developing a criteria for identifying additional viable agricultural areas for permanent protection in a greenbelt.

1610

But viability in agriculture is more than just protection of farmland. This government understands that farmers have serious concerns about maintaining viable farm operations. We also understand that many issues related to farm viability are outside the mandate of the Greenbelt Task Force. Many of these agricultural issues have roots far beyond the boundaries of our jurisdiction. Subsidies and trade regulations are dealt with at national and international levels. But farmers deserve to have these issues addressed, as the task force requested, in a more holistic manner.

Our government has committed to this. As noted by Minister Gerretsen, we have formed an agricultural advisory team to look at those broader issues concerning the farm community, not only in the proposed greenbelt area but also across all of Ontario. It will enjoy the support of our staff of experts at the Ministry of Agri-

culture and Food and my colleague Minister Peters because these issues, and the farmers who live with them every day, deserve respect and understanding.

The task force understands that agriculture needs special attention. They know also that those needs are interrelated with yet another layer of discussion. That layer helps them to get their wares to market. Transportation and infrastructure is the next layer, on which we keenly await the task force's recommendations. The task force suggested principles to consider in their discussion when looking at things like highways and other infrastructure that may be required in the greenbelt. They include special recognition, such as not seeing the greenbelt as a land reserve for future infrastructure needs, and recognizing that the Golden Horseshoe is the fastest-growing region in Canada and infrastructure will be needed to support that growth.

Also included are methods that could be used to minimize the cost of new infrastructure, including looking first at alternatives that maximize the capacity of our existing infrastructure. They also include minimizing social, economic and environmental impacts, respecting natural features, preserving open space, seeking creative approaches to design, and controlling growth through planning tools.

While we await the task force's recommendations, we will be working closely with the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal in determining an approach to the greenbelt in those areas. Current initiatives on transportation in the GTA and growth management will figure prominently in any proposed approach.

Away from the gridlock, in rural areas in the Golden Horseshoe, we have some different choices to make. The task force understands that some of the building blocks of our cities' construction industry and aggregates are located within the Golden Horseshoe. Over the course of the consultation, they asked that resource extraction be considered, provided it is done with due care and attention. Proposed approaches include the identification of high potential aggregate areas and their protection from incompatible land use, and a more rigorous approach to rehabilitation of depleted sites to uses that would support or enhance the objectives of greenbelt protection.

They added that aggregate extraction licensing procedures should reflect those approaches. We heard that during the presentations to the standing committee. The task force recognizes that rehabilitation of such sites can render some of them compatible with the objectives of the greenbelt. Some examples in existence today include a restored pit now used for grape growing and another that is now a healthy wetlands area. These are the types of places where people want to be.

The task force understands that Ontarians' enjoyment of the greenbelt is another key to its success. The task force has also discussed culture, recreation and tourism opportunities in the greenbelt area, but they understand that they must be compatible with other greenbelt objectives and priorities. These include things such as the recognition and promotion of cultural sites, districts and

landscapes that are important to community identity, history and character; a network of protected open spaces, such as provincial and municipal parks and conservation areas, which people can enjoy; a system of trails on public and private lands, where expressly permitted by the landowners; and tourism destinations that support and depend on farms, natural areas and rural communities.

The layers identified by the task force show us the many issues that must be considered in determining the scope, content and implementation of the greenbelt. So we eagerly await the task force's final recommendations.

Once these layers have been defined more clearly, we will need to decide on how to implement and administer the greenbelt. This approach will be no small feat. It will need to take into account the provincial plans that already exist in the area; namely, the parkway belt west plan, the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the Niagara Escarpment plan.

It is clear that a permanent greenbelt is a complex task, and this is one of a number of tasks that must be completed to achieve our growth management strategy—a strategy that will maintain and enhance the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe. The government understands this, the task force understands this and the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is what this government's plan for growth in the Golden Horseshoe needs to be effective.

Our proposed act will give us the time to develop a clear and comprehensive plan for permanent greenbelt protection. It will give us the time to discuss the recommendations of the task force, which they will be delivering to us in July. Given the complex layers to consider, the need for time is obvious. It will give us the time to determine where the most environmentally sensitive areas are. It will give us the time to determine where our most productive and viable agricultural lands lie. Then we will know where we can grow.

Once green space is lost to development and sprawl, we cannot get it back. Ontarians want strong communities and a stronger economy. Our goal is to determine where growth makes sense and what we need to do to protect and ensure a quality of life that is second to none. The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is the first step this government is taking to achieve that goal—and that's real, positive change.

I want to add my thanks to those of the minister to the members of the Greenbelt Task Force and to all those who have worked and participated in the greenbelt consultations. This not only reflects our government's commitment to public input; it adds priceless value to the decision-making process of this assembly.

I am proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of protecting a greenbelt and green space for Ontarians, because it improves the quality of life for all of us, and a high quality of life is what we were elected to deliver.

1620

After eight long years of increasing sprawl under the Tories, we are taking decisive steps toward making real,

positive change by introducing legislation that is the first step to permanent greenbelt protection. By containing sprawl and encouraging growth management, we will protect our environment and enhance our quality of life. Permanent greenbelt protection is one of the ways we can manage growth responsibly. Managing growth is critical to guiding important and positive development in Ontario. We have the opportunity with the proposed greenbelt legislation to do just that.

The lands on the outer edge of the Golden Horseshoe's developed areas are the most threatened, as I said earlier. Current population growth trends in the Golden Horseshoe point to strong, consistent growth. This trend is expected to continue into the future, from 7.5 million people in 2001 to an expected growth to 11 million people by 2031.

Ontario is a place where people want to be, and we welcome growth, but population and economic growth must be planned and managed responsibly. Growth provides more choice about where to live and where to work. It also generates investment, income, tax revenue for municipalities, innovation and higher property values. Poorly planned development, however, can result in increased air and water pollution and the loss of green space and agricultural land. Poorly planned development can encourage over-reliance on the private automobile, traffic congestion and inefficient infrastructure investment. It can also encourage sacrificing important agricultural land and Ontario's food supply.

The government must guide the future development of the Golden Horseshoe to ensure it stays a healthy and prosperous region, with growth that is managed wisely. We will not ignore this challenge. Our government is taking the critical steps to manage that growth and development in a responsible manner. It would be irresponsible for our government not to give careful consideration to the potential effects of sprawl without ensuring a plan is in place for carefully managed growth. But there are many factors that need to be examined. These factors are all interrelated and will require careful consideration before we can propose an approach to permanent greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe.

When discussing greenbelt protection, we must talk about permanent environmental protection. Ontarians understand, and we understand, that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Together they mean a high quality of life for all Ontarians. We must talk about the protection and sustainability of agricultural lands. Protecting particularly sensitive areas, such as the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands, and making them viable over the long term, must be an important consideration. Many of us have specific interests in the protection of culture, tourism and recreation opportunities in the region. These things must also be discussed. And last, but certainly not least, providing for infrastructure, transportation and the future resource needs of the region must be examined.

The greenbelt study area is a foundation for both our provincial and national economies. Our economy is vital

not only to Ontarians, but to Canada as a whole. We must be able to move through the Golden Horseshoe to ensure our economy stays healthy.

It is home to scores of significant natural heritage features such as wetlands and kettle lakes. These features are part of the habitats of rare, sensitive and threatened animals and plants. The government has the means—the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the Niagara Escarpment plan—to protect the environment in parts of the Golden Horseshoe. These plans are explicitly directed toward the protection and enhancement of these significant natural features. For example, the Oak Ridges moraine is an essential source of Ontario's drinking water. It provides a recharge zone for groundwater and its aquifers that provide clean drinking water for over 250,000 residents in central Ontario.

