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(Hansard)**

Monday 1 December 2008

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 December 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2008

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'm pleased to welcome those shortly arriving students and faculty from Walter E. Harris and would ask all members to join me in welcoming them when they arrive.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to recognize the following guests: Lynne Boldt, Doug Carew, Marilyn and Ron Raw, Faye McGee, all from Victoria county, and Roman Sarachman and Stan Haworth from Flamborough. They are here to observe the proceedings today.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I would like to introduce the family of page Tess McGurn and would like my colleagues to join me in welcoming Karen, Stephen and Michaela from my community of Barrie.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to acknowledge a good friend of mine, Diana Reynolds, who is in the east members' gallery, visiting from the great riding of Kitchener-Waterloo.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: Today is World AIDS Day, and I'd like to seek unanimous consent that all members can wear the red ribbon to commemorate this solemn occasion around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

On behalf of page Kush Thaker, we'd like to welcome his dad, Rohit Thaker, who's sitting in the public gallery today.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome an all-party delegation from the Scottish Parliament, who are observing us here at Queen's Park, and as well, using it as an opportunity to meet with members on a wide variety of issues in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park and Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier, and it deals with economic challenges facing the

province. In the past few months, as he knows, we've seen the financial markets sinking. I saw in the weekend papers that average house prices in Toronto have decreased approximately \$44,000 over the past little while. Economic predictions are getting gloomier, jobs disappearing—we saw a number of plant closure announcements last week.

Eastern Ontario, Premier: That's an area that you represent and one of the hardest-hit regions in the province. Last March, to great fanfare, you announced an \$80-million eastern Ontario development fund. Nine months later, we're not aware of one dollar flowing.

Despite the urgent need for economic stimulus, why has none of that money flowed to bring jobs and investments to eastern Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the conversation of late has turned to efforts that should be made by governments around the world to stimulate their economies. That's an important conversation for us to have and I'm proud to report that we have been all over that for quite some time now.

We have in place now a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure plan. It was going to end next year, but we've actually moved forward so quickly on that it's going to end one year early. I can tell you, for example, there are now, under construction, projects at 19 different hospitals in Ontario; I could list those for you, but I won't at this point in time. There's a Roy McMurtry Youth Centre—there's construction taking place there. The Durham Consolidated Courthouse is another example of infrastructure spending on our part. So there's a lot of work taking place and a lot of people working as a result of those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I asked the Premier a specific question about a region that he supposedly represents. I guess he's spending too much time in eastern Ontario—

Interjection: Downtown Toronto.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Or in Toronto, I should say, rather than eastern Ontario, because we didn't get any response to that. It's been nine months and people in eastern Ontario are entitled to say "Show me the money"; nothing has flowed. Last year, during an election campaign, the people of Cornwall were guaranteed that Liqui-Force, the sewer renovation company, was coming to town—563 good-paying jobs. Your member there made that commitment during an all-candidates debate. More than a year later, again, that's another commitment that hasn't been met.

The people of eastern Ontario, Premier, need to know if you're going to deliver on the promises you've made. Why should they have to wait for some reannouncement next March?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Among those hospital projects which I referenced we can include the Kingston General Hospital, the Montfort Hospital—we'll remember that one; it has a very colourful history because that was a hospital that the Conservatives tried to close—the Ottawa Hospital regional cancer program; I think that's construction that's taking place at two different sites there.

With respect to the eastern Ontario development fund, a program which was voted against by my Conservative colleagues, I can report that we received 20 applications; 12 applications are currently in the 45-day assessment review. I can tell you we take our responsibilities seriously to conduct due diligence on each application, and we'll be working to complete this within the 45-day service guarantee period.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, I guess it really displays and shows the lack of urgency on the part of this government: Nine months after the announcement, not one dollar has flowed. You can look across this government in terms of a whole range of programs they have announced with great fanfare which are not working. The Next Generation of Jobs Fund: We heard last week that money is not going to flow until February. In terms of Second Career, I was advised this past Friday that one of the things that you've instituted there is going from a two-page application process to an over-40-page application process.

You're great at creating bureaucracies and making these wonderful announcements but having a real challenge in making the money flow, getting these programs to work and helping create jobs in this province. When are you actually going to do something about the jobs crisis and the economic challenges facing this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will take the opportunity to speak a bit more broadly about some of the things we've been doing to stimulate the economy. In addition to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take your time, Dalton.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Thank you; I appreciate that.

We have a Next Generation of Jobs Fund; it's \$1.15 billion. There is no federal counterpart to that. We have our advanced manufacturing investment strategy; that's a \$500-million fund. There is no federal counterpart to that. We have in place extensive investments in energy projects. I talked about our hospitals. There's also extensive ongoing investment in transportation projects. In addition to our five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure plan, on top of that there is a \$17.5-billion Move Ontario 2020 plan which is focused on public transit projects here in the GTA and beyond. I am not sure if any government anywhere in North America is doing more, on a per capita basis, to stimulate the economy by way of infrastructure.

1040

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. In April this year, you promised the people of this province that you would not cut public services, yet day after day, we hear that hospitals must fire nurses, close beds and eliminate services because the 2.1% funding increase you are providing for next year will not enable them to balance their budgets when expenses such as heat, hydro and salaries are increasing by 4% to 5%. Premier, why have you broken your promise to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue as well. I think it's really important to understand that every single year, we have invested still more money into health care for the benefit of all Ontario families. We'll continue to do that on a go-forward basis as well. What I have indicated is that we may not be able to spend as much as quickly as we have in the past, given our economic circumstances, but everybody will be getting more money in health care.

Let me talk just briefly about some of the things that we've been able to do: I think it's 630,000 Ontarians who didn't have a doctor before now have one. We've hired thousands more nurses as well, to ensure that we can deliver still better quality public health care to all Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The reality is that there are still about a million Ontarians without a family doctor, and as you know, you postponed the hiring of the 9,000 nurses. I met with the president of RNAO today, who tells me that all of the nurses who are being fired at the hospitals have to now be added to that total of 9,000, so we are lacking more than the 9,000 nurses.

But I say to you today, Premier, that Cambridge cut 30 jobs, reducing access to surgery and diagnostic imaging services; Cornwall closed critical care units and one of their two emergency rooms; Rouge Valley, 220 jobs; Hamilton Health Sciences, 485 jobs. Why are you cutting services to patients at a time when the population is growing, getting older, and desperately in need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: The member opposite mentions Cambridge Memorial Hospital. Over the past number of years, they've seen an \$11-million increase to the base of their hospital funding. That's a 16% increase in funding to this present day, and that is going to continue into next year, which is quite a different story than when the member opposite had the privilege to serve the people of Ontario as Minister of Health.

Should the member opposite and her colleagues get their way and cut \$3 billion out of health care through the elimination of the Ontario health premium, I shudder to think what would happen to Cambridge, Cornwall and St. Mary's or a host of other health—that's why we have an innovative \$1.1-billion aging at home fund, to drive

services into the community, close to where people live, and support seniors living at home. It's not, as the member would indicate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The Minister of Health doesn't know about what he speaks, regrettably. We've still seen no plan of action from this government, despite the fact that they promised, when the LHINs were created, they would come out with a vision, a plan. So we see all these cuts happening in the absence of any planning for a continuum of care for patients in the province of Ontario.

Premier, this is what you said: "The important thing in all of this is that patients are paying the price." That's what you said about hospital deficits. "What this means is that staff are being laid off, those who are left behind are burned out, beds are being cut, services are being reduced."

Premier, you said this on October 14, 1998. Then you said, on April 28 of the same year, "I'll tell you what I would do if I was in charge.... I'd "stop the hospital cuts."

Well, Premier, I ask you today: When are you going to stop the hospital cuts of nurses, beds and services, impacting negatively the health of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: I would say directly to the member, that's exactly what we did in 2003. That's exactly what the plan was: to stop the reckless cuts of the previous government.

The member mentioned Cambridge Memorial Hospital earlier. When the member and her colleagues came into power, the funding to Cambridge Memorial Hospital was cut by 5.5%. When the member opposite and her colleagues came to office, St. Mary's General Hospital was cut over \$4 million, or 10%; Grand River health centre in nearby Kitchener-Waterloo, cut \$4.7 million, or 4.33%.

That era and those days are over. We are not cutting hospitals. Rather, we are supporting them today in ways that we have not done previously. We are also driving services into the community through innovative mechanisms, like aging at home, which provides seniors and their family members with a range of supports—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Last week, the Premier gave us the McGuinty government's bold response to the continuing economic downturn. The Premier said that people should get out there and go shopping.

When it comes to an economic plan, is this the best the Premier and the McGuinty government can do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I knew the moment I said that, that the leader of the NDP was going to seize upon

this and try to have some fun with it. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this as well.

About 60% of our economy in Ontario is based on consumer spending. The advice that I had for Ontarians—and I know that many folks are wondering how they can be part of the solution. My advice is this: If you can afford it—and that's the important condition I attach to this—you should go out there and buy those Christmas gifts. You should buy that fridge, you should buy that car, because that in and of itself is a small part, but an important part, of something that we can do together to help strengthen our economy. I know that my friend understands that as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: What I think the Premier needs to understand is that there are hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who no longer have a job. There are many more who have been told, "You take a pay cut if you want to keep your job." All of the economic reports show that poverty—people struggling to pay the rent, pay the hydro bill, put food on the table—that list, is growing too. So for the Premier to say, "Oh, the answer is just get out there and go shopping," ignores the social and economic reality of literally millions of families across this province.

