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Mercredi 30 mai 2007

**Standing committee on
estimates**

Ministry of Public
Infrastructure Renewal

Ministry of Citizenship
and Immigration

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère du Renouvellement
de l'infrastructure publique

Ministère des Affaires civiques
et de l'Immigration

Chair: Tim Hudak
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 30 May 2007

Mercredi 30 mai 2007

The committee met at 1624 in room 228.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Garfield Dunlop): Thank you very much, everyone. We'll call the meeting to order. We have apparently nine minutes for each caucus to finish up with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, thank you for being here again, and to all the members of your staff.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Great, Chair; thank you. I just wanted a clarification. I've been to the estimates committee twice before, and I was afforded an opportunity to give closing remarks. Is that still the case?

The Vice-Chair: Yes; you'll get the last nine minutes.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: No—

The Vice-Chair: You'll get the government's last nine minutes. That's what we have right now. In the beginning you had—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm just curious, because on the previous occasions when I've been at the estimates committee, I think it was half an hour for closing remarks that I was granted on those two occasions.

The Vice-Chair: I think you had those closing remarks at the beginning.

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair: You started with the first 30 minutes. The official opposition had 30 minutes. The third party had 30 minutes. Then you had an additional 30 minutes, which was your response.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Correct; yes.

The Vice-Chair: Then we went to rotations for the remaining time. That's how we're finishing up today. We've only got nine minutes.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Okay. I guess my recollection is unclear, because I recalled on the previous occasions that—

The Vice-Chair: It's standing order 65 that indicates that.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The clerk is certainly very capable, so I certainly believe it. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Hudak, we'll start with you. Do you have a question?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Thank you, Chair. The minister may be aware, he may have been briefed on an article on the front page of the Niagara Falls Review today that says, "It's Post Time: a \$300-million Facelift for Race Track in the Works, but Town Says Province Has to Act Right Now." This is following from our discussion yesterday.

Mayor Doug Martin said, "Obviously, the track is suffering. The owner is willing to invest a significant amount of money here"—which is \$300 million. "He has two choices—go high or go home."

Mayor Martin continues to say, "The province needs to come to the table. If they don't and he goes home, we all lose."

There's a great fear, Minister, that Fort Erie Race Track will close if the province doesn't come to the table. Is the minister willing to entertain proposals by the owner and send that signal quickly to the town of Fort Erie and the investors?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I believe, as I indicated yesterday, that I guess about three or four weeks ago Mayor Martin and members of council, certainly members of the Fort Erie staff as well as other interested folks, the good folks from Fort Erie, brought along, shared, a very high-level overview of the proposal. I certainly expressed the interest of the province of Ontario in ensuring the viability of racing at Fort Erie. I do note that there have not been municipal approvals yet granted for the particular proposal that has been made.

I can tell you that it's my understanding that the track owners have begun discussions with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. That was undertaken immediately following the meeting. I know that no decisions have been made because they're sharing the business plan and the various elements of their particular proposal, but I do look forward to it coming forward toward a decision, and also to the municipality indicating, through its various approvals stages, the necessary zonings, the necessary municipal approvals to make things happen.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the minister's undertaking, because this is an establishment, as he knows, that has been around since 1897, a major employer in the town, with significant spinoffs in the agricultural community. It would be an awful shame to see it close, and I appreciate the minister's interest in seeing it sustained.

My last question for the minister, and then I will switch to my colleague: The Ontario wine industry has

not seen its sales hit the targets in the Ontario wine strategy. There are two issues to address, one of which is taxation; the other one is market access. Concentrating on market access, is the minister contemplating or open to new retail channels for Ontario VQA wines outside of the LCBO?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: There have been some proposals. Certainly the member from Fort Erie is well aware the member from Niagara Falls has also made some proposals. I don't believe that there are contemplated any changes to additional retail streams outside of not only the LCBO but, the member is well aware, individual wineries do hold licences to be able to sell Ontario wines through other retail chains. I'm not sure—how many licences are there? Do we know, Deputy?

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I don't mean to belabour the point—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: So I don't believe that there is any contemplation of growing additional retail chains at this particular time.

1630

Mr. Hudak: I thank the minister.

Now, with your indulgence, Chair, I'm going to allow my colleague the handsome and talented member from Simcoe to ask questions, if the Chair will allow it.

The Chair (Mr. Tim Hudak): Go ahead, Mr. Dunlop.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have a statement I'd like to put on the record, very similar to what the member from Huron-Bruce did just yesterday when she made a statement to the minister. There are two areas I'd like to comment on, both affecting my riding and the citizens of Simcoe county. Those areas of concern are the closure of the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia and the future use of those lands and, if any time permits, the need for substantial infrastructure investment in the county of Simcoe as a result of the greenbelt legislation that was passed by this government.

Minister Papatello made a decision—I consider it a bad decision—on September 9, 2004, when she decided to announce a closure date of March 2009 for the three remaining regional centres in our province. That decision will ultimately remove 700 well-paying jobs and a \$30-million payroll from the city of Orillia and the area. As well, the only remaining safety net for some of the most vulnerable people in our society is being removed, in what I consider to be a mean-spirited and cruel manner. Staff at the regional centres are sworn to complete secrecy, and family members have been treated with disrespect because they want what was promised: group home facilities with equal to or better services than those available at the regional centres. Those facilities simply do not exist in Ontario, and nothing is planned at this time.

The question in Simcoe North is, how is the government of Ontario about to compensate the city of Orillia for the negative impact of this closure? The answer lies

in the future use of the lands that the HRC sits on. They are zoned as institutional.

A number of ministers in the McGuinty government have dodged this for the past three years, and it is a serious issue. Minister Bentley won't even make a comment. As he said in estimates last spring, it's not his problem. Minister Meilleur, as the lead minister, has said that she will come up with a plan, which she also said in estimates last year. Again, we have no plan. Now we are told that it is in the hands of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Ontario Realty Corp.