Source protection is a critical element of our government's comprehensive strategy to protect Ontario's drinking water, and our government is moving forward quickly to protect our sources of drinking water. But the Golden Horseshoe needs a coordinated approach. As the land in the Golden Horseshoe is identified as a region, any plan to protect it should be regional in scope. But how to achieve this is the question.

We could use the models provided by the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan or the Niagara Escarpment plan. These plans are based on natural heritage systems and compatible rural land uses. Such natural systems can provide the framework for developing legislation that protects and enhances the health, diversity, abundance and connectivity of natural heritage features and functions.

A water resource system-based framework could protect and, where necessary, improve or restore a clean and abundant water supply, and healthy, functioning aquifers. Environmental protection, outdoor education, recreational opportunities, tourism benefits, public access and natural heritage appreciation within the proposed greenbelt would all be achieved.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act will allow us the time we need to discuss all those issues. It will allow us the time to seek out and provide the balance we need. We must discuss how to manage a greenbelt in the future, for the generations of Ontarians to come. The Greenbelt Protection Act provides for a time out in the greenbelt area and in the Golden Horseshoe.

The bill also includes a moratorium. The proposed moratorium would stop new urban development on key rural and agricultural lands within the greenbelt study area. The moratorium is a time out that we need for discussion.

We need to talk about it. We need to go through the issues that all of us have, not only as Ontarians but as residents of the greenbelt area. So I am again very proud to speak in support of Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004.

Ms Churley: I want to acknowledge the graciousness of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, who

agreed to change the rotation a little bit, so I could—we cooperate from time to time—speak before them.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): You do.

Ms Churley: I do, I do, from time to time.

I have a lot to say about this bill, so I'll just get on with it. We made an agreement some time ago that we would get this through in a certain amount of time. We're sticking to that agreement, of course. Today is the final day of third reading debate.

I represented New Democrats on the committee and put forward a number of amendments which I very much hoped would be accepted, and they weren't. I'm sad to say that the Minister of Municipal Affairs—sorry, I got a note and got distracted here for a second—said earlier in his speech that this is an “extremely limited piece of legislation.” I wrote that down because I think that his explanation for what he meant by “extremely limited” legislation would be different from what I took from it. I think what he was trying to say is that this is just one small piece in bigger legislation that's going to come forward, bigger plans for preserving green space.

But how I took it fits right into the theme of what I have to say about this legislation, and that is that it's an extremely limited piece of legislation. It doesn't do what the minister and the parliamentary assistant and, I'm sure, other Liberals have been told the bill will actually do. It will not do it.

1630

I tried to point that out in committee. And it's not just me. The Conservatives are opposing the bill, and they're opposing it for a whole different set of reasons. They didn't support my amendments either, and I understood why they didn't, because they came at it from another perspective. The Liberals are trying to have it both ways. They're trying to be green and say, “We are trying to conserve and preserve, and this is a ground-breaking piece of legislation that does that.” But it doesn't.

I'm going to read some quotes from other experts, certainly people who have more expertise than I do about the problems with this bill and why, because the amendments were not accepted, this piece of legislation is simply not going to work. When I first heard that there was going to be a greenbelt—and to viewers out there and people who may read these remarks, I don't know if most people understand what “greenbelt” legislation means. It sounds fairly dry, but I would say to people that they should really take notice and pay attention to what's going on here, because there are a lot of pretty words said here today by the minister and Liberal members. It sounds really good unless you look into the implications of the omissions from this bill.

The minister, I think, made a point of singling me out—I was the member from the third party who was on the committee—and almost, I think, tried to make me look foolish by saying, “She actually proposed that we expand the greenbelt. We can't do that.” He made it sound as though that was a foolish thing to suggest. Well, I've got to say that when the government first introduced the greenbelt, I was quite enthusiastic about it. You

know, Mr Speaker, that I have been known to stand up and support, even with the previous government, the Conservatives—it was few and far between, but if government brings in good legislation, I will criticize the parts of it that I think need to be, but I will also applaud it if I think it's good legislation. I was prepared to do that with this, but it isn't good legislation. I tried my best to fix the holes, because it's like Swiss cheese right now, there are so many holes in it. But it didn't happen.

I was aware—we were all aware—of the government's green reputation that it tried to build when it was in opposition, especially around the Oak Ridges moraine. Mr Mike Colle made quite a fuss at the time about the government's position on the Oak Ridges moraine and fought very hard to urge and push the government to bring in legislation on that. In the election campaign, they promised that they would stop, halt in their tracks, the 6,000 new homes that the previous government was going to allow. Then after the election came one of the first, if not the first, significant broken promises by the new Liberal government. “Oh, we looked into it, our legal people,” as though they didn't have legal people—how many lawyers were in that party and still are? I don't think you're a lawyer, Mr Speaker—thank goodness, eh?—but there were lawyers in that party who should have known.

I can tell you, just as the Liberals knew there was a deficit but ignored it during the campaign for practical reasons, they knew that there were legal problems involved in stopping the building of those homes on the Oak Ridges moraine, but went ahead and made the promise, then couldn't deliver. They got into pretty deep trouble over that. At least there was enough guilt out of that, and the desire to show that they truly are green, that they came forward with a plan for greenbelt legislation. But what happened is a far cry from what we were promised.

There are a number of problems with the bill, which I will get into in a few minutes, but because the minister in particular pointed out some of the things I said about expanding it, because it's way too small, I think I'm going to read you some quotes from experts who came before the committee to tell us, the committee, and the government in particular, what was wrong and what they had to do fix the bill. And they didn't listen.

Here is a quote, and it's a fairly lengthy one. It encapsulates fairly well the nub of the problem with what we've referred to as leapfrog development, which I'll go into in a few minutes. Although there are many other problems associated with the gaps in this bill, I think the leapfrog aspect of development is one of the biggest problems, if not the biggest, with the bill.

Here's what Dr Rick Smith from Environmental Defence Canada had to say. First he talked about the significance if the greenbelt is done right. I'm going to start quoting. He says:

“Done poorly, this greenbelt has the potential to contribute to leapfrog development, a concept that is so well understood, it actually has a name. Why would we

repeat the problem that we know can occur with leapfrog development? Done poorly, the greenbelt could be carved up by roads and eaten away over time. It could be as stillborn and unsuccessful an initiative as the ill-fated parkway belt—a chunk of land that was supposed to be a greenbelt and regrettably is now known as the 407. They say the definition of insanity is repeating the same thing twice and expecting a different outcome the second time around. We certainly don't want to repeat the parkway belt experience, and we have some common-sense amendments to propose to you today to help the committee make sure that this greenbelt is done right.

“The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance members believe that in order to be successful, the greenbelt must be planned according to the following principles:

“We should think big and not small.” So it's not just me, Minister, saying that these amendments should have been made; I'm quoting the experts here now. “The greenbelt must link the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine and the Algonquin Park-Adirondack state park axis”—I'm having trouble reading here; I need my glasses—“as a unified natural heritage system. This protection plan has been discussed for years by scientists. It has come to be known as NOAH.” We heard a lot about NOAH. Those on the committee will remember this. It was completely ignored, but we heard about it. “Connecting these four existing protected areas will form the greenbelt's backbone and support steps to reverse the fragmentation of natural areas, the loss of biodiversity.... The last thing Ontario needs is another isolated island of green.”

He goes on to say, finally:

“The good news is that Ontario doesn't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to planning these sorts of ambitious corridors of protected habitats. It's being done in the Pacific northwest.... It's being done in Florida.... There are initiatives ongoing in Ontario that it would be a shame if this greenbelt didn't connect with. We have hard-working groups connecting with the MNR in eastern Ontario,” and he goes on to talk about all of these groups who are working there.