I ask the question again. I know the Premier took this page out of George Bush's book, but is this the best policy advice the McGuinty government has to offer in the midst of what may be one of the worst economic downturns in seven decades: "Go shopping"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Actually, I think it was on Tuesday or Wednesday of last week that President-elect Obama offered the same advice to Americans.

Again, I attach an important condition to that: if you can afford it. We're all getting so much bad news today that even for Ontarians with secure jobs, jobs that are not in danger of being lost, there's a natural tendency to kind of retrench and pull back, and that can have the effect of reinforcing a downward cycle.

Again, I say to Ontarians—and I know my friend understands what I'm saying in this regard—if you can afford it, then please go ahead and do your usual Christmas shopping. Buy that fridge, buy that car. Those are the kinds of things that help our economy and help maintain existing jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, just last week, for example, in the auto parts sector, Magna, the largest auto parts company literally in the world, announced almost 1,000 layoffs right next door, in a neighbouring city. Just in the last couple of weeks, in the communications sector, Canwest Global and CTV—hundreds of layoffs. What started as tens of thousands of jobs lost in the forestry sector three years ago, and then moving into the manufacturing sector, is now moving into the auto parts sector and into the communications sector.

Is it the McGuinty government's position that the response to this should simply be, "Oh, gee, just go shopping"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've answered that a couple of times now, so I won't answer it again. But my honourable colleague did raise an important issue about the auto sector.

I want to report to this House that late on Friday, Ministers Bryant and Clement sent a formal request to the Detroit Three to come forward with a specific proposal with respect to their plans to strengthen their operations here in Canada and, indeed, throughout North America. We hope to be able to announce very shortly as well a due diligence team that will conduct the necessary investigation into the financial status of our Big Three and confirm that they are in fact making genuine efforts to complete a transformation. That's just another example of some of the efforts we are making to further strengthen our economy.

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ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: It seems to me that you've been sending people out to study this and that for some time. The former Treasurer has been studying tourism for, I think, almost a year. We see the tourism numbers continue to drop. You've had your former Minister of Natural Resources turn over another report that addressed some things that need to be done to take on job loss. Your government completely ignored that. Yes, Mr. Bryant has been to Washington, and about all we heard out of that was, "Blame Washington," and, "Blame Ottawa."

Premier, the time for studies and the time for telling people to go shopping is literally long past. We've got a federal government in Ottawa that is about to fall because they are not taking the situation seriously enough. My question to you is: What is the McGuinty government's plan, other than, "Go shopping"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just say again some of the things we've done to help strengthen our economy. Our Reaching Higher plan consists of a \$6.2-billion investment in post-secondary education in Ontario. I'm not sure there is anything we could do that would be more important than to invest in the skills and education of our workers, so that we can enhance our competitiveness. As a result of those investments, we have a 100,000 more young people in our colleges and universities, we have 50,000 more young people in our apprenticeship programs and we're graduating between 10,000 and 11,000 more young people from our high schools—young people who used to drop out. We think that's a significant and important investment to enhance our competitiveness and productivity. Furthermore, investing in skills and education simply enriches our enjoyment of life. For all those reasons, we will continue to support the skills and education of our workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The question is, where is the jobs plan? You announced something that you call Reaching Higher. Your so-called Reaching Higher means

that your government's investment in post-secondary education is dead last in Canada on a per capita basis. I don't call that Reaching Higher; I call that finishing at the bottom of the pack. But that is not a jobs plan either.

I think you need to recognize the urgency of the situation. When Magna, the largest auto parts producer in the world, which has very deep pockets and can go to literally any bank or finance company and get financing, starts announcing close to a thousand layoffs right here, it tells you that lots of other smaller companies are on the edge of the cliff. Where is the jobs plan, Premier? Where is the McGuinty government's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In addition to our investment in post-secondary education, we also have a number of programs that are designed to encourage further new investment in the province of Ontario. There was our \$500-million auto investment strategy, for example, which leveraged some \$7 billion worth of new investment. My friend asks, "Where is our job plan?" But when we came forward with that auto investment strategy, he wouldn't support that.

We have in place now our Next Generation of Jobs Fund. It's \$1.15 billion—one of a kind in North America. My friend doesn't support that either. We're investing in an advanced manufacturing investment strategy—\$500 million—that's designed to elicit new investment in Ontario and new jobs as well. My friend opposite doesn't support that as well. We have significant programs in place to create new jobs for Ontarians. It's just that my friend doesn't support them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to be very clear with the people of Ontario: New Democrats do not support a McGuinty government scheme that gives \$200 million to General Motors and doesn't get any meaningful product guarantees or job guarantees. We do not support giving \$200 million to General Motors, and the next week literally thousands of General Motors workers are shown the door. I don't think many people in Ontario support such a giveaway.

The things that you recite either have been a failure or they have not been effective strategies in terms of addressing the huge loss of jobs, a job loss pattern which is going to grow worse. I ask again of the Premier: Where is the McGuinty government's plan? Where is the strategy to take this on, other than telling people to go shopping?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can understand how it's in my colleague's interest to somehow have Ontarians believe that the global economic crisis has no bearing on the Ontario economy whatsoever, but I just don't think that's credible and I don't think Ontarians will believe that.

I think as well, when I take the opportunity, for example, this afternoon to meet again with CAW—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll be meeting with CAW again this afternoon. I am confident that if I revisit the idea of investing together with our Big Three here in the province of Ontario—they're very supportive of that \$200-million investment that we made in GM. Workers at that plant are very supportive of that investment that we made together with GM. So we will continue to find ways to partner with the auto sector, the CAW and the federal government to put our auto sector on a stronger, more sustainable footing.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health: Minister, the first word of the LHIN acronym is "local." However, your LHINs are certainly not taking local issues and situations into account when allocating funding. Let me give you an example: the C. difficile outbreak that the province watched unfold from a very comfortable distance and did not contribute financially to—not one red cent.

Minister, why are you abandoning Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital and leaving them with deficits that are due to your inappropriate levels of funding?

Hon. David Caplan: I say to the member opposite that she is quite incorrect. In fact, we've increased health care spending in the province of Ontario by 37% and we've made the right investments in our hospitals. The investments in Joseph Brant Memorial, for example, include more than \$17 million in base funding since 2003-04. That's nearly a 20% increase in funding to that hospital; over \$60 million in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network toward a three-year, local aging-at-home strategy; \$113,000 for 102 general surgeries. That's in addition to the over \$13 million in total funding the hospital has received since 2004 to reduce wait times. That's over 15,000 more procedures and that's the kind—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The reality is these increased levels of funding are not appropriately funding the hospital and beds are still closing. Your platitudes and trumped-up notion of your accomplishments are not going to help the people of Burlington who will be turned away when their hospital closes yet more beds.

The reality is that your government implemented the single largest tax increase disguised as a health premium on the struggling middle class, and yet, when it comes down to tough times, the first thing that your government will cut is health care. Minister, can you explain to the people of Burlington, who have been paying your health tax for many years now, why you refuse to invest their own health tax money in their own community hospital?

Hon. David Caplan: I think I explained that base funding has increased 20% since 2003-04 at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. In contrast, when the Conservative Party came into office, they cut hospital funding to

Joseph Brant by over \$3 million, or 6.25%. I say to the member opposite that I am delighted to go to Burlington or to meet her in this House to compare and contrast the records of her colleagues and this government, because I can assure the member opposite that the cuts pale in comparison to the investments which we have made in Joseph Brant. We have a plan that is working; we are increasing investments in our hospital and, importantly, in our community-based services. We have seen, as the Premier had mentioned earlier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

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ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier: Why was the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth forced to seek legal action against the McGuinty government to obtain documents involving a young person who asked for his help?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me begin by saying I have enormous respect for the advocate as an individual and for the office of the advocate. The commitment that this government has to children and youth is clearly evidenced by our record. In fact, we were the ones who established the independent office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, which provides advocacy and an independent voice to some of the most vulnerable kids in this province.

The confidentiality and privacy provisions of the legislation were crafted in consultation with the Information and Privacy Commissioner to protect the privacy and legal rights of the child. Given that the advocate is now independent, it represents a new relationship. We're working very closely with the advocate to develop the protocol for information sharing as we go forward. This protocol—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is an unprecedented action that's happening here. The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth was repeatedly stonewalled and had no choice but to go to the courts to seek information. This is an officer of this Legislature. He has a job to do. It took this government long enough to get him to be an independent officer, and now all this government is doing is stonewalling his work. Why is it taking so long for the ministry to provide the child advocate with the information he needs, and why won't this government facilitate his important job, instead of hamstringing him?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are absolutely facilitating the work. I think it's important that I can't speak to this particular case, but I can speak to the request for information. The request for this information was received on November 5, 2008, and the ministry has been working to compile the information requested while aligning the privacy requirements of the YCJA and

FIPPA. The ministry will be contacting the office of the advocate today to inform him that that information will be forthcoming this week.

As I said earlier, we are working to develop the protocol. It is a new relationship. He is newly independent. We want him to have the information he needs, but we must also abide by the privacy requirements.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Purdue Pharma Canada is located in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East. Purdue has never undergone layoffs in Canada, and the company employs over 200 Ontarians and is Pickering’s fourth-largest private sector employer. With 75% of its employees living in the region, Purdue has a strong connection to the community. Purdue donated a pill-forming machine to the faculty of science at UOIT, used to train students preparing to enter this industry. Purdue hires graduates from Durham College and brings in co-op students from the pharmaceutical and food science technology diploma program.