Let me give the minister some thoughts of my own on this particular issue, because it is very serious to our region. Lakehead University—it's a dynamic university—has a satellite campus in Orillia. It has been very successful. They need a permanent site. Part of the HRC lands would be absolutely perfect for this site, a perfect setting for this exciting new adventure in our community.

Georgian College, one of the most dynamic community colleges in the province, would like to expand their Orillia campus. Across the road sit the HRC lands. It's perfect for an expansion. Georgian College has little room for expanded programs left on their Barrie campus.

The OPP general headquarters sits across the road as well. My personal dream and goal is for the site to be a centre of excellence for policing in our country, complete with marine unit training and a satellite campus for the Ontario Police College. Again, the HRC lands would be perfect for this site as well.

Also, a centre of excellence for the training and education of those working with severely mentally and physically challenged individuals: This could be housed on the 13 acres that house the remaining 300 individuals who make the Huronia Regional Centre their home.

How about an environmental education centre, as proposed by the Twin Lakes Conservation Club, at the Coral Cove Camp—also a part of the 300-plus acres that make up the Huronia Regional Centre lands.

As I have said, these lands are institutional. There is plenty of room on the lands for all of the organizations that I have mentioned in my previous comments. It is time, I believe, for the McGuinty government to compensate Orillia and area. We don't need waterfront condos on this site; we need permanent jobs, like the ones that are being removed with the closure of the HRC.

As the MPP for Simcoe North, I ask the minister and the Premier to do what is right for this region: Give fair compensation to the city of Orillia and area by arranging the sale and purchase or long-term lease of these lands at little or no cost to these agencies. The city of Orillia and the surrounding communities deserve no less.

Mr. Chair, I understand that I have very little time left?

The Chair: You're about out of time.

Mr. Dunlop: Okay. Well, I would have liked to talk about the greenbelt legislation as well, but that will be for another day. I do appreciate being able to put this statement on the record. I wanted to draw it to the attention of the minister today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dunlop. That does—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I don't have time for a response, other than to say that there was much factually incorrect information—

The Chair: Minister. No, Minister—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: —and simply opinion that the member had that I—

The Chair: Cut off the minister's microphone.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: —disagree with considerably.

The Chair: If members ask the minister or staff questions, we'll have them respond; if members weren't intending to ask a question, then they don't need a response.

We now have nine minutes for the third party. Mr. Tabuns, the floor is yours.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Minister, today the CBC reported that high levels of lead were found in tap water at Queen's Park and we will all be sent a notice in writing. Notices are supposed to be posted in washrooms so that visitors don't accidentally drink the water. Can you tell me whether your ministry is going to take action on the lead-in-water problem here at Queen's Park?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Well, I can't provide you any specific direction, because the Legislative Building itself falls under the purview of the Speaker. There was a transfer of responsibility from the Ontario Realty Corp. to the Speaker and the Clerk of the Legislature, and that's overseen by the Board of Internal Economy. I assume that members of the board and the authority of the Speaker and those folks—but of course we will co-operate in any way that we can with the Speaker and with the Clerk in dealing with this matter.

Mr. Tabuns: Are you considering helping municipalities that have to deal with large numbers of lead service lines going to homes? Are you considering financial support for them in clearing out the lead that is currently going into residences?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Well, I think it's fair to say that this is something which has emerged in the past very short while. Municipalities themselves have not identified the extent of the problem, nor the particulars of what the financial cost would be. That being said, I think the approach that we've taken as a government so far would indicate that we are willing to work with our municipal partners. Once we can identify what the problem is, we can work with them on potential solutions to expedite their implementation.

Mr. Tabuns: What have you spent on roads and road infrastructure over the past four budgets?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The way we group it together in the ReNew Ontario plan, I believe—and I stand to be corrected by my officials—on northern Ontario highways, approximately \$1.8 billion; southern Ontario highways, through the Ontario highway strategy, was some, I believe, \$3.4 billion. I can tell you as well, other programs that we have—for example, COMRIF, the rural infrastructure investment initiative and others—had components of road repair, as well as the connecting links

program that was run through MTO, and there were a number of other ones. But those are generally the highlight numbers that we do identify on investment through the new plan.

Mr. Tabuns: What have you allocated for transit over the same period?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: What have we allocated for transit? ADM Hughes is here—

Mr. Bill Hughes: I don't have the numbers for the last four budgets, but I can give you 2006-07 and 2007-08. I have those numbers handy. For highways, \$1.4 billion for 2006-07; and for 2007-08, \$1.7 billion. You'll have to give me a minute—

Mr. Tabuns: Those numbers are for roads or transit?

Mr. Hughes: Those numbers are for roads. For transit, the number for 2006-07 was \$1.7 billion; and the number for 2007-08, from memory, is \$991 million.

Mr. Tabuns: Can you give us the numbers for the previous two budgets?

Mr. Hughes: I don't have those with me.

Mr. Tabuns: Can they be provided to us?

Mr. Hughes: Yes, they can.

Mr. Tabuns: Have you done projections on transit demand in the greater Golden Horseshoe over the next five years?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I don't believe that would come through the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal; rather, the Ministry of Transportation would do the individual due diligence on car volumes on roads or transit volumes in the transit system, and they would provide the baseline information.

Mr. Hughes: If I could just add to that, Minister, one of the reasons the government established the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority was to do exactly that kind of work. I know one of the things they will be thinking about in the next short while is exactly what the demand for transit will be, not only over the next five years but over a longer period of time. I'm not sure what their horizon is, but I would expect that it would be at least 15 to 20 years.