What Dr Smith is saying here is that the bill needed to be amended to make the belt bigger, the study area bigger, and to make all those connections; otherwise, it doesn't work. What he was saying is, if it's done poorly, which it is, then it could make things worse. And that's what happened. That's what the bill does, in essence, because of the potential—not potential; they're buying up the land in Simcoe right now. Highways are still going to be allowed to go ahead, right in the heart of the study area, the greenbelt area. What he is saying is that it could in fact create a worse problem than we have now.

I am going to read to you as well from another expert. I'm sure many people here are familiar with Dr Mark Winfield. He is now with the Pembina Institute. He came forward and talked at length about the problem of not taking off the table for the time being the whole series of 400-series highway extensions in the Golden Horseshoe region. He talks about the implications of that and the

problems with keeping the highways until we decide what it is we want to do in the greenbelt. I want to come back again to the leapfrogging and what he says about that. Dr Winfield says:

“Significant development pressures are also emerging in the areas immediately beyond the greenbelt study area to be established by Bill 27. These potential developments highlight the possibility for leapfrog low-density urbanization in response to the greenbelt initiative.” Listen to this quote carefully. That's why this is so important. He says: “Such development patterns would defeat the underlying purposes of the greenbelt initiative of containing urban sprawl in the region.”

I have just quoted two of the experts in this area, who did an enormous amount of work and know the history of what happens when we don't protect the land and make it a bigger area, but there were many more who came forward and told the government they needed to make amendments.

1640

I based most of my amendments on the advice we got from the experts who came forward to tell us that this bill would not work unless it was expanded and unless infrastructure and highways were included in the moratorium. The only amendment the government listened to at all, and the minister referred to it, was the Niagara Escarpment, because it was left out. I put forward an amendment—I've now brought forward a private member's bill to cover it—as well as the government, to include the Niagara Escarpment in the protection. But it only went half as far. Under the government's amendment, and I don't know if the minister is aware of this but I pointed it out in committee, it doesn't get the same protection as the Oak Ridges moraine gets from the previous government.

My amendment actually gave that full protection. The government went halfway there, but didn't give it—they said they were worried about lawsuits. That's the reason they didn't do it.

I wanted to tell you, Minister, why it was important that you should have instructed your members, because we know how committees work. They all sat there, and I think some of them were sympathetic to—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Not our members.

Ms Churley: Oh, yes. They all sat there and voted, one by one, against every amendment I made and could not give any reasonable explanations as to why they are opposing them.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: That's belittling them.

Ms Churley: Oh, the minister says they weren't told what to do. They would have, because—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Oh, they're getting antsy back there. If they really cared about it and if they really wanted to be able to go out and say, “We are bringing in comprehensive legislation that is actually going to protect green space and agricultural land,” they would have supported my amendments, the NDP amendments, or they would have brought them forward themselves. They didn't.

Let's talk about why this is important, because it is very important. In Toronto and many other parts of Ontario it is now the first smog day, not June 21, that marks the arrival of summer. We know that a large part of this smog is created by congested highways, the by-product of urban sprawl. We know that urban sprawl is gobbling up green space in southern Ontario at an unprecedented rate.

According to the Neptis Foundation, at the current rate an additional 260,000 acres of rural land will be urbanized by 2031, almost double the size of the city of Toronto. Try to imagine that. About 92% of the land is Ontario's best farmland. That's why this legislation is so important, and why I'm so angry that it is so inadequate. Sprawling patterns of growth unnecessarily destroy green space and farmland, pollute rivers, streams and other waterways and force us to continue to be overly dependent on motor vehicles, which in turn fuel air pollution and global climate change. What a vicious circle we are in here.

A few more facts about why we need stronger legislation here: The Golden Horseshoe area of Ontario is growing by more than 115,000 people a year. In 15 years, it will be the largest urban region in North America, behind only New York and Los Angeles. The greater Toronto area has approved or developed 128,000 acres since 1989, a rate of 9,100 acres per year. In comparison, the city of Portland, Oregon, set an urban growth boundary in 1980 and has consumed land at only 1,700 acres per year. So it can be done.

Passenger cars and trucks account for nearly half of personal greenhouse gas emissions, which lead to global climate change. Vehicles in Ontario contribute about 40% of the pollutants that cause smog.

The Ontario Medical Association estimates that 1,900 people die prematurely every year in Ontario because of air pollution. The Toronto Board of Trade estimates that gridlock costs the greater Toronto area \$2 billion per year in truck and delivery vehicle delays. So this isn't just about the environment and our health; it's about our economy too. By 2031 the hours of delay on a typical weekday experienced by auto drivers around the greater Toronto area are projected to rise—are you ready for this number?—by 300%. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has identified habitat loss as the leading reason for the rapid decline of species diversity in southern Ontario.

As I said, when the greenbelt proposal was first announced, because of all these issues and problems, we expressed some enthusiasm for it. But my enthusiasm has completely waned because the bill in its current form—obviously the Liberals have a majority, and they're going to pass it and pretend they're actually protecting green space here. The Liberals are proposing a greenbelt so full of holes that it more resembles Swiss cheese than a protected natural area.

The government purports the greenbelt act to be a cornerstone in its plan to prevent urban sprawl from usurping the Golden Horseshoe. The act institutes a year-

long pause on urban development in the region as the task force completes the plan that is supposed to establish a permanent greenbelt.

I presented to the general government committee a number of amendments that would have rectified many of the holes and problems in the bill so that it could actually achieve its purported purpose, but all the Liberal members rejected them—every single one of them.

I'm going to talk a bit about leapfrog. There are a few areas I'm going to touch on in particular in this, although there are many problems. As I said, the act in its current form is not only ineffectual in stopping urban sprawl, but it actually encourages it because it sets the stage, has set the stage already, in that this bill is before us. Again I'll refer to leapfrog development. The greenbelt area is too small in size. Developers can, and are, just hopping over the area to build on the fringes rather than concentrate construction of new units in existing settled areas. Construction of low-density housing will continue.

Simcoe is an area we talk most about, have heard most about and will continue to hear about when it comes to this leapfrog development. Because it's not included in this greenbelt moratorium, developers are already up there buying the land, planning to build. Another amendment that the Liberal members of the committee did not accept—the minister, I think, was somewhat trying to ridicule me earlier by saying, "She suggested that we put a moratorium on infrastructure and highway construction during this short moratorium." He said that's not necessary. Well, I'm saying to him and the Liberal government, the evidence is already there. We're repeating the same mistake over again if we allow this to happen.

You construct the roads, you build the infrastructure and the development comes. Once the infrastructure is there—you've got the big pipe in King City, which I'm going to get to in a few minutes. No matter what happens after—you may decide and talk about the other processes coming later—if you've got the big pipe, you've got the infrastructure and you've got the highways, what do you think is going to happen? It's going to get developed. It doesn't take rocket science to figure that out. That's what's going to happen, and it's happening already.

I want to quote Jane Jacobs in her essay "The Greening of the City," which was published recently—I don't know if anybody saw it—in the New York Times magazine about a month ago. It uses a great vegetable simile to describe the sprawl that continues to grow before us. She writes, "Look at them: monocultural housing tracts, erected on ever-larger scales, like so many endless fields of cabbage." That's Jane Jacobs—very expressive.

1650

I said in committee, and I'll say again now, that this was the acid test of the Liberal government's commitment to the greenbelt. This bill, in its current form, does not succeed in protecting against urban sprawl in some of Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas. Today is your last chance. We could have it go to committee of the whole and expand the scope of the study area to protect agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.

In the committee debate, the government members claimed that leapfrog development in bordering areas will be addressed in a growth management initiative being prepared by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. However, this separate plan, I can assure you—and I said why earlier—will be of little relevance and use, as developers are already buying up the land in the Simcoe area as we speak. I pointed that out in the committee as well.

My concerns were echoed, as I mentioned, by Dr Mark Winfield, Dr Smith and others. They wanted to expand it. There were 10 hot spots that were brought forward as problematic and that should be included. None of them was included. Every single recommendation made by experts who came in to tell us why the bill would not work without it was ignored.