In April, our government announced an investment of \$13.9 million in Sanofi Pasteur, contributing to their \$101.5-million expansion. This secured 900 existing jobs, created 30 new permits, high-skilled research jobs and about 300 construction jobs. As Purdue looks to expand and hire more people, what has the Minister of Research and Innovation done to help make this a reality?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Last Thursday I was delighted to join the member for Pickering–Scarborough East and also his colleague next door from Ajax–Pickering to stand with the Premier at Purdue Pharma in Pickering for a wonderful announcement for Pickering and the province of Ontario. Purdue Pharma will be launching in January a 26,000-square-foot expansion. It will result in the doubling of their research space, it will hire 53 more people in the short term, it will create another 100 jobs, and this \$32-million expansion has attracted a \$4.9-million conditional grant from the Ministry of Research and Innovation through the biopharmaceutical investment program.

We are particularly proud to partner with Purdue, a wonderful company in the Pickering area, as it works to increase the economic opportunities in Pickering, and I want to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Minister, Purdue has sites worldwide where it conducts manufacturing and R&D. In making decisions regarding where to invest, it considers factors like the availability of skilled workers and resources. They also take into account those broader factors such as the overall business climate.

Purdue Pharma Canada’s president, John Stewart, is quoted as saying, “Ontario’s participation was critical to getting this project off the ground. It will enable us to build our research and manufacturing capacity and bring

more people on board here in Pickering.” Investments like these are making Ontario more attractive to researchers around the world.

Just last week, it was announced that professor Stephen Hawking, perhaps the world’s most famous scientist, is the Waterloo Perimeter Institute’s new, distinguished research chair. What is the ministry doing to attract and retain talented innovators and researchers to the province?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to say to the member that it is wonderful news that Dr. Hawking will be coming to the Perimeter Institute in Kitchener. We welcome him from Cambridge. He is considered one of the great theoretical physicists of all time—and part of that is because his colleague Dr. Neil Turok is the new executive director of the Perimeter Institute; he also hails from Cambridge.

I want to pay tribute to the people at Perimeter for this amazing work. The fact that so many people in Ontario are watching this on television right now, that we use the Internet—it’s all based on the fact that at one time, a theoretical physicist in his or her mind’s eye was able to conceive that. It’s because of the breakthroughs that we have all of the high-tech things. If we’re going to stay at the forefront of the 21st century, we need to attract the best in the world here to Ontario to make those fundamental discoveries that will transform our economy and generate new jobs in Ontario.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last Thursday, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth wrote to tell me that your ministry will not provide him information about a young person allegedly beaten while in custody. Your repeated refusals to provide the information he needs to protect young people have now led to his taking legal action against your ministry. Minister, why do you need to wait for the threat of legal action before you take action?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I am glad to have a second opportunity to discuss this issue.

The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the independent officer, was something that was created for this government. We take great pride in having an independent advocate for children and youth. It’s an important position, and I’m proud to be part of a government that made that priority.

Let’s be really clear about what this issue is. It’s about a request for information. As a government, we have a responsibility to balance the privacy interests of the child with the request for information from the advocate. The confidentiality and privacy provisions of the advocate’s legislation was something that was negotiated—crafted in consultation with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We are working on how to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, your government created the advocate's office. You appointed the advocate as an officer of this Legislature. In the answer that you gave a moment ago, you indicated the fact that this was a problem that you had been working on, so my question to you is, why did you not create that balance that you refer to in the creation of this legislation? Either the legislation is flawed or you really don't want to protect children. Which is it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me completely reject the idea that we don't want to protect children. Let me tell you that we have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are working very closely with the advocate. They met on October 31 and have continued to meet thereafter to establish the protocol for information-sharing. It is not simply a matter of xeroxing the reports and sending them over to the advocate. We have to be careful. We have to respect the FIPPA regulations; we have to get the permission of the youth. There is a protocol that is involved. We are working very closely with the advocate to make sure he has the tools he needs to do the job.

1110

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last week, the Minister of Children and Youth Services mentioned two suggestions made by the 650 Ontarians who responded to the government's online poverty consultation: (1) The desire for support to move from social assistance into employment, and (2) the problem of intergenerational poverty. I assume the government has done a detailed analysis of the online submissions, so therefore my question: Could the minister please tell us how many of the 650 respondents mentioned these two suggestions, and where did they fit in terms of all the other suggestions made?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Breaking the cycle of poverty is something that we really simply must do. We know that the cost of poverty is far too high. There was an excellent report released last week that actually outlines and quantifies for the first time the cost of poverty. We know that poverty does in fact have an intergenerational dimension to it. We all know from our work in our ridings that there are families that face real challenges. Breaking the cycle, making sure that kids growing up in poverty do have the opportunity to be successful at school, to go on to be independent and productive people, is a really important priority of this government. We have in our education system really tried to level the playing field for kids growing up in poverty, and we will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Obviously, the minister has not read her own report or the online submissions. The gov-

ernment is about to release its poverty plans, but it still is not clear that it has rigorously analyzed the submissions made during the poverty consultations.

The NDP did analyze the 170,000 words of online submissions and found the five most frequently mentioned recommendations were as follows: (1) The need for more affordable housing, (2) the need for free social and recreational programs for young people, (3) the need for increased ODSP, Ontario Works and child benefits, (4) faster increases to the minimum wage, and (5) more affordable child care. Those were the ones.

Will the minister tell us whether this government's analysis also found these to be the top priorities for reducing poverty and assure the House that these priorities will be addressed in the upcoming poverty reduction plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the member opposite is very anxious to see the strategy and I know that many people across the province are very anxious to see the strategy. I can assure you that we are on track to release the strategy by the end of the year.

Will we be addressing the issues that were raised in consultations? Absolutely. Will we be building on the work that we're already doing? Absolutely. Will we be looking to the best research that's out there that tells us how we can address the fundamental factors influencing poverty in this province? Absolutely.

I'm delighted that the member opposite is as engaged in this issue as he is, and I look forward to his continued support to reduce poverty in this province.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Phil McNeely: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Minister, I first want to congratulate you for the successful conclusion of the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review in partnership with Ontario's municipalities. Our government, with the partnership and hard work of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the city of Toronto, reached a consensus agreement that will make a difference for Ontario communities, including my own community of Ottawa-Orléans.

We are all aware of the downloading by the former government and the difficulties municipalities had dealing with the cost of many services formerly delivered by the province. Uploading is well under way under our government. Minister, could you outline what that agreement is and how it will impact Ontario municipalities and communities?

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the honourable member for Ottawa-Orléans. When we sat down with the municipal sector under the auspices of the fiscal and service delivery review, they told us that their three top priorities were uploading costs for the Ontario drug plan and the Ontario disability support program, as well as Ontario Works and court security and prisoner transportation. I'm very pleased that we reached a consensus agreement that

will see those three items uploaded to the provincial government and taken away from the municipal property taxpayers.

Let me quote the new president of AMO, Peter Hume, who is a city councillor in Ottawa, when he said the report turns the page “on that dark chapter in provincial-municipal relations.... The consensus reflected in this report sets out the changes that reflect the highest priorities of our municipal governments and what can be accomplished in current economic circumstances.”

It’s a good deal for municipalities, it’s a good deal for Ontario, and we’re very proud to see this uploading that began five years ago—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. Again, in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans, the municipal councillor of Innes ward specifically took aim at the province of Ontario during a city of Ottawa budget consultation meeting recently in my riding

It is my position that the McGuinty government in Ontario has significantly contributed to the city of Ottawa through the gas tax transfers, through the Move Ontario fund, and through the recent \$77 million for infrastructure that Minister Naqvi and I announced a few weeks ago, including \$33 million to the Ottawa River cleanup and \$15 million for social housing retrofits.

I know that we’ve been a real partner for the city of Ottawa and for all municipalities in Ontario. Outside of uploading court security and offender transportation costs, our government is also uploading public health care and land ambulance, and beginning a 10-year plan that will ensure that these uploads are being implemented at an affordable pace that reflects the current global economic crisis.

Could the minister tell this House about the increased contributions to the city of Ottawa and how he arrived at this landmark agreement with the municipalities of Ontario?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me begin by thanking the honourable member, who joined me and my colleague from Ottawa Centre at Petrie Island beach. If there’s one person in this province who can take responsibility for ensuring provincial funds are going to the cleanup of the Ottawa River, it’s the member from Ottawa–Orléans, and he should be congratulated for that.

That \$77-million investing in Ontario investment—the city has agreed to put \$33 million into the cleanup of the Ottawa River. The deal that we struck between AMO, the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario will see \$122 million flow to the city of Ottawa on an annual basis. That includes, in 2009, close to \$18 million as a result of the Ontario disability support program administrative costs being uploaded. It’s a good deal for the city of Ottawa. It’s a good deal for the province of Ontario and for our municipalities, and we look forward to working with our municipalities to strengthen that relationship.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: The latest sign of Dalton McGuinty’s have-not Ontario—the number of houses sold in the GTA has dropped by a shocking 44% in November. Even outside of the GTA in the riding of your agriculture minister, in Bancroft, the average price of a home has fallen by some 15%. Here’s the catch: Those Bancroft homeowners are being hit by average property assessment increases of 31.5%, some paying even more.