Mr. Tabuns: Okay. The response I received the other day from—sorry. Ms. Layton, when you spoke about the cost of adapting to climate change, you said the fiscal plan didn't accommodate climate change initiatives. Those are roughly the words that you used. Have initiatives been costed?

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Ms. Carol Layton: Just on climate change, I think I spoke about a bunch of different things on climate change. For example, I made the comment that there are some initiatives already funded that do address the long-term thinking that you need to address climate change, like for example the significant flood plain land form—that berm that I talked about—that's going to be able to sustain multiple hurricanes as opposed to just the one Hurricane Hazel sort of thing.

A few other points just on that: The fiscal plan goes for the fiscal year and looks out the next two years. We do infrastructure planning, though, over a five-year

horizon. We are certainly looking at—obviously, it's a very complex area; it's an emerging field—the full scope of what we have to do to address sustainable infrastructure requirements over the next two and a half decades. So that's long-range planning that certainly extends beyond the fiscal framework that we're working within today. We have to look to the long term. This is two and a half decades-plus of work that we have to do.

Mr. Tabuns: So within that, you're already doing the costing on climate change adaptation?

Ms. Layton: Within that, we are. We have a small team, actually, in the infrastructure policy and planning division that is exactly looking at that. They're working with the conference board, which has done some good work in that area as well. MTO, for example, is one ministry, though, that certainly has done, in the context of road construction, some scientific study as well. We are using the environment folks multi-ministry, as well as through the leadership of our asset management team that we have. We are certainly spending a fair amount of time thinking through the long-term planning framework to be able to address climate change and what it means to bridges, roads, storm water systems. It's endless, where it goes.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: But I think it's fair to say, Mr. Tabuns, that this is a very young area of scientific interest and also understanding. There is not a great deal of data internationally to be able to look at that we could apply here in Ontario. We're working with colleagues—I guess from around the world—who are also looking at these kinds of challenges that all jurisdictions are facing, and with our small team we have done a lot so far, but much more remains to be done.

Mr. Tabuns: But do you have a cost projection at this point, a preliminary cost projection of the impact of adaptation?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I have not seen any cost projection of that nature.

Mr. Tabuns: Are you planning to produce one?

Ms. Layton: Absolutely. You have to do the cost projections. You have to look to other jurisdictions, to the benchmarking type of work that they look at. It's fairly detailed work that you have to do, but you have to appreciate that you have to use various sources, assumptions and all of that—because it is very much based on assumptions as well—to figure out what that means. So, for example, in the context of should we ever go down the road of LEED being a standard consistently in, say, hospitals and onwards, that's absolutely the sort of thing you have to do, because those are 25-year, 30-year funding commitments. That is the work that we do.

Mr. Tabuns: Do you have a sense of when you will be able to tell this government the projected costs of adaptation?

Ms. Layton: It's in the context of 2008-09, the results-based planning process, that we're certainly going to be giving guidance to ministries to start that work and support us. I think we will begin to know that as time progresses, but I can't say that we'll have that in the next

two months; I think that work is going to take a bit of time.

Mr. Tabuns: So your target, then, for producing those projections is by the next budget year?

Ms. Layton: It's certainly to begin the process of having those projections as we head into the next fiscal cycle.

The Chair: Mr. Tabuns, that does conclude your nine minutes. Thank you very much.

To the government side, Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Chair, I'm wondering if the minister would have any closing comments.

The Chair: I'd be shocked.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I do. I have rather more than nine minutes' worth, but I'm sure, Mr. Chair, you'll indicate to me when the nine minutes are complete.

The Chair: You will get the signal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Thank you. Well, first of all, I want to thank the committee and all the members for giving me the opportunity to appear before you.

I think it's important to have a context. Years of neglect by past governments of all political stripes have left the essential infrastructures of our province in a less-than-desirable state. I and my Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal have been tasked with finding ways of meeting those challenges, and I believe that we are doing a great job. The proof is most visible in the cranes that dot the sky, the shovels which have gone into the ground.

The primary vehicle for doing the work that needs to get done is through ReNew Ontario. We established the ReNew initiative in 2005 as a means by which we're going to tackle and reduce the infrastructure deficit that threatens the economic security, indeed the quality of life, that all Ontarians count on. With our partners, we are investing more than \$30 billion in renewing and revitalizing the province's infrastructure. I believe this amounts to nothing less than one of the largest investments of its kind in more than a generation. Equally important, it's the first long-term comprehensive infrastructure plan developed by the province. I think it's a clear contrast to the year-to-year ad hoc infrastructure investments that were previously pursued by past governments.

There are many highlights. Investments in ReNew cover the health care sector: I highlight in particular—I see our colleague from Ottawa—Vanier—the Montfort Hospital in Ottawa. It was originally slated for closure by the previous government. Construction began in June of last year and will be completed in 2009. North Bay Regional Health Centre: a project that, despite being in a riding held by a former Premier, languished on the books for decades. The redevelopment project began a couple of months ago. It's the same story in Sudbury, the same story here in the city of Toronto at Sunnybrook, in Belleville at Quinte Health Care, where construction began in March. I could go on and on, but I suspect you get the idea. Past governments were content to make phony photo opportunities, phony groundbreaking,

phony oversized cheque presentations. The McGuinty government is all about getting shovels in the ground and cranes in the air, and providing better access to high-quality health services close to home for all residents in the province of Ontario.

The financing strategy—we call it AFP, or alternative financing and procurement. It's a departure from the P3 approach of both the previous New Democratic and Progressive Conservative governments. It's based upon the Building a Better Tomorrow framework, which I've had a chance to talk to at some great length at this committee.

The crown agency we established, Infrastructure Ontario, has done an incredible job executing the larger construction projects. They are using AFP to do so. They have conducted value-for-money analysis of these projects, and the results are impressive. I want to give you just two examples. I had mentioned earlier the Montfort project in Ottawa—a savings of \$19 million over traditional financing methods; and in North Bay, a savings of \$56.7 million.