The goals of establishing a viable greenbelt and promoting sustainable development in the region are also being undermined because infrastructure expansion is not subject to this development moratorium. Infrastructure planning needs to take its direction from the greenbelt plan, not vice versa, if sprawl is to be contained.

The minister is shaking his head. It's true; it's not just me saying this. The experts will tell you that. They came to the committee and told your members that. It's very clear; it's not like we're reinventing the wheel here. The evidence is all there, and you're just repeating the mistake. This is not going to work.

I mentioned the Niagara Escarpment, and I just want to mention again that I have a private member's bill before the House because my amendment was not accepted.

Also on the Niagara Escarpment—I've raised this several times in the House, and the government says they can do nothing about it: the first year-round town since the 1970s, when Niagara Escarpment protection was established under the then-Conservative government. Every successive government since has built on that. But this Liberal government is not doing anything to stop this year-round town, Castle Glen, from being built on the Niagara Escarpment. It's absurd. It's a beautiful area, and the minister could still step in and declare the provincial interest and stop it. But they've done nothing. I will continue to press to have my private member's bill on that passed.

The bill's failure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and prime agricultural areas from sprawl also points to the government's fleeting commitment to establish a real, viable greenbelt and to put into practice smart growth principles. It could have achieved its purported purpose in my amendment to expand the study area so that it matched the central Smart Growth area that was put in place under the Conservative government. In its current form, it does not offer much-needed protection to some of southern Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas. Development on these lands is already in the hopper, and you are completely missing the boat here.

There are a couple of other areas I want to go into. The big pipe: I mentioned it today in response to the

Minister of the Environment's bragging that she did in a press conference today on a white paper on continuing with source water protection. I just had a couple of minutes to respond today, but one of the things I talked to her about, Minister and Liberal members who are here and listening attentively—I say that sarcastically—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: We're listening.

Interjection: I'm listening, Marilyn.

Ms Churley: Oh, good, some of them are listening. Late last week—I got their attention then.

The big pipe: Do you know about the big pipe? It's a sewer works expansion project that's been around for a long time, which will connect King City to the York-Durham sewer system. It received a draft certificate of approval from the Ministry of the Environment, from your government.

Interjection: What's that got to do with the greenbelt?

Ms Churley: It lies on class 1 agricultural land on the moraine. That's what it has to do with the greenbelt. See, she didn't even know. That's what it's got to do with it. It lies on class 1 agricultural land on the moraine, at the headwaters of the Humber River.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: It's a pipe.

Ms Churley: Yes, and why do you think they're building the pipe? To allow more development. They don't get it. It's scary.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Yes, we get it.

Ms Churley: No, you don't. The majority of King City residents and councillors, in opposing the big pipe, fighting against it—they've been fighting against it for almost a decade. Most of the present councillors were elected on an anti-pipe platform.

This is going to get big. This is going to get really big. It's going to become your Oak Ridges moraine. The big pipe will flood Oak Ridges moraine with sprawl and threaten the environmentally sensitive headwaters of the Humber River. That's how it has something to do with source protection, which is why I raised it today.

Build the infrastructure and developers follow. Again, that's common knowledge. Therefore, we know what's going to happen. All those areas where you're going to allow infrastructure to be developed while you work out this plan, we now know, will be developed. These residents and councillors are very correct in their fear that this massive sewer expansion is being constructed for the purpose of inviting intense development into this natural heritage area.

The big pipe breaks the principle of protecting water at its source. Despite the minister's announcement today pertaining to source protection, a draft certificate of approval has been granted for a project that will impair the Humber watershed, a source of Toronto's drinking water. Development will threaten sensitive areas and "the 'King's Crown' natural heritage system, a conservation biology plan designed by local residents using the best available science."

You used to go after the previous government for not paying attention to the best available science. The best available science here is telling you that this is going to

be a problem, and you're not listening. Federal and provincial staff scientists all agree that if the YDSS service corridor is further extended to villages such as King City, base flows to rivers flowing into the city of Toronto will be further disrupted.

I'm going to quote Councillor Jane Underhill, because she deserves to be quoted for her fight against this pipe. I'm sure you're familiar with her; she has tirelessly fought against the extension since the idea was first proposed, for purposes of protecting the moraine and the environmental health of downstream populations. This is what she says: "While it has many local dimensions, the big-pipe fight also has regional environmental implications. Source waters will be damaged by the big pipe; instead, source waters could be protected through development of waste water treatment systems that keep the water in the Humber watershed. We need to respect source waters at source, rather than exporting them far and wide through big-pipe systems."

STORM, the Save the Oak Ridges Moraine coalition, explains this in detail. They talk about all the problems with building this big pipe: "Experts have confirmed that the waterworks will not beget significant improvements to drinking water quality."

But there is an opportunity to stop this. Let me tell you, there's going to be a huge public outcry and you're going to be forced to. So you might as well just do it now. And I will be part of that fight, I guarantee you. You will not hear the last of this one. Just like the Tories had to eventually back down on the Oak Ridges moraine, you're going to have to back down on this one, so why don't you just do it now? Save us a lot of time, money and trouble.

1700

Great Lakes United, a very respected body, an international coalition of Great Lakes groups—they're involved in trying to stop this big pipe. They've called on Premier Dalton McGuinty to honour his government's commitment to protect the Oak Ridges moraine by cancelling the certificates of approval for this. Then the Minister of the Environment, under the Ontario Water Resources Act, can intervene in the decision-making process or overrule this decision. So I'm asking again: Just do it. Get on with it.

Before I close, I want to talk about some other things that are happening here. There was a very interesting few moments in the committee hearings where I wasn't paying a whole lot of attention to this aspect of the bill that I'm going to outline to you now—and I'd listen carefully to this. This is a foreshadowing of things to come, I think I'll title it.

The Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve: I assume, Minister, you're well aware of what that is. That's the sensitive area within the belt itself that is at threat from development in the Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve in Pickering. Duffins Rouge is a 7,400-acre agricultural preserve that was promised 100% protection by the former and current Liberal provincial government. In 1999, farmers were granted agricultural easements with

the understanding that the lands would remain rural. The city of Pickering recently commissioned a growth management study, I understand paid for by the developers—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: You admit that? That's an interesting fact—calling for development in the Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve. I understand that there was a meeting last night and there's going to be a meeting next week to decide if the growth management study is accepted.

The threat to this agricultural preserve, in particular the possibility that the government will lift the protection it currently receives, was the topic of discussion at a recent edition of Studio 2 on TVO. Susanna Kelley from TVO—I must say, people have been paying a whole lot of attention to this issue. I know that Ms Kelley was, under the previous government, following very closely the Oak Ridges moraine and other development issues, and she's continuing her commitment to that. So you and your government are being watched on this, Minister. I'm very pleased that there is a journalist keeping a close eye so that these things are not going on behind closed doors in secret. You know they shouldn't be.

She, on TVO, recently talked a bit about what happened at committee. I was sitting there and I was kind of confused about an amendment that the Conservatives made. The Liberals were just, *carte blanche*, turning down—as was I—Conservative amendments. All of a sudden, Mr Wayne Arthurs, who's the MPP for the area—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: You can't name a member here.

Ms Churley: Sure I can. He's a member of the committee. He doesn't want me to name him. Why not?

He made an amendment to the amendment that the Tories made. I didn't catch on for a second. I'm wondering, "What's going on here?", but it's all straightened out now, thanks to some research.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Did the amendment pass?

Ms Churley: No, it didn't pass, but listen to this. This is what was said on TVO by Susanna Kelley. She said, "Well, there is something called the agricultural preserve land. A lot of it is owned by farmers, but there is a great deal of interest on the part of some developers and builders to build there. It was—there was a ministerial zoning order put on it by the Conservative government that it would be protected in perpetuity. But Mr Wayne Arthurs, the MPP for the area, is in favour of opening up that agricultural preserve, or parts of it, for development."