Premier, do you think it’s fair that families in Bancroft who are seeing the value of their homes fall will be paying higher property taxes as a result of your new assessment scheme?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: The honourable member was involved in his government’s feeble attempts to reform the assessment system eight different times, and they got it wrong eight different times. The honourable member knows full well, the taxpayers of this province know full well, that an increase in assessment does not automatically equate to an increase in property taxes, number one.

The member asks about Bancroft. As a result of the fiscal and service delivery review, as a result of the Investing in Ontario Act, more money is flowing to communities like Bancroft to ensure that they have the economic and fiscal stability to ensure that they do not have to be adversely affected as a result of changes in assessment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess, back to the minister from wonderland. He knows full well, if assessed values are going up by some 31.5%, that hard-working families and seniors in the Bancroft area are going to get whacked with higher property taxes under McGuinty’s new assessment scheme.

The minister may also know that Northumberland county residents, the home area of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, are seeing average assessment increases of 28%, with many seniors and families seeing much higher assessments. The minister knows that your new scheme locks them in at the height of a hot housing market. Since January 1, home values in Cobourg and Port Hope, for example, have actually fallen by 6%.

Minister, why are you punishing Northumberland homeowners who are experiencing declines in the value of their homes with much higher property taxes?

1120

Hon. Jim Watson: Thank goodness we have Lou Rinaldi as the MPP for Northumberland, because he has delivered for the constituents of Northumberland.

Let me just tell you: In 2006, \$2.8 million in roads and bridges money; in 2008, over \$2 million for roads and bridges money; the Investing in Ontario Act, over \$1 million has gone to the good people of Northumberland as a result of decisions made by the McGuinty government.

Let me quote someone that I know the honourable member is very fond of, Ernie Eves, when he said, "I want to get a point across because everybody, whether you're a homeowner or whether you're a business owner, is now getting their assessment notice. The assessment notice is not a tax bill. It is a statement of what the assessment corporation believes your property to be worth in current value...."

Even the Ombudsman recognized the work that this government has done to fix the mess that the Conservatives created with the assessment system when he said the impact and the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Earlier this fall, as a matter of fact nearly two months ago, I wrote the minister and asked a question regarding this government's lack of goodwill to the de-amalgamation vote in the city of Kawartha Lakes.

I haven't yet had a response, so I'm asking you today in the House, why won't the ministry tell the people of Kawartha Lakes why it accepted the democratic election of a council but would not recognize the democratic results of the second question on the same ballot; that is, the desire of those people for de-amalgamation? How can part of a ballot be recognized by your government and the other part not be recognized?

Hon. Jim Watson: This government has been very clear. We've set out the parameters and the criteria when it comes to the issue of governance structures within the province of Ontario. We, quite frankly, believe that it's up to the local municipal sector, whether it's through the county system, a region or the lower-tier municipalities, to come forward with a plan that shows fiscal viability in terms of any changes and also shows the support of all of the parties involved. We're happy to entertain those kinds of requests when they come in.

We're proud of the relationship that we have developed with the municipal sector. This is not a top-down approach that this government has taken when it comes to dealing with the municipal sector. We went through that period under the NDP, under the Conservatives. We've taken a more co-operative and consultative approach, and we're very proud of the work we've done with Kawartha and other regions and counties in the province.

Mr. Michael Prue: This minister doesn't answer the question any better than the former one.

The town and county of Essex is now considering its desire to de-amalgamate. The people of Essex are concerned that if the question is put on a municipal elections ballot for a referendum, the government will ignore the results of that vote just as they did with the people of Kawartha Lakes. Will the minister please tell these good people that he intends to accept the results of their

potential referendum, or will he choose to follow the lead of his predecessor and impose new, impossible conditions after the vote?

Hon. Jim Watson: I've actually had a number of conversations with respect to the Essex situation, including with our member from Essex. My understanding is that just as early as last week, that issue was not supported by county council.

We have taken a very positive approach when it comes to dealing with the municipal sector, because we understand that we have to treat them in true partnership. These are individuals who are providing the important services, and one of the reasons we believe that the relationship is on a much more positive footing under the leadership of our Premier is that we have actually sat down on a consultative basis every single month through the AMO MOU process to work out problems before they flare up and before they cause angst to a particular community, council mayor or residents of that community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer.

Hon. Jim Watson: So we're proud of the MOU process. We just had our last meeting a few weeks ago. Ministers appear before this group. The process is working, and we're very proud of that

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. There is no excuse in Ontario for drinking and driving, and while most Ontarians obey these rules, this message does not seem to be reaching everyone. In fact, in a recent OPP news release, it was reported that, last year alone, during the five-week period of the holiday RIDE program, officers charged 342 people with alcohol-related criminal offences, issued a further 896 12-hour licence suspensions and issued 375 90-day suspensions.

Minister, this is just unacceptable. It's a huge concern for my constituents in Willowdale and, indeed, for all Ontarians. What are you and what is your ministry doing to help reduce instances of drinking and driving throughout this province?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for an excellent question, particularly at this time of year. I think there isn't any member of this House who thinks that it would be acceptable for people to be drinking and driving, in the holiday season or any time, so this is not something that is a partisan consideration. Each government, I think, has endeavoured to do this.

Last week, many services launched their festive season RIDE campaigns. We'll see significant increases in spot checks across the province, as our government, you will remember, doubled the funding for the RIDE program this year. With the winter weather experienced in some parts of the province, I'm sure that our officers were out in full force working to keep our roads safe.

Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America but you're always striving, as a government and as

members of this Legislature, to make them even safer. That's why MTO staff are continuously reviewing current policies, monitoring other jurisdictions and working with our safety partners—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Doubling the funding to the RIDE program aids with enforcement, but there is still a lot to be said about prevention and education aspects as well. Each year in Ontario, statistics continue to show that drinking and driving collisions are the cause of almost one quarter of all traffic fatalities. The behaviour of drinking and driving, especially of those repeat offenders, is a learned behaviour.

Minister, my constituents in Willowdale and indeed, again, all Ontarians want to see this behaviour stopped before it even begins. You talked about other initiatives that the government is moving forward with to keep our roads safe from impaired drivers. What are those other initiatives?

Hon. James J. Bradley: We have among the toughest sanctions in all of North America, and subsequent governments have worked on this. New measures are already in place to seize and forfeit the vehicles of repeat drunk drivers. That being said, the member is correct that both education and prevention are key to the reduction of drinking and driving. That is why the Ministry of Transportation has purchased a full page in the RIDE Checks booklet to educate the public on consequences of drinking and driving.

We have also recently introduced legislation that, if passed, will require zero blood alcohol concentration for drivers 21 and under. Zero BAC already works for novice drivers in the graduated licensing system. In the four years following its introduction, the fatal and injury collision rate involving the youngest drinking drivers, aged 16 and 17, fell by 76% and 53% respectively. We believe this initiative will drastically reduce drinking and driving on our roads as it teaches our youth, from the beginning of their driving career, to separate drinking—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Premier. While we're in the chamber, I just received an e-mail that another company is shutting down; 165 more individuals are being laid off in, well, about half an hour.

Premier, the impacts and stress on people in the community as a result of the impacts on the auto sector are just being felt. Saturday I met with the United Way and, for those who don't know, the CAW workers and the individuals at General Motors contribute over \$1.6 million annually to the United Way. Should the auto sector shut down—as a matter of fact, every week that General Motors shuts down means \$21,000 less to the United Way and the programs that they support. Premier, should the auto sector fail, who's going to pick up the \$1.6 million when the funds are most needed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. This is yet another issue which ought, if nothing else, to cause all of us to recommit ourselves to overcoming the challenge before us. The member indicated what would happen should the auto sector fail; well, I'm not prepared to allow the auto sector to fail in the province of Ontario.

The fact is, the CAW makes a wonderful contribution to the health and well-being of their communities. We've talked about helping the Big Three, but what we're talking about is helping 400,000 Ontario families that are supported as a result of the auto sector in the province of Ontario. When it comes to a sense of accountability, I think there's a shared accountability amongst all Ontarians to ensure we're doing everything we can to support those 400,000 Ontario families.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Premier, in a question earlier on, you mentioned a due diligence team. Will this due diligence team take into consideration the impacts on the United Way, the taxation base in the communities or any other aspect that is happening with the auto sector, in the event that it falls apart? We want to make sure that all aspects of community are taken into consideration. Hopefully, this due diligence team will look at those factors.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't know whether the terms of reference will incorporate that. I'll certainly want to give that consideration but I think that, ultimately, that's our responsibility as well, to take into account the harmful consequences that would flow from the continuing loss of the health and well-being of our auto sector in the province of Ontario.

It reaches into every community in the province with a car dealership, for example. Those dealerships employ people, and they've got their ads running on radios and supporting local baseball and hockey teams—you see their names on jerseys if you have kids in community hockey, as I did. So this is a very important issue for all of us, and that's why we remain absolutely committed to finding a way through to strengthening the auto sector and ensuring its continuing, long-term viability in the province of Ontario.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for Minister of Health Promotion. Focus Community projects fund substance abuse prevention strategies in 22 communities across this province—some of them are in my constituency—communities that have no other mechanism to take on substance abuse, particularly amongst young people.

The Focus projects have been asking the McGuinty government for some time, "Is the McGuinty government going to continue to fund these strategies?" So far, they've received no response from the McGuinty government.