Education is another highlight for our government. Only a few years ago, Ontario students were sitting in schools with leaking roofs, inefficient heating systems and outdated equipment. Worse, I think they were caught in perpetual crossfire in a war that the previous government waged against teachers. Under ReNew Ontario, we're investing more than \$10 billion over five years to renew and expand schools and post-secondary institutions; a \$4-billion Good Places to Learn fund; across-province assessment of almost 6,800 individual school projects—breathtaking in its size and scope—helping school boards deal with the backlog of repairs to existing buildings and to construct new schools where needed. Thousands of projects have been completed or will be completed.

There's more, though: at the college and university level, an investment of more than \$1 billion to provide access to opportunity. In a very tough and competitive world, post-secondary education is indeed the key. So we're investing \$600 million to expand university graduate school spaces by 14,000 by 2009-10, and to increase medical school spaces by 15%, and an additional \$540 million is being used to renew university and college facilities and to buy new equipment at colleges.

Roads and bridges: We faced traffic gridlock and congestion on our roads, threatening the very economic prosperity and quality of life in the province of Ontario. Border delays alone were costing the provincial economy more than \$5 billion per year, according to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Public transit systems were inadequate for the growing population. So under ReNew Ontario, we've set about to change that course. We've committed more than \$11.4 billion in transportation infrastructure initiatives. Our goal is to develop an integrated public transit system composed of well-maintained provincial highways, local roads and bridges, public transit and our number one priority: efficient border gateways.

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There is much more. I wanted to just touch briefly on growth planning because, just shy of a year ago, we released our first growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. One of the members asked a question about what's next. More recently, my colleagues the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Rick Bartolucci, and Natural Resources, David Ramsay, announced that northern Ontario would be the next region for which we will be implementing a growth plan.

The one for the greater Golden Horseshoe was the product of an unprecedented level of engagement with stakeholders, planners and municipalities. Over the next 25 years, almost four million more people are going to be calling our province home, living in the greater Golden Horseshoe. I'm not going to go into too many details, but here are the key points of the plan:

The plan establishes a number of planning and design standards to ensure that our communities grow in a more complete and liveable form, while making the most efficient use of available land and infrastructure. It requires municipalities to plan for complete mixed-use communities with jobs, shopping, services, located where people live and also opportunities for recreation and play.

One of the key policies of the growth plan is a minimum target for intensification. That means that now there is a new minimum requirement for municipalities to accommodate at least 40% of new residential development within already-built-up areas by 2015. For the first time ever in Ontario—and this is, in many ways, the most significant part of the plan—we've coordinated growth forecasts for both population and employment for the 21 counties and regions in the GGH.

The environment: We're incredibly proud of the work to support Minister Gerretsen and the establishment of a 1.8-million-acre greenbelt. But our ministry too has recently transferred 10 significant green spaces from Pickering to Hamilton, all the way south to Essex county, protected 2,000 acres of ecologically sensitive land in Rouge Park and the new Bob Hunter Memorial Park, 650 acres of land in Oakville, and we're using 180 acres of natural heritage land to create Hamilton's newest conservation area, Eramosa Park.

Of course, many of you are well aware of the west Don lands initiative in the Toronto waterfront revitalization initiative.

I wanted to chat about the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., because the Ombudsman was very clear, and very helpful in pointing out that things should be done at OLG to ensure a change of culture occurs. I have, to the very best of my abilities, given very clear direction to the OLG to do those very things. I've been equally clear in directing the OLG to fully co-operate with the OPP and the review they have undertaken. At the same time, I've been unequivocal in directing the OLG to implement the recommendations made by an independent consultant, KPMG. So we are doing everything necessary to maintain the trust of Ontarians in one of their public institutions—a trust, I understand, that has been shaken.

As the Ombudsman noted, the inside-win problem within the lottery system had been going on since 1993, and continued to go on to 2001 and beyond. Our government was not in power in 1993, nor in 2001. Indeed, some of my colleagues around this cabinet table had the opportunity to do something when they were in government in 1993 and 2001 but, as the Ombudsman noted, clearly chose to do nothing. This government chooses a very different approach. When we learned of the situation in which wrong had been done, we responded immediately and decisively.

Mr. Chair, and ladies and gentlemen of the committee, I want to thank you once again for giving me and our ministry the opportunity to appear before you on this, our third time at the estimates committee. As I said, a hallmark of our government has been accountability and transparency. I do feel that this committee has done an excellent job in holding us to that standard. Mr. Chair, I want to thank you for your patience with us, and, with that—do I have any time left?

The Chair: No, you're actually over.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: No? I'm going to conclude my closing statements. So, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you so much. I have truly enjoyed my time with the committee.

The Chair: Outstanding. Minister, I wanted to thank you, Deputy Layton, those civil servants from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal—I know ADM Hughes, ADM Graham and ADM Barretto had taken the time to brief us. Thank you very much. It's good seeing you again. We do, before the minister goes, need to proceed with the dramatic votes.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm hoping the committee will see fit to approve our estimates.

The Chair: I don't want to pre-judge the committee's vote.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I don't presume anything.

The Chair: We need to do vote item 4001. Shall vote 4001 carry? Carried.

Shall the estimates of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal carry? Carried.

Shall I report the estimates of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal to the House? Carried.

We have now concluded the estimates of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

The minister asked a question a bit earlier in terms of the 30 minutes at the end. What sometimes happens is government members stack their time at the back; you need the unanimous consent of all committee members to do so. That's why last time you had the 30-minute conclusion. That wasn't followed this time. That's why you only had the nine minutes at the end. So it depends on how the committee members approach the estimates.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Mr. Chair, I just want to understand the votes that you just took. Am I to understand that this committee unanimously approved the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal's estimates? Is that correct?