Hon Mr Gerretsen: He has been very consistent.

Ms Churley: Yes, he has been very consistent, and he continues to be consistent.

"So he has been fighting for this for quite a long time." Of course, he used to be mayor before he got elected here. The conversation went on to say that, "While he was mayor of Pickering"—Ms Kelley talked about the growth management study that was done for the city and paid for by developers and builders, and, as she said, surprise, surprise, it recommends opening up the agricultural preserve. Did you know that, Minister, that that's the recommendation?

The hearings will continue, the talks in the area, but Mr Arthurs, when he tried to move this amendment that would exempt it in the committee—I was taken by surprise. I didn't quite know what he was up to, but it turns out that he's still working—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Did the amendment pass?

Ms Churley: No. He was voted down—you're right—by the Liberal members on the committee. But it shows that he's still trying to do that.

Ms Kelley went on to say in this show that she was trying to get to the bottom of this too. She said she talked to the people in the Premier's office about this and said, "Are you aware that Mr Arthurs has been doing this?" Two of them said to her, "We don't want to talk to you." One said, "Go talk to Mr Gerretsen," the municipal affairs minister. Another said, "Go talk to our PR people." PR people?

Ms Kelley says, "I just want to know if you're aware that Mr Arthurs is doing this." A third one finally said to me, "Well, I'm not surprised." And when I said to him, "Can you give me a guarantee that you will, as you promised in your campaign, protect this land in perpetuity?" they said, "Well, it depends." And I said, "On what?" And they said, "Well, the Greenbelt Task Force recommends or what the—David Caplan's infrastructure initiative recommends later."

She says, "I also found out that in the Greenbelt Task Force, guess what's been sent to every member of the task force this week?" Mr Paikin says, "Tell us." She says, "The growth management plan done for the city of Pickering, and the developers and builders have been showing up as well at the public consultations on this."

This is quite revealing.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: The minister is chat-chat-chatting away over there. I think he's getting nervous because all of this has been revealed now, thanks to the research and investigative journalism by Ms Kelley from TVO.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want the member to know that I'm not nervous and I'm listening to every word she's saying.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Ms Churley: You might want to get up on this, because the other thing that Ms Kelley pointed out—she looked into Mr Arthurs's campaign contributions. You know how we used to go after the Conservatives for all the money they got from developers and then they come in here and try to get in bed with the developers? We found out that over a third of Mr Arthurs's campaign contributions were from developers or builders who have an interest in developing that preserve, including 23 contributions of \$1,000 each from numbered companies and companies related to one address at 27 Buggy Lane. Did you know about that, Minister—Buggy Lane? Everybody up there is familiar with that address. That's the golf course that's owned by one of the builders.

Mr Arthurs, according to Ms Kelley, was asked about this, and he said, "I don't see a conflict of interest here." I can only imagine that the former mayor received these

big campaign donations as the mayor was quite in favour—the developers and the builders did this study. We'll be watching this very closely.

In closing—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Are you voting for this bill or not?

Ms Churley: Well, I'm going to hold you in suspense on this because—we'll see; we're going to delay the vote, because I have to tell you quite honestly that I'm having a lot of trouble supporting this bill. I really am. The fact that a bill is coming forward that purports to improve the situation and is actually in some ways going to make it worse—it's pretty hard to support.

On the other hand, I know what the government will do if I don't: every chance, say, "Oh, Ms Churley, the great environmentalist, didn't support the greenbelt legislation." They're selling it out there as though it's this great piece of environmental legislation when in fact it isn't.

1710

It's like when Michael Prue in committee voted against—here is what happened—the retroactivity of the cancellation of the private school tax credit. He voted against it. You know, everybody here knows, we are against credits, taxpayers' money going to help people pay for private schools. We felt the money should go, and still do, into the public school system. Michael Prue, the member for Beaches-East York, on principle, in committee, voted against it simply because he didn't think the retroactivity piece of it was fair, and neither do I. But every time a member of the Liberal Party has an opportunity to go after us—because they are on the defensive all the time now—they throw out, without being fair—

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Who's being defensive now?

Ms Churley: Listen to them, Mr Speaker. They are running so scared, let me tell you.

They don't point out that what he was really voting against was the retroactivity.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Are you nervous, Marilyn?

Ms Churley: Well, I certainly don't want my own principles to be used against me.

In closing, it was—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: You believe in dinging people retroactively. You believe, these Liberals believe, in dinging people retroactively. That's what they passed, that's what they have said. They certainly did. They took some money away from people who, in good faith, paid this money. They don't care about these people.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Listen: "Yap, yap, yap, yap."

So, in closing, this is bad legislation. It does not achieve what it said it was going to do. The government refused to accept the amendments and don't even take it seriously. But they will be sorry, because this is going to come back to haunt them. The leapfrog development, the big pipe, the agricultural preserve, the highways, the

infrastructure that's allowed to be built: All these things are going to come back to haunt you. You are sitting pretty today, you think it sounds like you are doing a good thing, but just as the Oak Ridges moraine got the previous government, this is going to get you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): As we know, this proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is obviously proposing a permanent Golden Horseshoe greenbelt. We have been hearing during this afternoon's debate and previous debate that this bill, Bill 27, would create a greenbelt study area in the Golden Horseshoe area, including Oak Ridges, the Niagara Escarpment, the Niagara tender fruit lands, and would also establish a moratorium, temporarily preventing new urban uses in portions of that study area.

We should know that this is not enough for a number of groups in the province of Ontario, and it is seen by some, as was mentioned earlier, to be limited.

I will make mention of a much broader proposal by a newly formed greenbelt alliance and Earthroots. Earthroots, along with other members of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance—a fairly recent amalgamation, as I understand—is proposing the implementation of what they refer to as NOAH. NOAH refers to the Niagara Escarpment to the Oak Ridges moraine north to Algonquin Park and a much broader area also including and heading south across the border to the Adirondack State Park heritage system.

Earthroots contends that the GTA population is projected to increase to six million people by 2021, and they feel that we must act to ensure an environmentally and economically healthy future for this area. Having said that, I think we should all pause in this House to consider that figure: six million people by the year 2021; six million people living in what I consider a relatively small area in North America. Six million people—from my perspective, there is something inherently wrong with this picture. That is too many people. However, the projections are there. This government is taking a step to deal with what I consider quite a daunting population figure. Earthroots uses these kinds of population projections to underline the need to protect natural spaces by creating a very large greenbelt area through urban planning controls. The option they envision is that we will be facing a smoggy, traffic-congested megalopolis, sprawling from Lake Erie in my area to Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe.

I also want to mention another initiative I was involved in previously. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the merits of a very positive initiative that began in January 2000 with the creation of what is known as the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. The Great Lakes Heritage Coast was identified as a signature site by the previous government.

I know the parliamentary assistant for MNR is present, who will be forging ahead and perhaps carrying on the work of a former parliamentary assistant. Not only Ted Chudleigh, but I had a great deal of involvement with the Great Lakes Heritage Coast, a project that seemed

almost, I wouldn't say too broad, but too long in scope, stretching, as the parliamentary assistant would know, from the Pigeon River up on the Minnesota border, south of Thunder Bay, across the north shore of Lake Superior, continuing down Manitoulin Island, which was latterly added to the planning area for the coast, stretching down Georgian Bay to the Severn River. It's a project of the Ministry of Natural Resources, one of a number of signature sites.

Interjection.