Is the McGuinty government going to continue to fund the Focus projects or are you going to cut these pro-

grams, which are the only substance abuse programs in literally dozens of communities across this province?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for his question. The McGuinty government has delivered and will continue to deliver programs that promote the health and well-being of all Ontarians. We provide \$2.4 million in annual funding to support the 22 communities across the province that participate in drug and alcohol prevention programs. In addition, \$400,000 is provided to provincial organizations that support alcohol and drug prevention activities in Ontario. This funding helps community partners work together to provide alcohol and drug prevention programs to those Ontarians who need them the most.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't need a description from the minister about what these programs do. Most of us know that they do very valuable work, and in many communities, they're the only community-based alcohol and substance abuse prevention strategies that are available to our youth.

The question is simple: These projects, located in dozens of communities, have been asking the McGuinty government, "Are you going to continue funding into 2009 and 2010? Are you going to continue funding at the same level?" So I'm going to ask the minister again: Is it the McGuinty government's intention to fund the Focus Community strategies in 2009 and 2010? Are you going to fund them at the same level and on the same basis that they were funded on since 1998? Yes or no?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government certainly recognizes the important work that the Focus program is doing to improve the health of all Ontarians. We have committed to providing funding to this program until March 2009. We will be gathering data on the program and will be analyzing it in the context of the Ministry of Health Promotion priorities and community needs. We know that mental health is a priority and a fundamental concern of this government, and we will continue to address the issue.

FLAG-RAISING CEREMONY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind members too that there's a flag-raising with the Consul General of Romania, Valentin Naumescu, and his wife, Simina, and leaders of the Romanian-Canadian community. The Consul General's with us, and the flag-raising is at noon.

The time for question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like to introduce a councillor from the town of Orangeville—who is, as we speak, going through security—in the beautiful riding of Dufferin–Caledon. His name is Doug Beffort.

MAURICE BOSSY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I regret to inform the House that we've learned of the passing of a former member, Maurice Bossy, who was the MPP for Chatham–Kent from 1985 to 1990. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, our regrets go out to his family, and I'd ask each member if they would join me in a moment of silence in memory of Maurice Bossy.

The House observed a moment's silence.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DHADKAN GROUP

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Heart disease affects all people regardless of religion, race, colour or creed—and even politics. Last night, however, my eyes were opened by the Dhadkan Group who showed me and 600 others in the nation's capital that heart disease and type 2 diabetes show prevalence in Canadians of Southeast Asian descent and, in particular, those whose lineage is from India.

For the past six years, the Dhadkan Group has been raising money for the Ottawa Heart Institute, and under the leadership of Anand Aggarwal, Dr. Parvesh Bajaj, Manjit Basi, Bharat Rudra and Vijay Tejuja, they have raised more than \$6.3 million to combat heart disease.

I am extremely grateful to Daljit Nirman, a lifetime patron of Dhadkan, for inviting me to share in last evening's sixth annual fundraising event, as well as to keynote speaker, Dr. Sonia Anand, of McMaster University, for her important and life-saving presentation.

As the host of last evening's event, Jyoti Aggarwal so brilliantly pointed out, even if one segment of the population is more susceptible to a disease, it requires an entire community to work together to combat that disease.

I congratulate the Dhadkan organizers and the Ottawa Heart Institute for their successful fundraising event, and above all, for the meaningful work that they do for the city of Ottawa.

CITY OF CORNWALL

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have frequently shared with this House the many amenities of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry that would be of extreme benefit to families and businesses looking for a new place to settle.

The municipalities of my riding have done an excellent job of promoting themselves, most recently at the Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry Day I hosted here at Queen's Park on October 15.

Today, the city of Cornwall has launched a new marketing campaign with the theme Smart Decisions Start with Small Numbers. This campaign will include print advertising, Web advertising, direct mail and trade show activities.

In today's economic climate, numbers play a key factor in the decisions being made by businesses in the province. Consider: business park land costs \$20,000 per acre in Cornwall compared to \$75,000 or more in big cities; Cornwall has no development charges, which often add \$15,000 or more to development projects; and the average sale price of a house in Cornwall is half of what it is in most big cities, \$141,000 compared to \$285,000 or more.

The city of Cornwall and all the municipalities of my riding are competitive, directly and ideally located near major markets and boast an unmatched quality of life for business owners and their families. We also have a hard-working bilingual labour force.

I commend the city of Cornwall for this initiative and encourage everyone to visit www.ChooseCornwall.ca to learn more about why Cornwall is a city with a world of possibilities.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have been bombarded with e-mails recently regarding Bill 126, making valid points of how their lives will change if the bill becomes legislation.

The restriction on having more than two teenagers in a car assumes that this is a dangerous situation and assumes the worst of our teenaged drivers.

One of my constituents from Dufferin county coaches the University of Guelph rowing team. Rowing practice takes place at 5:30 a.m. and relies on carpooling to get everyone to the lake for that time. Most university programs like this rely on the athletes with vehicles to drive their teammates to practice, since there is no public transit system in place. If this legislation passes as it stands today, it will effectively shut down the Guelph rowing program.

A concerned mother from a rural area wrote to me as well. In her area, they travel 80 to 100 kilometres to play a game of hockey. What if her sons had no way to get there except carpooling? They would probably not be able to go. Her sons are regularly the designated drivers who stay sober and safely drive six people home.

This bill would effectively punish our youth for making good decisions and being responsible. Passing this bill as it is currently written will limit part-time jobs, athletic activities and transportation to school, and will have a negative effect on the environment. It will inconvenience teenagers and families who have legitimate reasons for multiple young people to be travelling together. This would be one more Liberal ban that will hurt rural Ontario.

BRAMPTON CIVIC HOSPITAL

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise today to congratulate the hard work and dedication of Dr. Frank Martino and all of the doctors, nurses and support staff who work hard each and every day at the Brampton Civic Hospital. Their hard work can not and should not go unnoticed.

Just recently, the College of Family Physicians of Canada awarded the Reg L. Perkin Award, which is only awarded to one physician in each province in Canada. I'm proud to say that the Ontario recipient was Dr. Frank Martino of Brampton Civic. Dr. Martino is a gifted physician who has helped countless patients recover from serious illnesses.

Brampton Civic Hospital has had its growing pains. This is a new hospital in Brampton and, like all new, large ventures, it has been adjusting to the needs of the community. However, that has not affected the excellent medical care that is provided by this facility. This hospital, under the leadership of Mr. Ken White and his board, has evolved into a world-class facility that all Bramptonians should be proud of.

Once again, I congratulate Dr. Frank Martino and all the people at Brampton Civic Hospital, and I encourage them to keep up their great work.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to remind the Minister of Health that Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital is in fact in Burlington, not Brantford, as the minister stated during question period.

Minister Caplan threw out all kinds of investments that his government has made into what I assume is our Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. However, the minister refuses to take ownership of the costs associated with the C. difficile outbreak at our hospital. Not only was the hospital forced to fight this deadly outbreak with aging infrastructure, but without any supports from the McGuinty government whatsoever.

The local health integration network was created by Premier McGuinty for the purpose of addressing local needs. Well, this hospital funding model isn't working. Clearly, the LHINs are a puppet arm of the McGuinty government, because they are not taking into account local issues. This is just another way for the Premier to avoid blame and scrutiny. He can say, "Well, it's the LHIN's decision, not my fault." The problem is, Premier, that the residents of Burlington have contributed a significant amount of money into the McGuinty health tax. At the very minimum, they deserve to have access to their hospital, and they deserve that that hospital be capable of delivering services that meet current standards.

My colleagues and I know that the health tax is a sham, but we should not be penalized for the poor accounting practices of this government. The taxpayers of Burlington deserve to have their health tax reinvested in our community. Minister, you need to take LHINs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as you and all members of this chamber are well aware, Ontario and the world are

facing one of the greatest financial crises we've seen in decades, perhaps since the Great Depression.

We need substantial action in Ontario on our economy, on rebuilding manufacturing. We have an opportunity to look at the steps that are being taken in the United States. The United Steelworkers, under the leadership of Leo Gerard, are pressing for development of a new energy economy in that country, and that cry is being taken up in Rust Belt states all over the US. We here in Ontario could take on the jobs crisis following that strategy. We could take on the climate crisis following that strategy. We could retrofit every house, school, hospital, factory and office building in this province, putting hundreds of thousands of people to work, dealing with air pollution that kills 10,000 people a year in this province, and dealing with a climate crisis that, as we are all well aware, continues to grow and grow.

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I urge this government to look at the strategies being put forward by the Steelworkers, to take on board their advice and assessment and to actually bring forward an economic and environmental strategy that will take Ontario into the lead in dealing with these issues.

OTTAWA COMMUNITY IMMIGRANT SERVICES ORGANIZATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise today and highlight for members the great work being done by the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, OCISO, in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

As you know, more than 8,000 immigrants and refugees come to Ottawa to make it their home. As a non-profit group, OCISO has been assisting immigrants and refugees address settlement and integration issues with award-winning programs, including English language training, since 1978.

On November 20, I had the pleasure of attending OCISO's 30th anniversary symposium and gala. Organized in the theme of setting a community agenda and creating a place for everyone, the anniversary conference highlighted critical issues facing immigrants in the larger Ottawa community and proposed meaningful move-forward solutions.

As honorary patron, I was pleased to see the conference bring together community service organizations, public institutions, academics, immigrants and the broader Ottawa community to have a robust dialogue about the importance of immigrants to our community's social vibrancy and overall well-being.

The gala dinner honoured community members and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to assisting immigrants and their families. OCISO also announced a scholarship to honour the former mayor of Ottawa, the late Marion Dewar.