The Chair: I'll leave it that it was carried.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I believe it was unanimously carried, so clearly the committee members were impressed with the staff here.

The Chair: There was a lot of noise, but I will say that the estimates were carried.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): On a point of order, Mr. Chair: Just for my own edification, we were laughing about the minister's point, but it was a unanimous vote, wasn't it? I want to ask the clerk for an interpretation on that.

The Chair: No. We know it was carried. There was no recorded vote, so I can't say whether it was unanimous or not.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: There weren't any nays, though, were there?

The Chair: The estimates were carried. There wasn't a recorded vote.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I believe it was unanimous, though. Is it possible to have the clerk—

The Chair: Listen, I won't belabour this point. The estimates were carried. There was no recorded vote requested.

Mr. Zimmer: I heard no nays.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I heard no nays, either. Is it possible to have the clerk provide us with a clarification?

The Chair: I am the Chair of the committee and I have answered your questions. You can ask me for the sixth time if you want to.

Mr. Zimmer: I do respect your role as the Chair of the committee, but notwithstanding that, you still have to rule in accordance with the accepted practices and procedures and rules.

The Chair: As I am, Mr. Zimmer, thank you very much. The estimates of the ministry were carried. There was no recorded vote, and I'm ruling in accordance with the rules.

Mr. Zimmer: So that's a unanimous, then, is it?

The Chair: Why don't you ask me for the eighth time? Listen, I've ruled. The estimates were carried. There was no recorded vote.

Mr. Zimmer: With all due respect, Chair, what's the avenue to appeal that ruling of yours?

The Chair: I guess you can appeal to the Speaker. Go ahead and appeal to the Speaker as to whether it was a unanimous vote, if such a thing exists. If members want a recorded vote, they simply ask for one before a vote takes place.

Mr. Zimmer: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to reopen the vote on this and ask for a recorded vote.

The Chair: I've never heard of the vote having passed and then to have a revote in committee, nor do I believe that that is possible by unanimous consent. If you have a problem with my ruling, go ahead and challenge it with the Speaker in both respects. I think it is rather unprecedented to consider doing a revote on something like one estimates vote item.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I was just seeking clarification because I was trying to understand the committee pro-

cedure and what the vote actually meant. I believe if there was any negative, you would ask for yeas and nays and then move ahead. Since there were no nays indicated simply on a motion to approve the estimates, that in fact is unanimous of the committee. That is my understanding. Did you hear any nays, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: The estimates have carried. There was no recorded vote, so—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I truly appreciate committee members unanimously supporting the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Zimmer: But I've asked for unanimous consent. Surely I'm entitled to ask. I might not get unanimous consent on this. Much like the procedure in the chamber, I would ask for the unanimous consent of this committee to reopen the vote.

The Chair: In my 13 years here—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Distinguished years.

The Chair: Well, some better than others, I'm sure—I have not heard of a revote, but I'd be willing to put it forward. Do we have unanimous consent for a revote on estimate item 4001?

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I definitely heard a no there, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I know you enjoy your time here, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I did enjoy the time.

The Chair: Are we about done?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I have no other questions, but I just wanted to give my thanks to you, to the clerk, certainly to research and to all members of the committee.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Ramal.

Mr. Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak. I want to thank the minister, on behalf of the committee and on behalf of the government, for the great job he's doing on behalf of all of us in Ontario. I know he's doing a great job. I guess that's why all the members voted in support of your report, because you're doing a great job, I believe.

The Chair: All right. Let's move on.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Thank you, Mr. Ramal. That's very kind.

The Chair: I thank the minister again. It appears we are going to recess until we have the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. This committee has a 10-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 1701 to 1718.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

The Chair: Folks, we are here this afternoon for the consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration for a total of seven and a half hours. Before we begin, I'd like to clarify the role of legislative research with respect to the ministry before the committee today. The research officer is assigned to

the committee to support the work of the members of the committee. Her primary function is to research and prepare briefings, summarize submissions made to the committee, draft a report to the House and, in this case, help committee members track the questions and issues raised during the review of estimates.

The ministry is required to monitor its own undertakings resulting from the consideration of their estimates, and I trust that the deputy minister has made arrangements to have the hearings closely monitored with respect to questions raised so that the ministry can respond accordingly. If you wish, you may at the end of your appearance verify the questions and issues being tracked by the research officer.

Any questions before we begin?

Ms. Joan Andrew: No, sir. I just wanted to indicate that I understood the protocol you just outlined.

The Chair: Terrific. Thank you. We will begin with a 30-minute statement by the minister; 30 minutes then will follow from the official opposition and 30 minutes from the third party. Then the minister will have 30 minutes in which to reply. The remaining time is then apportioned equally amongst the three parties.

We welcome Minister Mike Colle, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration; his deputy minister, Joan Andrew, beside him; and other members of the ministry staff who have joined with us. Minister, welcome, and the floor is yours.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As you said, I'm here with my deputy minister, Joan Andrew. I'll begin with my remarks.

It is with great pride that I present the estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration for the 2007-08 fiscal year. The talent and dedication of my ministry's staff and community partners are truly remarkable. I am honoured to work with such extraordinary people to help build a better Ontario for all.

This ministry includes the citizenship and immigration division, as well as the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat. My remarks today will centre on my portfolio, Citizenship and Immigration, and will also provide a brief overview of the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat.

In addition, the ministry delivers regional and corporate services that support not only its own programs, but also those of three other ministries. I'll have a few words about these common services as well.