Mr Barrett: I'm not arguing against that. I'm actually addressing much of my remarks to the good work done by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Great Lakes Heritage Coast is one of 10 signature sites, as I recall: the Nipigon Basin, a very broad area to the north of Thunder Bay, and having spent time on Lake Nipigon, I consider it in a sense one of the Great Lakes; the Kawartha Highlands, a signature site much further to the south, and many will know of some of the recent controversy around the Kawartha Highlands signature site; and there is an additional signature site that was announced latterly—that would be St Williams crown forest, which I am very proud to have been involved in. That actually is in my area, down on Lake Erie.

Progress to date with respect to the heritage coast: It was launched in January 2000, MNR established a director position and four staff were assigned to this project. Considerable work was done initially in marketing, with brochures, computer disks, posters and pens. There were some Group of Seven paintings that were reproduced, as I understand, and distributed very broadly from one end to the other.

Over the course of that project and up to the fall of 2003, the team responsible for this planning initiative, the heritage coast, prepared a strategy for the protection and sustainable use of the area. It was a document titled *Setting Sail*. It culminated three years of public input, interministerial direction, and of course MNR working with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and certainly working with the Ministry of Transportation—very important with respect to signage, for example, something that's very important when you're attempting to pull together a project like this, but also to try to communicate to people—tourists, for example—just what's going on. *Setting Sail* forms a blueprint for an initiative that I feel can result in not only a world-class tourist destination, but a natural heritage destination. It's said the coast would rival areas such as the Cape Breton highlands. It does really have the potential to put Ontario on the world stage as a place to visit and to take a look at Ontario's fresh water and, by and large, unspoiled coast. I say that having, in my younger days, travelled in over 50 countries, I suppose. The northern forest to me is equivalent to the Himalayas or equivalent to what I saw in the Amazon, for example. It's something. Many people don't get up there and we don't realize what we have when you look at it from a global perspective.

1720

A bit of bad news: The document was never released. The election came along. So we have a timing issue

there. The project has not been implemented and I look to the present parliamentary assistant, who knows the north very well and knows this project very well, to continue to serve as a champion for what is a very, very large planning project, not unlike what we're debating here today.

The goals of the greenbelt legislation, the goals of groups like Earthroots, for example, seem laudable. I guess when you look at southern Ontario, you've got a little different kettle of fish here compared to the heritage coast, where much of our work involved crown land. In the south we're dealing with private land, we're dealing with landowners—farmers, for example—the owners, the stewards of the land. Farmers, in my view—and this government would know this—cannot be ignored, farmers must not be ignored. The members of the province's Greenbelt Task Force are taking heed, and certainly must take heed, of the voices of farmers—voices that were heard recently at a public meeting in St Catharines. Most of those voices addressed the fact that the province has imposed a development freeze on the Golden Horseshoe during the study and throughout the various stages of this legislative process. They are worried.

They're worried the bill's implementation will hinder their rights, limit their rights, by freezing development on their lands, and their concern is that there is no indication of compensation. Farmers are concerned that the government is seen as protecting the environment. They're concerned that it may well have forgotten about protecting farming and protecting farmers.

Farmers already are in a situation where they see their present-day opportunities being threatened economically. I think that goes without saying, whether it's as a result of soaring energy prices, the beef border closure, poor growing conditions which continue yet again in much of Ontario with what has been a cold and certainly a very wet spring, and higher taxes. Again, this government, in a sense, has frozen their assets without compensation. What opportunity does that offer to farm families? The average age of a farmer is what I consider alarmingly high. How do we encourage the next generation to take a look at the family farm when farm debt is growing faster than growing crops or growing livestock? The issue in many quarters in the agricultural community is the perception of lack of adequate government support and, worse yet, the perception in some of the direction of this legislation, the spectre of government intrusion. How do we save farmers?

How do we keep them on an even keel without allowing them, with confidence, to plan on continuing to make a living by farming and, on retirement, to be able to have that guarantee that they can enjoy the financial fruit of their labour?

Agricultural lands are a valuable resource. They're privately owned, and the majority of generations of families have this perception. If younger members of the farm community see this perception under threat, they will have less desire to take over the business when they balance off some of the restrictions that are being

discussed in this legislation with the opportunities that they know have to be there for them to hang on to the farm.

The answer is not to put in place legislation that removes further opportunity for farmers. If the government does decide to tie the hands of farmers even further, surely there must be compensation, and regrettably I see no sign of that in this legislation.

I wish to quote the words of Dr Riina Bray, a physician, chair of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. They have an environmental health committee. She is quoted as stating, "Ensuring a well-protected ecosystem subsequently impacts on the physical, social and psychological well-being of our population, from the very young to the elderly, surely, if we are to expect our farmers to sacrifice land opportunities for these vital societal benefits, society must be expected to shoulder some of the economic burden."

For that reason, I join the OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, requesting—and I think the OFA is demanding—compensation for any loss of farmers' equity and, with that, demanding a clear statement from the minister, from the government, that the long-term viability of farm operations is ensured so that future generations would have confidence to stick with it.

It's in this context of essentially a government-private sector partnership that I wish to speak a minute or two and to highlight what I consider a very ambitious, farmer-driven conservation plan. It is taking shape in my riding, in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, as a pilot project. I know it's seriously being considered in Prince Edward Island. It originated in the province of Manitoba. The program goes by the moniker ALUS, which stands for Alternate Land Use Services. The ALUS program, headed up in my riding by our local Norfolk Land Stewardship Council, not only protects and enhances natural areas but also further encourages environmental partnership between rural and urban, a partnership that includes all stakeholders: government, of course; landowners—in this case, farmers; and conservationists.

The thinking behind this program holds that good stewardship of the environment is not only a personal responsibility; it's a public value. It is a value based on, in this case, payments to farmers for rendering ecological services that provide environmental benefit to society as a whole. Under this farmer-driven plan, a variety of performance incentives or reward options, if you will, are included: property tax credits, conservation agreements. These are all proposed to encourage farmers to develop and maintain these ecological services which would create markets for public resources like clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat. This also presents an opportunity to nurture the environmental ethic that is inherent within the agricultural community and also to communicate the good things that farmers are doing for the environment and our natural world in the province of Ontario.

The partnership that this program offers is voluntary; it's participatory. It's building on existing programs like the environmental farm plan, but it recognizes the distinct

nature, the contributions of many other conservation initiatives on our landscape. It further recognizes that while protecting existing ecological values of the landscape, it's vitally important also to reward those stewards of the land.

1730

Payments for ecological services would create markets, as I indicated, markets for public resources; many resources that currently exist on private land, and I think of wildlife habitats alone. Because no markets currently exist for public resources on private lands, farmers are essentially forced to maximize production, albeit on occasion government-subsidized, from private resources such as livestock, crops and the soil itself.

Under ALUS, the Alternate Land Use Services program, farmers in rural communities would benefit from a new source of income, obviously, and Canadians would diminish the need for further environmental legislation, somewhat similar to the kind we're discussing today. I've mentioned that farmers have to be considered when it comes to government land protection plans, and that's why I feel this ALUS program does have potential.

As I've said, this farmer-driven conservation concept was developed by farmers, initially in Manitoba, promoted by grassroots rural organizations, again in cooperation with governments, conservation groups, anyone who is really interested in planning and attempting to enhance a sustainable environment in our great province. The real winning part of this concept is that it's run by those who are most affected.

ALUS: Again, the plan is administered, controlled and directed through rural communities, through farm organizations, through institutions used by the farming community in their home area. This is the first time that all aspects of a major conservation program, including the wildlife habitat component, would be administered and delivered by farmers.

Further, ALUS is not restricted to conservation cover, wetland or wildlife. It's much broader in scope than many previous programs, the set-aside programs that have been developed in the past. It goes further than that. It has a goal to build on social and economic prosperity in rural Ontario while at the same time building on a healthier natural environment. Under these principles, it is innovative in the way that, to date, these programs have been developed in this province, by integrating environmental concerns—not only concerns, but opportunities—into the mainstream of farm communities.