I want to commend the executive director of OCISO, Hamdi Mohamed, and the board chair, Tyler Meredith,

along with the board of directors and all the staff and volunteers for their great service to the Ottawa community.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OF GREATER FORT ERIE

Mr. Kim Craiton: Last week, I had the opportunity to visit the Fort Erie business development centre, which is funded by our government. This centre has a mandate to help promote small businesses, entrepreneurship and economic development in the town of Fort Erie. Under the capable leadership of Helen McCreddie and Marc Aquilina, the BDC offers business loans, counselling seminars, business development plans and government-sponsored self-employment programs.

The business development centre has been delivering the Ontario self-employment benefit and development programs. These two programs provide new entrepreneurs opportunity to create jobs for themselves by providing financial support, business plan development and mentoring during the first year of operations and, in some cases, enabling individuals to receive income support.

Many businesses fail during their first year in business. However, through the mentorship of the Fort Erie BDC and the financial support of OSEB, the survival rate of new business starts is over 85%, with 73% still in business in their fourth year. This is truly an amazing success rate and these two individuals deserve the thanks and congratulations of a grateful community and province, and this assembly.

I want to say thank you, Business Development Centre of Greater Fort Erie, for a job well done.

ROMANIA

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Ninety years ago, on December 1, 1918, the Romanian nation celebrated union with parades, banners flying, flowers and happy faces. So today on the front lawn of this Legislature, we celebrated the Romanian union by raising the Romanian flag. The areas of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania were joined, and that's why Romanians today are very proud of their country.

They were today joined by their organizations, and many of their people came. When the Romanian national anthem was playing and the flag was raised, I happened to be close enough to some of them. You could see them with tears streaming down their faces. It was an emotional moment. I would only hope that when the Canadian flag is ever raised that we have those emotions as well. We honoured this nation, Romania; we honoured their history today; we honoured their sacrifices. When they looked at their flag, they saw it all wrapped up, emotional and celebratory at the same time.

Today, as we celebrate the modern Romania and its entrance into the united Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, we are mindful also of the contributions Romanian Canadians made to our country, because

we find them in all aspects of life. I say to all Romanians, abroad and here, [*Remarks in Romanian*].

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Standing order 63(a) provides that “The Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, November 27, 2008, as required by the Standing Orders of this House and by order of the House dated October 9, 2008, pursuant to Standing Order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal, and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Accordingly, the estimates 2008-09 of these ministries are deemed to be passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

PETITIONS

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with government Bill 126 and it reads:

“Petition on Bill 126:

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s Bill 126, Road Safety Act, 2008, unfairly targets and discriminates against teen drivers; and

“Whereas laws are already in place that punish drivers of all ages who speed and drink and drive; and

“Whereas this bill discourages carpooling and punishes teens who live in areas that don’t have public transportation; and

“Whereas all citizens should be treated the same under the law;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the provincial government revoke Bill 126 and enforce the laws that are already in place to deal with speeders and impaired drivers of all ages.”

I support this petition.

BATHURST HEIGHTS ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are over 2,000 adult ESL students being served by the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre, operated by the Toronto District School Board, in partnership with the province; and

“Whereas this is the only English as a second language (ESL) learning centre in this area of the city located directly on the Spadina subway line, making it accessible for students across the city; and

“Whereas newcomers to Toronto, and in the Lawrence Heights area, need the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre so they can succeed in their career opportunities; and

“Whereas the proposed revitalization of Lawrence Heights threatens the existence of the centre;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that any revitalization of Lawrence Heights include a newcomer centre and ensure that the Bathurst Heights centre continues to exist in the present location.”

I support this petition from the students of Bathurst Heights and affix my name to it.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

“Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

“Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren.”

I fully support this petition and affix my signature to it.

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CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I’m pleased to introduce these petitions from Alex Alexander and his wife, Olga, who have submitted over 1,500 petitions to me. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by” the member for Niagara Falls.

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreason-

ably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

I’m pleased to sign my name in support of this and present it to the House.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the community lab service. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition.

HOSPICES

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas hospices on church or hospital property do not pay taxes;

“Whereas hospices are not-for-profit organizations providing emotional, spiritual and bereavement support and respite care to terminally ill individuals and their family members;

“Whereas a residential hospice (usually an eight- to 10-bed home-like facility) provides around-the-clock care to terminally ill individuals and support to their families;

“Whereas hospice services are provided free of charge;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow hospices across the province to be exempt from municipal taxes.”

I agree with this petition, will sign my signature and send it to the table with Zac.

FERTILITY TREATMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is about funding for in vitro fertilization, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the prevalence and growing incidence of infertility in our population is a medical issue that demands the attention of our public health care system and should be placed on the agenda for funding;

“Whereas fertility treatment, including in vitro fertilization, is a proven medical solution that is unfairly limited to those with the financial means to pursue it, and it should receive significant coverage through the Ontario health care system as soon as possible;

“Whereas in vitro fertilization should be fully funded when deemed medically necessary, without discrimination based on cause or gender; and

“Whereas it is long overdue that financial assistance for fertility treatment be offered to Ontarians. We,” the undersigned, “are residents of the province of Ontario and request that the Ontario provincial government address this important issue.

“We ... strongly support the inclusion of financial assistance by the Ontario Ministry of Health under the Ontario health care program for all fertility treatment for Ontarians,” be they male or be they female.

And since I agree, I am delighted to sign my name to this petition.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

“Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

“Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would

receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren.”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of constituents from my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents,

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerks’ table.

LOGGING ROUTE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with logging in the village of Restoule. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Nipissing forest management plan proposes to use Hawthorne Drive in Restoule, which features a single-lane bridge and narrow and steep sections; and

“Whereas area residents have grave concerns about community safety, traffic speed, truck noise and general wear and tear of Hawthorne Drive and the bridge in the village of Restoule; and

“Whereas the proposed route travels past the Restoule Canadian Legion and two churches; and

“Whereas alternate routes are possible via Odorizzi Road and Block 09-056;

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

“That the government of Ontario put the safety and concerns of the people of Restoule ahead of logging interests and ensure an alternate route is selected for the Nipissing forest management plan.”

I support this petition.

LUPUS

Mr. Kim Craiton: I’m pleased to introduce a petition on behalf of the Lupus Foundation of Ontario, located in Ridgeway, Ontario. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

“Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

“We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario.”

I’m more than pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

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GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: “To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

“Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge;

“Whereas this bridge,” which is an underpass, “will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it’s about 50 metres long). It’s dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high

banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

I certainly agree with this petition and I'm delighted to put my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to read this petition on behalf of my seatmate from Mississauga–Streetsville. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer ... stay in hospital;

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 ... budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign my signature to this petition in support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAKE SIMCOE PROTECTION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION DU LAC SIMCOE

Mr. Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of water quality trading / Projet de loi 99, Loi visant à protéger et à

rétablir la santé écologique du bassin hydrographique du lac Simcoe et à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne un système d'échange axé sur la qualité de l'eau.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the minister for his leadoff speech.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville. Before going any further, let me just thank him and, indeed, all the members of the committee for the hard work that they've done on this particular bill, as well as many, many other people, going back some 20 years, who I will be mentioning a little bit later on.

Let me also thank the members of the opposition for their active participation in the committee hearings. I had the opportunity to watch a lot of the hearings a week ago Friday, when they were rebroadcast on the parliamentary channel. I happened to see both of the public sessions and can well appreciate the hard work and dedication by those people who appeared before the committee; also, the very proactive work that was done by all members of the committee at that point in time to give this bill the proper kind of scrutiny it requires.

Last year, Premier McGuinty stood before the members of the Lake Simcoe community in August 2007. This is a community that has been concerned about the health and safety of the lake for many, many years. He recalled at that point in time a saying that has been said many times before, but the way he said it I think is significant. He basically said that we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors but we borrow it from our children. He committed to the individuals who were there on that particular occasion that our government would permanently protect Lake Simcoe so that our children and our children's children would be able to enjoy its beautiful waters for generations to come. Today we are on the edge of fulfilling this particular promise.

If passed, this legislation would secure the legacy of Lake Simcoe for Ontarians well into the future. It will help preserve the health of the water, its fish, aquatic plants and animals, and it will protect the watershed that supports some of the most ecologically significant wetlands, woodlands and farmlands in Ontario. It will also ensure that the 350,000 people in the eight communities that surround the lake and who draw upon its waters every day can continue to depend on it as their population and economy grow.

Perhaps for the benefit of those Ontarians who may not be all that familiar with Lake Simcoe, let me just give you a few facts about the lake. It was named after John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Canada, in 1793. At the time of the first European contact back in the 17th century, the lake was called—and I hope I have the pronunciation correct—Ouentironk, meaning beautiful water, by the Huron natives. It's located about an hour north of Toronto, and it has a service area of about 30 kilometres in length and 25 kilometres in width, so it has a service area of about 750 square kilometres. The average depth of the lake is 15 metres, with a maximum depth of about 41 metres.

There are about 35 rivers that flow into Lake Simcoe, including the Holland River, the Black River, the Beaver River and the Uxbridge Brook; as well, about 4,000 kilometres of streams flow into the lake. It provides the drinking water for about eight different communities, as I mentioned before, but it also receives treated discharges from about 15 sewage treatment plants that are located at or near the lake.

As we all know, it includes a provincially significant prime agricultural area as well. The most common and best-known area, I suppose, is the Holland Marsh, where we have dominant crops which include lettuce, carrots, onions, celery, corn and alfalfa, and livestock production that includes beef cattle, poultry and horses. People may be surprised to hear that it has an annual value of farm production that exceeded \$300 million in the year 2006 alone.