Our vision as a ministry is an Ontario where diversity is valued as a source of strength and where all people, including newcomers, seniors and women, contribute to a strong economy, a caring society and a high quality of life. It is not enough for us to express our values in words. We must make them real for people in their communities by delivering better public services and strong economic growth that create opportunities for all and improve our quality of life. Expanded opportunity is the

measure of the open, progressive society we seek to build in Ontario.

I was mandated by the Premier to actively promote Ontario's rich multicultural diversity and be the champion for strengthening immigration, settlement and integration services for new Canadians who have chosen Ontario as their home. I know all the members of the committee share this vision, and I am looking forward to a positive and constructive discussion.

The citizenship and immigration division has two broad objectives: to maximize the economic and social benefits of immigration; and to build vibrant communities through civic engagement and responsible citizenship.

Maximizing the benefits of immigration: Immigration has made Ontario one of the most diverse societies in the world, and diversity is one of our greatest strengths as a province. Ontario is fortunate that newcomers choose to come to our province. Each year, Ontario welcomes up to 140,000 newcomers, more than any other province and more than 50% of the nation's total immigration.

I have the privilege of bringing provincial immigration activities under one roof for the first time. This represents an important opportunity for us to use the talents of new Ontarians to enhance our competitiveness in global markets and ensure the continued economic prosperity of Ontario.

Within less than five years, it is projected that all of Ontario's net labour force growth will come from immigration. Our flat birth rate and our aging population are not enough to maintain the status quo, let alone increase our workforce. If Ontario is to succeed in the global economy, we must count on newcomers to keep the workforce expanding. Newcomers offer the necessary skills for our knowledge economy. Nearly three quarters of today's newcomers have post-secondary education. They also bring an understanding of world markets and global experience that Ontario needs to compete internationally.

Diversity can and should be our competitive advantage, but too often this advantage is wasted. According to the Conference Board of Canada, the Canadian economy loses up to \$5 billion every single year because the skills and credentials of immigrants are not recognized. The reality is that today's well-educated immigrants can choose to go elsewhere. The global competition for talent is intense. And as India's and China's economies boom, their residents are choosing in greater numbers not to immigrate.

What this means for Ontario is that we must make Ontario a place of opportunity, a place where newcomers are given every opportunity to succeed and prosper and become contributing members of the community. This is why the McGuinty government is delivering a comprehensive plan for breaking down barriers that keep newcomers from reaching their potential.

The Canada-Ontario immigration agreement: We are on the side of new Canadians who want to succeed. That is why we have fought on their behalf, negotiating the

first-ever Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which I had the pleasure of signing in November 2005. You'll recall that Premier McGuinty fought hard for, and won, this agreement from the federal government at that time. This is the first immigration agreement between Ontario and Canada and it will make a huge difference in the lives of our newcomers.

The agreement we negotiated quadrupled Ottawa's spending on settlement services and language training in Ontario by providing an additional \$920 million over five years. This means that, as a result of our negotiations, federal spending on services for newcomers will increase from about \$800 to \$3,400 per immigrant. This agreement is expanding the range of settlement services and enhancing language training for newcomers to Ontario, including services aimed at immigrants before they arrive in Canada.

I'm pleased that the promised funds, which are urgently needed, have begun to flow. In December 2006, Citizenship and Immigration Canada announced planned spending of \$182 million for fiscal 2006-07 for settlement and language training services. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada federal deputy minister has assured my deputy that all promised funding will occur before the end of the agreement in 2010.

Newcomer settlement agencies: The result of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement is that workers on the front lines are beginning to see the results of this new investment. According to newcomer settlement agencies that the Ontario government funds, spending by the federal government through the immigrant settlement adaptation program, known as ISAP, increased by about 55% between 2005-06 and 2006-07. This new funding, which is being provided directly to service agencies by the federal government, is expanding and enhancing services to more newcomers each year, helping them to settle and get language training to reach their full potential.

English-as-a-second-language and French-as-a-second-language classes: What will this mean for newcomers? This agreement will mean more ESL and FSL classes at more levels so that newcomers can learn the language that fits their job or profession.

The Canada-Ontario immigration agreement will help us compete by making sure more regions of the province have the ability to attract immigrants and keep them. With populations aging and skills shortages growing, it's essential to recruit and retain immigrants to address those labour market shortages.

Provincial nominee program: One of the provisions in the federal-provincial agreement is Ontario's pilot provincial nominee program that I announced in Toronto last Thursday. For the first time, our province has the ability to match the skills of prospective immigrants with the demands of the labour market. Under the new program, the Ontario government will nominate individuals for immigration to fill labour shortages in 20 skilled occupations, including health, education, manufacturing and construction.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada will be able to issue work permits to the provincial nominees and fast-track their applications for permanent residence, as well as those of their families. We expect to nominate 500 individuals in the first year of the program. The nominees will fall into one of two categories: skilled workers with job offers in the specified fields, including international graduates of Ontario colleges or universities; or key employees of multinational companies making significant investments in this province.

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Approximately half of the first-year nominations will be destined for communities outside the greater Toronto area. This emphasis is part of Ontario's regionalization strategy to think outside of the greater Toronto area box and spread the benefits of immigration around the province more evenly. The pilot provincial nominee program is a significant step in the right direction of linking immigration with Ontario's economic needs.

Joint information: Under the federal-provincial agreement, the two governments also made a commitment to collaborate on strategies for electronic and web-based communication services to newcomers and those considering immigration, information on things like employment, housing and education that makes it easier for newcomers to feel settled more quickly and get the support they need.

This collaboration also includes the ongoing partnerships with municipalities. The municipal annex of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement establishes a framework for municipal participation in areas of immigration related to their interests and the development of a memorandum of understanding with the city of Toronto.