There are benefits, there are advantages, and I'll list a few, of the ALUS program. It would reposition the agricultural role with respect to the environment from a reactive position—almost a circle-the-wagons position in some quarters—to something more proactive, developing a predictable revenue stream that would serve as yet another economic pillar for our farm communities.

ALUS is seen as reducing the occurrence and the need for financial crisis management, something all too common. Every several years a need arises—certainly since I've been a member of this Legislature—in the province of Ontario.

ALUS is seen as reducing government and public reliance on environmental regulations. It's seen as increasing farmer control of the emerging environmental agenda, as it targets private land. ALUS is seen as converting environmental risk to a business opportunity for farmers. It's seen as coordinating conservation initiatives at the farm gate and as building the business infrastructure, the capability to deliver these kinds of environmental or ecological services, on a profitable basis.

It's seen as addressing the financial imbalance with respect to the global marketplace. Certainly we cannot win the subsidy war in comparison to the United States or Europe. The ALUS concept, I will point out, has been checked out; it's fully accessible to our trading partners, the World Trade Organization.

ALUS has potential to provide a modicum of security for farmers who are considering retirement or succession of the farm to the next generation. As I mentioned earlier, it is felt there is a great deal of merit in this program to serve as common ground between rural and urban Ontario. Where Bill 27, as we're discussing, simply freezes development, ALUS is a program that offers the financial incentive for people to go out and plant trees; set aside marginal land and rather than grow corn, allow those cattails to come up in that corner of the field; and set aside habitat, something very important with respect to wildlife—all with government compensation paying, as I've indicated, for environmental benefits that accrue to all in Ontario, to the public at large. It's an example of what can be done to protect the environment while ensuring that farmers are not left behind, tied to land that may well lose its value due to restrictive government legislation.

This ALUS program, as I said, is happening right now in Norfolk county, down in my area. A proposed pilot project is there, down in the tobacco country, an area that needs a bit of direction from government at this point. It certainly needs some direction from our present provincial government.

With respect to this program, 37 different organizations have contributed their logo and 10 have shelled out \$45,000 for a survey, and I'm happy to say that MNR is continuing to fund the pilot project. I know \$20,000 was put forward by the previous government in 2003. It's the kind of farmer-driven program that should be considered for expansion. As we see this government ploughing ahead with restrictive legislation that seems to penalize farmers in some quarters, I just want to make the very important point that when government gets involved in this kind of legislation, you have to be cognizant of the fact that we're dealing with private land.

Since the introduction of Bill 27, farmers have worked hard to make their voices heard. However, we do have the perception that this is an urban-based government that sometimes has trouble hearing the voice of rural Ontario over the noise of the gridlock traffic within the Golden Horseshoe area.

I have much more that I could talk about. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, to name one organization, has

put a great deal of thought into this. I ask people to consider the very broad proposal put forward through NOAH.

Just to wrap up, I'm calling for a much more inclusive approach. We, on behalf of our children and grandchildren, should be very concerned at the spectre of six million people in this part of Ontario. I'm calling on this government to take a second look and maybe see the bigger picture beyond the Golden Horseshoe, beyond simple development freezes and the inherent leap-frogging that we see occurring, and will occur. Take a second look. Take a look at a broader, province-wide conservation and compensation program that will not only maintain a program but would enhance Ontario's natural legacy for centuries to come.

1740

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise on third reading of Bill 27. I know my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke also wants to comment.

First, I think the opposition parties' point is clear. We advocate a more comprehensive approach, as my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk talked about, a greater consultative approach, one that addresses the issues as a whole in the province, as opposed to the piecemeal approach that leaves a lot of questions unanswered that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has brought forward. I know there are promises of a growth management strategy from public infrastructure renewal shortly, but I've not heard an apt explanation and a simple explanation of why this particular area has been severed off, leaving so many questions unanswered.

Well, you know what? The reality is that this Bill 27 is nothing but a knee-jerk reaction to the spectacular flip-flop that Premier Dalton McGuinty did on the Oak Ridges moraine, a flip-flop of proportions that would make Greg Louganis proud. I think the minister probably remembers—he may have had nightmares for some time about it—that giant chipmunk that followed him around after Oak Ridges with the “I” word that I cannot repeat in the Legislature.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I've got a picture with the chipmunk.

Mr Hudak: He has a picture of the chipmunk, and I remember what that picture would have said, that “I” word that I cannot say but that rhymes with “pants on fire.” They were not happy, the giant chipmunk and his friends, about the Premier's spectacular flip-flop on the Oak Ridges moraine. Hence Bill 27, born in this Legislature without great thought for the policy implications.

The minister earlier on in his remarks said, “Well, it's a time out.” It's not a time out, sir, I say with all due respect—a time out perhaps in the sense that some planning amendments or some bylaws may be frozen at the municipal level, but markets continue. The housing market continues apace. The pressures have simply been moved elsewhere, and we brought evidence forward at committee and in this House about the significant spikes in land prices that are occurring across this province of Ontario, which make affordable housing a challenge. My

colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth talked about the leapfrog impact as well. Those pressures continue.

It certainly is no time out for farmers who face a loss of equity and significant encumbrances to their economic viability, and no time out for municipalities that seek to grow, that have pressures to improve their infrastructure, the services they offer to the local taxpayers, and the pressure that puts on their tax rates as a result. There is no time out for that.

Farmers for a second: I asked the minister today for a simple guarantee that the concerns of farmers would be addressed at this committee when it comes forward with its recommendations, that there would be funds behind it, some dollars to back it up and put money where the mouth of the committee and the minister is, and instead I received a juvenile retort, which I think shows unfortunate disdain for the concerns of farmers that have been brought forward in this debate. It was, frankly, beneath the dignity of the way the minister usually conducts himself in the Legislature.

Art Smith from the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association said, “It is not enough just to save the land; there must be compensation.... It must be remembered that farmers choose to farm, and while it is often a lifestyle choice, they must be able to make money doing so. If not, the banks will take over.”

Heather Konefat, director of planning and development for the town of Caledon, said that the model must acknowledge that in order to protect farmland, you also have to assist the farmer. Opportunities for secondary uses in agri-tourism on the farm must be provided for. This model must provide support for the farmer as well as protection of prime agricultural areas.

Amendments that this opposition brought forward to the committee were voted down one by one, by my observation, in what appeared to be a whipped vote from the government members on the committee, and farmers and municipalities are now still without answers to their very valid concerns.

Ray Duc, the chairman of the Grape Growers of Ontario, suggests that the key to preserving the land is to preserve the growers who are already keeping it green. He goes on to say that an injection of support will be required from both the provincial and federal governments—reasonable arguments made by Ray Duc of the grape growers and other commodity groups affected by the greenbelt legislation, and even those outside of the greenbelt that are worried about incursions into their areas. Yet seven months or so after this bill was introduced, not a single answer, nor even concern or a guarantee expressed by the minister today that the farmers' concerns will be remedied or at least seriously addressed.

Municipalities: The township of Brock, during the consultation, said: “For a municipality which has seen little sustained investment by the development community over the past few years, the potential value of development of these uses will be welcomed by council,” referring to projects that are already approved or in the

process of being approved: a gravel pit, a golf course and an office facility, just to name a few. Potentially one of those, through an amendment, may go forward, but the other two are definitely in jeopardy.

“The imposition,” Brock says, “of Bill 27 as it affects these applications will result in a potential loss of investment by the development community, loss of taxation revenue, particularly commercial assessment, thereby assisting to relieve the residential tax burden and loss of employment opportunities for residents, both during construction and once completed.” The township of King furthers those arguments.

The mayor of Lincoln, Bill Hodgson, passionately asked the committee to support farmers and municipalities that will now be constrained from their growth, from reaching their aspirations as a community.