It's also an important tourist destination year-round, through fishing, boating, cottaging and swimming, and of course it's a very significant link in the Trent-Severn water system that flows from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron. Maybe it's the other way around. It's probably from Lake Huron to Lake Ontario. It has recreational activities—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You'd better figure that one out.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes. I remember somebody else had that one wrong at one point in time. But it is right: from Huron to Lake Ontario.

Recreational activities alone generate more than \$200 million a year for the local economy.

But with all the development that has taken place and all the people who live there, people may be interested in knowing that approximately 35%—so more than a third—of the Lake Simcoe watershed is under natural cover with woodlands and wetlands. It supports a wide range of aquatic fish, coldwater fish such as lake trout and whitefish. Traditionally, the Lake Simcoe area has been known as Canada's ice-fishing capital, although the lake no longer currently supports a naturally breeding cold-water fishery. That's just one of the threats to the lake the way it currently exists.

There are other threats as well: excessive phosphorus and other pollutants such as chloride, organic carbon, iron, toxic metals, organic chemicals and inorganic pesticides and pharmaceuticals. Invasive species are there: the rusty crayfish, the round goby, and the zebra mussel. And, of course, climate change is having its effect there, as it has in so many other places as well. There is a loss and fragmentation of natural areas and habitat, and changes to the hydrological cycle and human use of fish and other resources.

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So you could well see from the description I have given that it's absolutely essential to protect the lake the best way that we know how.

Once again, if this legislation is passed, it will secure the legacy of Lake Simcoe for Ontarians well into the future. It would preserve the health of the water, its fish

and aquatic plants and animals. Bill 99 would have a unique potential to impact people, communities and economies all across Ontario.

If passed, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act would allow us to develop and implement the Lake Simcoe protection plan, which would set the gold standard for water sustainability. Let me just underscore that: What we have here in the bill today is basically the enabling legislation that would allow the government, through the Ministry of the Environment, to develop a plan for Lake Simcoe. It is my belief that building a clean, healthy future based on the sustainability of our water and our resources, and in support of our quality of life, is one of the most important goals that we can realize as legislators. The legislation would allow us to be better stewards of the environment that all of us have been entrusted to protect.

Our government has focused on a clean, safe and healthy environment as a matter of principle and priority since our election in 2003. We have brought in pioneering legislation and put critical measures in place, including major steps to protect and preserve our water. If you remember, we have introduced a Clean Water Act, which protects Ontario's existing and future drinking water sources. We're working with the federal government to improve and protect the health of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem, and with the states and provinces surrounding the basin on water conservation and efficiency programs.

We've put in place some of the most rigorous water protection measures in North America, including a strengthened ban on water diversions. If passed, this act complements that work. Through it, we will tackle threats to the water quality and ecological integrity of the largest inland lake other than the Great Lakes in southern Ontario. And by reducing phosphorus and other pollutants, responding to new and emerging threats such as invasive species and climate change, and mitigating the impact of population growth and development on the lake, we can restore and protect it for our benefit and that of future generations.

I want to acknowledge, as I mentioned earlier, that our government's commitment to Lake Simcoe and the protection of it is matched by the commitment of many partners who have worked on its behalf over many, many years. They all took part in the process to help us develop legislation to protect the lake in the best way possible.

I think of the LSEMS process that has been going on with the conservation authority in the Lake Simcoe area for at least the last 20 years. I think of all of those individual groups, such as the Ladies of the Lake and many of the other groups that have been formed to protect Lake Simcoe. They have done an awful lot of the spadework; they have done an awful lot of the work that is required and that brings us here today.

I want to thank all of those individuals and municipalities, conservation authorities, scientists, residents, cottagers, businesses, farmers and environmental groups and others who offered us the benefit of their insight, experiences and opinions, as well as the aboriginal communities, whose teachings and traditional indigenous

values encourage the work of protecting, defending and healing the earth, for providing their unique perspective.

I also want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources, my seatmate here, together with her ministry, because they provided invaluable contributions to the process as well.

I can tell you, hundreds have responded to the discussion paper, attended workshops and forums. I can remember attending two of these myself, one in Barrie and one in Newmarket, that were attended by literally hundreds of individuals.

I also want to thank all those who commented on the draft legislation which has been posted on the environmental registry.

If the bill is passed, I urge all of these partners, all those individuals, organizations and stakeholders, to remain involved. Protecting Lake Simcoe will be a collaborative effort that will occur over many years. It will require the hard work, diligence, co-operation, of all of us and, yes, also financing.

Bill 99 has been reviewed by the Standing Committee on General Government, and over the two days of public hearings we heard many positive comments, as I talked about earlier.

For example, Anne Golden attended. She's a cottager, and she's also a member of the West Oro Ratepayers' Association. Of course, the members of the House will know her as one of Canada's leaders in the public policy arena and as president and CEO of the Conference Board of Canada. She called Bill 99 "enlightened" and said that the government is doing the right thing with this legislation. She noted that, if passed, the bill would protect the lake from being destroyed by inappropriate land uses.

Erin Mahoney, the commissioner of environmental services for the regional municipality of York, said, "The region would like to commend the province for its very proactive approach to protecting Lake Simcoe."

Claire Malcolmson of Campaign Lake Simcoe, which is a coalition of 40 local groups, thanked our government for introducing the act and saluted the non-partisan nature of the effort to save Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

I would like to thank all of these individuals.

I have a number of other quotes here that I think will add to that as well.

For example, Environmental Defence, when it came before the standing committee hearings on Bill 99, stated: "We are overjoyed that the government is going to take action, as it has done in the greenbelt and elsewhere, to create world-class legislation to protect this threatened yet still magnificent resource."

Ontario Nature, in another comment that was made before the standing committee, stated: "As a partner in Campaign Lake Simcoe, Ontario Nature would like to applaud the Ontario Ministry of the Environment for the introduction of the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. This act is a tremendous positive step in protecting this beautiful lake and the regional economy at its heart. It also begins to recognize that what happens on the land determines what happens to our lake."

Earthroots, in another comment made before the standing committee, stated: "I'd like to say how encouraging it is that the government has taken this really critical progressive step of introducing legislation for Lake Simcoe. We're really enthused that the Ontario provincial government sees the incredibly urgent need for affording meaningful protection to this vital watershed."

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, at the same hearings, stated that it wanted to congratulate the government on its leadership on this important issue.

Finally, Conservation Ontario stated, amongst other things: "I would like to acknowledge the government's steps toward legislating a watershed protection plan. Conservation authorities are in full agreement that the best way to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed is through an integrated watershed management plan. This approach takes into consideration all the activities taking place on the land within the surrounding watershed which may impact the lake itself. It draws on the best available science,"—and I want to underline that: We've used the best available science in coming up with the plan—"which has been and will continue to be provided in large part by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority."

These were just some of the comments that were made during the committee hearings.

Again, I also want to thank the committee members for their thoughtful consideration of the bill—members on all sides of the House. We have made amendments that I believe make a strong proposal even stronger. Let me just highlight a few.

In a motion introduced by our NDP colleagues, we have amended the reporting timelines. Previously, the minister was required to report on the results of monitoring programs or objectives achieved under the protection plan "from time to time." This has been amended to say "at least every five years." We've made amendments to Bill 99 to clarify the continuing role of conservation authorities in the protection and management of the watershed. One amendment makes it clear that conservation authorities are included with municipalities and other local boards in coordinating policies related to the Lake Simcoe protection plan. Another adds the Conservation Authorities Act to the list of examples of provincial legislation upon which the plan would build, thus responding to concerns that it not overlap with existing legislation or programs.

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I have referred to the Lake Simcoe protection plan throughout these remarks. But as you know, and as I stated before, Bill 99 is enabling legislation that will require the province to develop a comprehensive plan to protect and restore the lake. My ministry has been developing this long-term protection strategy with the support of two highly respected committees established by our government.

The first is the Lake Simcoe science advisory committee, which was set up to provide advice on the latest science on how to improve and protect the lake. I under-

stand that this committee has met on at least half a dozen occasions—I have had the opportunity to meet with them at least twice myself—and we have benefited tremendously from the scientific know-how and advice they've given us with respect to developing the plan.

We also have the Lake Simcoe stakeholder advisory committee, which ensures that any proposed policies reflect the broadest range of perspectives, while still remaining practical and realistic. This is a committee made up of some 20 individuals, with whom I have met as well, who I believe have met at least half a dozen times as well and who provide the broad range of interests that individuals or organizations may have with respect to the lake, from developers to farmers to tourist operators to environmentalists to ordinary citizens as well.

Members of both these committees have made an invaluable contribution over the past several months. I sincerely thank them, and we look forward to a continuing productive relationship in the future.

If Bill 99 is passed, we will be in a position to post a draft protection plan for consultation. We would also hold a series of workshops and forums to gain additional public comment. We hope to have the protection plan finalized as soon as possible thereafter.

Our government has committed \$20 million over four years to support Lake Simcoe. We realize that much more is needed and will be there at the appropriate time. These funds will be directed to protection measures, to promote better stewardship practices on farms and to support ongoing research and monitoring. In fact, several research projects are already under way, which look specifically at improving Lake Simcoe's water quality. For instance, the Phoslock pilot project, led by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, is studying how this clay-based product could potentially be used to reduce phosphorus entering the lake, including that from the Holland Marsh. We look forward to seeing the results of this and other studies.