Information for newcomers: Ontario is the first province to negotiate an immigration agreement that involves municipalities. In line with the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement provisions, a little over a year ago, my ministry launched the OntarioImmigration.ca portal. Our user-friendly site provides instant access to current information on Ontario's communities, labour markets, school system, health care, professional licensing and other practical aspects of starting a new life here. The site is drawing an average of more than 5,000 visits per week and has attracted more than 11 million hits since its launch in March 2006.

Through the agreement, the federal government is providing Ontario with funds to invest in municipalities to create their own portals to attract and provide services to immigrants. Five portals or immigration gateways are currently in the works in Toronto, Ottawa, London, Windsor-Essex and Sudbury. Another eight are in development for Brantford, Chatham-Kent, Lambton, Niagara region, Peel region, Sault Ste. Marie, Waterloo region and York region. All will be accessible through the OntarioImmigration.ca portal to help newcomers decide where to make their home. The new gateways are also part of the regionalization strategy I mentioned.

Ontario's employers need to be able to quickly bring in workers to fill labour market shortages. These

announcements are only small improvements to a system that needs a major overhaul.

The temporary foreign worker program: Ontario is working with the federal government to improve the temporary foreign worker system in Ontario through a temporary foreign worker annex, as part of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement. The temporary foreign worker annex is an opportunity for Ontario to address some of its specific needs and have a say in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a program that has already contributed so much to Ontario's success.

Ontario receives approximately 44,000 temporary foreign workers annually, which represents close to 50% of the total temporary foreign workers who arrive in Canada every year. The federal-provincial immigration agreement is one component of Ontario's comprehensive plan for breaking down barriers to newcomer success.

Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act: The cornerstone of this plan is the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, passed by the Legislature last December and proclaimed this March. This groundbreaking legislation requires regulated professions in Ontario to have licensing and registration processes that are fair, quicker, open and clear, so that internationally trained individuals can work sooner in their fields of expertise.

We are heartened by the strong support this measure has received from different quarters. For example, Madina Wasuge, executive director of Hamilton's Centre for Civic Inclusion, said, "This bill represents one of the boldest attempts by a provincial government to address inequities that confront newcomers." And David Hipgrave, president and CEO of the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, said, "This legislation, together with the right regulations and the commitment of all regulators, will place Ontario at the forefront of fair access for the internationally trained."

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner is a key element of the legislation. The commissioner is responsible for overseeing regular audits to ensure that the practices of the professions meet the test of fairness. The commissioner will also submit an annual report on the implementation and effectiveness of the act. Our government was proud to nominate the Honourable Jean Augustine as Ontario's first fairness commissioner. We appreciate the opposition parties' prompt endorsement of this appointment. She will champion the cause of newcomers who want nothing more than a fair chance to work in their fields.

This is the first legislation in Canada to require self-regulating professions to meet requirements with regard to the fairness of their registration practices. The government of Manitoba has followed our lead by introducing a similar bill last month, including the provision of an appointment of a fairness commissioner. The legislation has prompted interest internationally, including from the Netherlands, Germany and Australia.

Global Experience Ontario: A further element of our legislation—and one of the main recommendations by

front-line workers helping newcomers—is the creation of a government-run access and resource centre for internationally trained professionals. Known as Global Experience Ontario, this centre opened its doors in downtown Toronto in December, and it's co-located with HealthForceOntario. It provides information and guidance to help newcomers navigate through the licensing process and find the shortest route to professional practice. All this support is accessible through one stop—in person, online or by phone.

The centre also promotes internships and mentoring programs. Let me tell you about one internationally trained professional's experience with Global Experience Ontario. In 2007, a mother and her young son came to Ontario from Mexico in search of a better future. This talented woman came with a master's degree in law but needed help to understand the process to qualify for the Ontario bar. In her own words, she said, "Global Experience Ontario gave me all the directions to contact the law society, to get all the information I needed to get certified here in Ontario as a lawyer. They were very helpful and kind. They answered all the questions I had." In time, she expects to be admitted to the law society and eventually practise corporate and international law.

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Internship program: Our comprehensive plan to help newcomers succeed includes several other innovative strategies. Since we're asking the private sector to tap into the talents of newcomers by hiring them into the workforce, we felt that we needed to do something to lead by example. That's why we've set up the Ontario public service internship program for the internationally trained, which began last fall, in partnership with Career Bridge. In the first intake of the program, 72 interns have been placed in six-month assignments in 15 ministries and crown agencies, in such fields as information technology, chemistry, health sciences, administration, finance and the environment. Twenty-one interns have already obtained jobs in their fields.

For example, Pedro Molina came to Ontario from Ecuador with a BA in economics, his MBA and a certificate in adult teaching. For the first 18 months, he worked at a variety of low-wage jobs. He points to his participation in the Ontario public service internship program as a huge turning point in his life and that of his family. Pedro is now training as a senior account manager at RBC Financial Group. He says, "The program helped me get back to work in my field of expertise, to meet people related to my profession and to get hope back."

Based on our success, we are getting ready to launch the second round of hiring for the program. Ontario is the only province to launch a program like this. Our leadership in breaking down barriers was recognized earlier this year through an award from Career Edge, a national internship organization. We are also helping internationally trained professionals work in their fields sooner by partnering with the Maytree Foundation to provide loans of up to \$5,000 to cover assessment, training and exam costs for qualified candidates.

Bridging projects: A long-standing initiative and one that has achieved solid results is our bridging projects. Bridging projects are partnerships between government, employers, educators, trainers and occupational regulatory bodies. They help people with international education and experience to upgrade qualifications and get added education and skills, such as specialized language training, so they can work toward licensure and employment in their field.

Our government has invested more than \$53 million in more than 90 bridging projects to help thousands of internationally trained, qualified individuals move into Ontario's labour market. For example, in January 2007, with our support, Ryerson University began setting up a part-time program for internationally trained engineers to allow them to take the specific academic courses they may be missing to meet professional licensing requirements, rather than repeat an entire academic career. It will also help them gain work experience through a four-month co-op program. The program will be open to students this September.