Whitchurch-Stouffville had some very strong comments. They have said, “The specific fear that exists of the establishment of a firm urban boundary is it’s an arbitrary line.” There’s no physiographic nature. There’s no consistency in this line, other than borne out of politics consistent with their campaign promise that they tried to get out the door after being chased by the giant chipmunk—but the land areas that they have chosen are otherwise arbitrary.

“Because municipalities are so reliant on the property tax base to raise our revenues to fund local programs and services, we could be faced with spiralling tax increases.” Whitchurch-Stouffville goes on to say, “If rural areas are to be forever green for the benefit of the urban population to the south, they should be financially rewarded by the outlying communities.”

So if the greenbelt area is to be a jewel, a treasure—and hopefully it will become that at the end of the day—for the province as a whole, not simply those who happen to live in it, part of the cost should be born by the province as a whole to help these municipalities, to help continue their growth, whether it’s through the CRF or other measures. Yet still no answer or even genuine concern or a plan that have I heard brought forward from the government.

Third, they’ve slammed the brakes on important infrastructure investments. The mid-peninsula corridor stands out as one. The minister today in his remarks said, “These should be better addressed under other initiatives.” They’re asking us to have faith, to trust that eventually answers will come forward.

Well, far be it from me to say, but we don’t always trust what Dalton McGuinty and his cabinet ministers have to say. I think it’s a fair request from municipalities, farmers and businesses, that these answers should have come forward apace with this legislation, or beforehand. The cart is so far ahead of the horse it’s going to lap it.

So why did these answers come forward at the same time? I expect that the growth management strategy will try to address these issues at the same time. But you have had, Minister, six or seven months since you introduced this legislation—and still no answers for the farmers, municipalities, businesses, for those people depending on

the infrastructure investment. I think it’s fair that those answers come forward before you ask us to vote for third and final reading of this bill.

I know my colleague from Renfrew is looking forward to addressing this legislation, but in a nutshell, I think it’s irresponsible. It’s irresponsible of this government to bring this bill forward because of the harm that it’s causing without bringing forward a more comprehensive approach that answers the questions that I have earlier addressed for farmers, municipalities, small businesses and local taxpayers.

The minister said, “Well, we’re going to work with Simcoe to manage the growth,” in response to question period today. But if they had addressed this in a comprehensive manner, they could address that same question as they addressed those caught up in the greenbelt area. At the end of the day, this is a half measure, accomplishing little, but imposing significant hardship. It has delayed projects, businesses, jobs and infrastructure. It’s harming farmers and causing price spikes on available land.

I believe this is symptomatic of the leadership of Premier McGuinty: a wandering focus, an incomplete policy vision, paleness, baldness, weak-kneed, grasping, bumper-sticker sloganeering, rather than a well-thought-out vision of growth management in the province of Ontario. This pallid and incomplete growth management plan should be rejected by this Legislature.

1750

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity once again to speak to Bill 27.

Interjections.

Mr Yakabuski: Sorry about that.

One of the problems with this bill, and it has many of them, is that again—and we’ve seen it in so many pieces of legislation that this new government has brought in, whether it be the Oak Ridges moraine or the Adams mine—what we see here at work is the Big Brother syndrome: We know better.

We saw that in the budget, where the Premier has gotten up repeatedly and said, “We know that some of these measures are not popular, but we’re doing the right thing. We’re doing what’s best for you. We’re doing what’s best for the people of the province of Ontario.”

One of the problems the people have with that is that they would like to have some input into what is best for the people of Ontario, and Bill 27 is no exception. One of the things I’m most concerned about—again, I talk about the Big Brother syndrome—is the lack of respect for private property rights in this bill.

It would appear that the government has a great deal of concern—and rightfully so. I support them on that. We do need to protect our green space in the province of Ontario. But what they exhibit or purport to exhibit is a great deal of concern for farmland; they show little regard for farmers.

If you’re in a situation where you own farm property and you’ve decided you’re going to retain that—you

decided a couple years ago that you're going to farm for another five years and you're within the scope of this bill or the geographic area that it encompasses. You decided a few years back you're going to farm for a few more years because your children do not want to farm. They've moved on to other careers. You've watched your neighbours sell their land at very lucrative prices to people who are developing land in other ways and now you're shut out because the government is going to say, "No, you can't do that. We're going to be preserving that land. You can't sell that. The developers can't develop it, so you can't sell it. You can't make that capital gain on your investment in order to support your family and have a good retirement yourself."

That's one of the cruxes of the problems in the legislation. But again, I say it's all about the Big Brother syndrome, Adams mine, where they just went in and took the feet right out from the under the legal rights of people to have any kind of redress with regard to the government's decisions.

The big picture is, what is the next step? That's my biggest fear. The people in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke have a strong organization of 1,700 members called the Renfrew County Private Landowners Association. They're concerned about private property rights. They're concerned about governments who want to come in and tell them what to do on their property. Day in, day out, they're the best managers of the land that exists, but the government's going to come in and tell them how to manage their property. They resent that because this land has been in their families for generations, some of it the original lots that were given to their ancestors when they came to this country. They have a great deal of pride in the property, a great deal of pride in the land. This is where they started. This is what they were given as their first stake, and they consider it to be their real legacy in this country.

So when governments start coming in and telling them how they're going to conduct themselves on their own land, they feel very, very cheated, because they've been the marvellous stewards of that land for decades and centuries. Now the government says, "We know better than you do what to do with this land."

We see it in a number of other pieces of legislation that this government has brought in. I look at the Minister of Natural Resources and say, why did you not stand up and bring back that spring bear hunt? We're already having problems as a result of that failure to reinstitute the spring bear hunt. We're having animals being attacked by bears. We're having conflicts between humans and bears. I'm very hopeful that this year we don't have a bad berry crop, because if we do, we're going to have some serious issues with regard to bear-human conflicts.

Bill 27 is the typical approach of this government. Right from day one on October 2, they have taken the attitude that they've got all the answers, and the people really don't. The people really don't understand what's in their own best interests, so we the government are going to make all those decisions for you.

I tell you, that is not the right way to do it, but it permeates everything that they do. It goes right to their budget. The Premier promised no tax cuts. The Premier promised balanced budgets. The Premier promised a referendum, if he was going to raise taxes, but he's decided now that he knows better. The people don't. We're going to go ahead without it.

The Deputy Speaker: According to the motion passed earlier today, I'm to interrupt the proceedings now. Mr Gerretsen has moved third reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The appropriate paper has been filed by the chief government whip. The vote is deferred.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
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Phil McNeely, Carol Mitchell, John O'Toole,
Michael Prue, John Wilkinson
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vic Dhillon
Marilyn Churley, Vic Dhillon, Brad Duguid,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Deborah Matthews, Jerry J. Ouellette,
Shafiq Qadri, Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Elizabeth Witmer
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Andrea Horwath
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Michael Gravelle,
Andrea Horwath, David Oraziotti, Ernie Parsons,
Laurie Scott, Monique M. Smith,
Joseph N. Tascona, Elizabeth Witmer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Justice Policy / Justice

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bob Delaney
Michael A. Brown, Jim Brownell, Bob Delaney,
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Peter Kormos, David Oraziotti, Mario G. Racco
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
Donna H. Cansfield, Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney,
Ernie Hardeman, Linda Jeffrey, Rosario Marchese,
Norm Miller, Mario G. Racco, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Public accounts / Comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Vacant
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Bill Mauro, Julia Munro, Richard Patten,
Liz Sandals, Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Marilyn Churley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tony C. Wong
Gilles Bisson, Marilyn Churley, Jeff Leal,
Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch, Tim Peterson,
Khalil Ramal, Maria Van Bommel, Tony C. Wong
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Social Policy / Politique sociale

Chair / Président: Jeff Leal
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Khalil Ramal
Ted Arnott, Ted Chudleigh, Kim Craitor,
Peter Fonseca, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese,
Ted McMeekin, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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