Bridging projects get results. The Ontario government has invested more than \$2.3 million in the Teach in Ontario program, to help internationally trained teachers prepare for employment in Ontario's publicly funded school system. Nine hundred and thirty-one internationally trained teachers have been certified by the Ontario College of Teachers since the inception of Teach in Ontario.

Since 2003, our government has invested more than \$900,000 in the international pharmacy graduate program, to facilitate the entry of qualified, internationally trained pharmacists into the Ontario workplace. The program has improved the pass rate in the Ontario College of Pharmacists licensing exam to more than 80%. To date, more than 450 internationally trained pharmacists have completed the program and all are working in their field.

Regionalization strategy: The regionalization strategy I referred to previously also includes newcomer employment networks in London, Niagara, Ottawa and Kitchener-Waterloo. Community organizations will partner with the business sector to engage employers and promote the value of hiring newcomers, following a path set by the pioneering Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, commonly known as TRIEC.

The Chair: Minister, I'm sorry to interrupt you at this point. We have a 10-minute bell. The minister has just five minutes left on his remarks, so I'm going to ask the minister to complete his remarks and then we'll have five minutes to get to the assembly.

Minister, please go ahead. You have five minutes to complete your remarks.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Speaking of TRIEC, we have recently invested \$1.75 million in the expansion of TRIEC programs to link employers and newcomers throughout the greater Toronto area, including York and Peel regions. This funding will help TRIEC deliver resources and tools to more than 3,000 small and

medium-sized businesses, where most new jobs are created.

Our government provides direct support to front-line settlement agencies that help newcomers get off to a good start. We increased our investment in the newcomer settlement program by 29% to \$5.3 million for 81 community agencies that provide settlement, orientation, job search workshops, language training referrals and other services to tens of thousands of newcomers each year.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt. It looks like the vote is deferred. Please go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: ESL and FSL: Strong language skills are an imperative for newcomer career success. In Ontario we have extensive English-as-a-second-language and French-as-a-second-language programs for adults, which are now under my ministry. We are investing more than \$50 million a year in adult ESL and FSL throughout Ontario, delivered through school boards. For the first time, we have undertaken a survey of learners to find out their needs and are working in partnership to review and improve the program, and we're putting more emphasis on occupation-specific language training for the workplace to help newcomers land jobs that reflect their qualifications.

Because we know that a range of language skills are required for newcomers to be successful, from basic to occupation-specific language training, we are also funding approximately \$2.2 million for school boards to develop programs that help newcomers gain the language of their field. For example, the Thames Valley District School Board has two non-credit ESL programs currently active that are of interest. For Thames Valley, their ESL Training in the Workplace partners with employers to give employees the language training they need to do their job well. The retail, auto and aircraft sectors have benefited from this program. I hope to be in a position to announce additional funds for these services shortly.

A new citizenship curriculum, called All About Ontario, has been developed and will be introduced by school boards across the province. It teaches newcomers about Ontario's history, geography, laws and civic participation, to help them make a smooth transition.

In all, the Ontario government invests more than \$146 million a year in services to help newcomers get settled, improve language skills and get jobs. That's more than any other province.

We are tackling the challenge of integrating newcomers into our communities and workforce in many different directions, working with many different partners. Our plan for breaking down barriers is comprehensive. It is also deeply rooted in Ontario's best values. It speaks to what this province is all about: fairness and opportunity. The stakes are high: We must capitalize on our diversity to remain dynamic and competitive on the global stage. By ensuring that Ontario's newcomers have

the opportunity to reach their goals and achieve their dreams, we build Ontario's future prosperity. The simple truth is that when newcomers succeed, we all succeed.

Apart from working to leverage the economic benefits of diversity, the ministry also seeks to reap the social and cultural benefits. My ministry has been fortunate to make investments in areas that promote Ontario's diversity and heritage, community involvement, volunteer participation and celebration of Ontario's cultural mosaic.

The Premier has asked the Auditor General to review the decision-making process for my ministry's year-end investments and report back in early July. These investments support hard-working organizations that deliver much-needed services in Ontario's diverse communities. I am proud of our investments, and I welcome the auditor's review.

Ontario's Community Builders program is one example of how we promote diversity and encourage cultural understanding. This program supports exhibits, workshops, cultural festivals, special events and other initiatives to celebrate Ontario's diverse heritage and value our diverse communities.

This program brings people together. For example, it has brought a replica of the historic Underground Railroad Buxton Liberty Bell to Queen's Park for the first time to share its significance in our history with Ontarians. It also assisted Guelph's Onward Willow neighbourhood, home to people from 30 different cultures, to launch a series of Stories from the Heart on the experiences of new Canadian families. It also supported a commemorative community event at the Vanier Museum to promote and celebrate the cultural heritage of French-speaking communities in Ottawa and throughout Ontario. To coincide with their opening last October, the museum launched an exhibition to unite francophone cultures from the 17th to the 21st century and to recognize the contributions of First Nations, pioneering explorers and first-generation French and English immigrants. In one particular instance, we funded Celebrating London's Cultural Diversity, which showcased a diversity conference and a series of centralized and neighbourhood-based celebrations that increased public education and celebrated London's cultural diversity.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, Minister, but at this point our time is concluded. This ends the 30-minute presentation. That's all we're going to do today. We'll resume on Tuesday, June 5. We'll have 30 minutes for the official opposition, 30 minutes for the third party and then 30 minutes for the minister to conclude, which you can use to complete your statement or respond to the comments of other members of the committee.

Thank you, Minister, Deputy, and members of the committee. We are now adjourned until Tuesday, June 5, at orders of the day.

The committee adjourned at 1752.

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