I want to end by recognizing that while the need to restore and protect Lake Simcoe and its watershed for its own sake is clear, it is also important in a broader context. From fishing and agriculture to boating, tourism and recreation, Lake Simcoe is directly responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars of local economic activity each and every year. In fact, environmental protection is closely linked to economic growth and prosperity across the province. No one would choose to live, buy or invest in an area where the environment is degraded. As we work to attract the best and brightest to Ontario from around the world, we must continue to protect our water and all of our resources from harm so our natural environment remains the attraction and matter of enjoyment and pride that it has been for so long.

We must also recognize that while Ontario has been blessed with the incredibly valuable resource of water, we, quite frankly, should never take it for granted. It is not an unlimited resource. Our water is under threat from climate change and from pressures of growth and development. As a responsible government, we must take

responsibility for its management and use in the same way that we commit to its good health, cleanliness and safety.

Bill 99 responds to these issues and, if passed, it will allow us to restore and protect Lake Simcoe and develop a gold standard of sustainability that could safeguard watersheds and ecosystems across Ontario. I mentioned earlier that we have worked closely with the aboriginal communities as well, and in particular, in this case, with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, on the proposed legislation and protection plan. I've been struck by their understanding of the inextricable link between people and the environment. They clearly understand that what happens on the land affects the water, and that what happens on the water affects all of us, and we agree.

If passed, Bill 99 would allow us to do what needs to be done to bring Lake Simcoe back to good health, now and for the future. By protecting these water resources they will help ensure the health of our communities, our people, our economies and the quality of life for our children and their children for years to come. I therefore urge all members in this Legislature to support this legislation so that we can get on with building the actual protection plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It certainly is a pleasure today to rise, and as parliamentary assistant to the minister, I'm pleased to join the Honourable John Gerretsen in support of the passage of Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. We all know that we live in a province that has a large number of rivers and lakes—it's what we are famous for—and while we're rightfully known for the vast water resources we have, it would be a mistake for anybody in the province of Ontario, including the politicians, to take any of that for granted. It's an issue that affects us all. Water and the issues associated with protecting that water are complex and very wide-ranging.

I've had the opportunity on a number of occasions now to visit Africa, and as we all know, that is a continent that is experiencing tremendous hardship related to drought and the displacement of many hundreds of thousands of people from land that actually was once arable and very productive. Here in Ontario we are incredibly blessed. We turn on a tap and what comes out is clean, safe drinking water. We know we have to protect and restore the freshwater resources we have in this province, and by supporting Bill 99 you are going to help to do that at Lake Simcoe.

In the case of Lake Simcoe, some 350,000 Ontarians depend on that lake for both their livelihood and their clean water supply. It's a lake that generates almost \$500 million a year, and that's from agricultural and recreational interests. Outside of the Great Lakes themselves, Lake Simcoe is the largest body of fresh water in southern Ontario. You'll find, if you look, that more than 30 rivers end their journey in Lake Simcoe. The lake itself provides water for eight communities, including the

larger communities of Barrie and Orillia, where we know we can expect growth to continue into the future. If you look, you'll see that the wetlands, the agriculture and the recreational waterways are part of a very large, dynamic ecosystem that forms the watershed.

The latest data we have tell us 33 of the species that depend on Lake Simcoe are currently at risk. Phosphorus levels in the lake are at a point when they are taking up much of the dissolved oxygen that is needed by the cold-water fish that are a large part of the lake's recreational attraction.

It's obvious to all that the lake is in trouble. Something needs to be done. We cannot just sit by and hope that the lake's going to repair itself; that simply isn't going to happen.

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Lake Simcoe's problems have been receiving a lot of attention for the past 20 years. Many of you in this chamber would be familiar with the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy. This is a volunteer group that brings together all levels of government, regional stakeholders and First Nations communities, and they all work together to find ways to protect and restore Lake Simcoe. In preparing for this legislation, we consulted with and received input and advice from these groups, from other municipalities, from businesses, from cottagers, and from our own Ministry of Natural Resources as well as from other ministries.

Earlier this year, we appointed the Lake Simcoe science advisory committee and we worked very closely with the stakeholder advisory committee. These committees have provided us with their best advice on the ways that we can work to restore the health of the Lake Simcoe ecosystem.

We also initiated an aboriginal engagement process in December. That's to coordinate the input and advice being received from Ontario's aboriginal communities, particularly the First Nations who live near or on or depend on the lake itself. Bill 99 seeks to strengthen the already successful partnerships we have established in this regard, and what it does is provide a monitored and well-coordinated effort.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy working group, Bill 99 includes a proposal for the creation of two advisory committees. One is the coordinating body and the other is a science advisory committee that's going to ensure that the best science is applied to this process at all times.

The Lake Simcoe Protection Act will also allow the government to increase support for ecosystem planning. It's going to pursue separate studies for both agricultural uses and urban uses. It's going to continue the scientific monitoring that is taking place, and it's going to contribute even more to resources that involve public outreach and educational programs. As promised by our Premier earlier, the processes and reporting on this will be regular and transparent.

Last June we allotted \$20 million to help start protection measures, and they are going to promote better

stewardship practices on the farms that depend on Lake Simcoe, farms like those, for example, that comprise the Holland Marsh. We've got about 2,000 farms in the area. The agricultural importance of the lake is simply not in question. These farmers have already put into practice some 300 environmental improvement projects.

Phosphorus is a key water quality concern that should be of concern to all of us. We need to find ways to reduce it, and we're going to look at the most innovative and the best science to help us do that. In fact, this summer I personally had the pleasure of attending at Lake Simcoe a demonstration of what is called Phoslock. The results look very promising, and we're already investing in further studies. This is why we've invested a quarter of a million dollars in this exciting project to study its effectiveness, and we're looking forward to seeing the results.

This investment was also part of our recent investment of \$850,000. Some of that money is going to research. Some of it is going to projects that focus on protecting the watershed, as well as to smaller groups that are passionate about raising public awareness of Lake Simcoe. We know that this money has been well spent.

In my visits to the watershed this past summer, I've seen first-hand how dedicated, how passionate and how committed these groups are. I believe it's our responsibility as a government to encourage and to add to the momentum that they themselves have created. If we're going to ensure a sustainable future for Lake Simcoe and indeed for the province of Ontario, government, business, environmental groups and researchers need to work alongside communities and with all our stakeholders.

Supporting the efforts of 23 local municipalities that share the lake is simply essential in our efforts to turn things around. Bill 99 calls for more environmental programs that would work with local initiatives to raise awareness and to assist in any and all steps that are being taken to restore the lake or upgrade systems that have the potential for improvement. Scientific analysis and best available technologies are also critical components.

The plan we're developing will take an innovative, science-based watershed approach to ensure that development and activities around the lake are indeed environmentally sustainable.

We're in the process of improving what we already know about limiting contaminant levels. We've already established strict interim limits on phosphorus levels into Lake Simcoe from local discharge points. We have the committees already in place that are advising us about the best ways to restore and protect the lake's ecosystem, and to date, the results are very encouraging.

But now, today, it's time to take the next step. The passing of Bill 99 is going to allow us to begin public consultations on the proposed Lake Simcoe protection plan. Bill 99 provides the framework that we need to move quickly to protect Lake Simcoe and provide a gold standard for similar acts that may be required around the province of Ontario for other watersheds, for other lakes and for other ecosystems.

I support and I encourage others to support this bill. I think it's working to restore and to protect Lake Simcoe. It's a priority of this province; it should be a priority for us all. It's a challenge we simply need to address, a challenge that's put before us because Lake Simcoe is an essential resource. It's a large part of Ontario's natural heritage and certainly worth the effort of all parties it's going to take to preserve it for generations to come. We have expressed our commitment in words, we've expressed our commitment in actions, and we plan to continue.

Sustainable and healthy communities are the key to Ontario's future, and nothing is more fundamental to that basic success than water. There's a strong agreement by all parties on the need to develop a comprehensive, long-term, science-based plan that's going to protect and restore Lake Simcoe.

If passed, Bill 99 is going to allow us to develop this plan and take the necessary steps forward on behalf of the people in the watershed and the people of Ontario. I sincerely hope that all members will offer their support to this bill.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to rise to speak for a few moments in support of Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, because after all, it was my colleague Mr. Garfield Dunlop, the member from Simcoe North, who brought this matter forward in a private member's resolution which was argued in this Legislature in November 2006. Being a long-time resident of Simcoe county and being quite familiar with the lake, he understood its strategic importance and the need to preserve it for future generations. I'm very pleased to be speaking in favour of it.

From my view of it anyway, there are three very basic goals to be achieved by the legislation. One, of course, is to protect the water supply for future generations, to make sure that those people who depend on it as a primary source of clean drinking water will be able to do that through the preventive measures that it's going to be bringing in. There's also the issue of the businesses that depend on Lake Simcoe being a viable lake that is in good shape for the sports and recreation facilities, for the fishing that goes on there and for the many people who have cottages and homes there and all the other spinoff businesses that are dependent on that as well.

But I think probably the most important one when we're talking about such matters in the Legislature is the fact that it is part of our natural heritage and it does have a very important ecosystem. It also has very important natural features that are part of our heritage, that we should be thinking about preserving for future generations so that they will have the opportunity to live, work and play in the area.

We should be using this example as we move forward and think about all of our lakes here in the province, to make sure they are maintained. We need to be mindful that we're only stewards of these natural features for the

time we are here, and we want to make sure they're here for generations to come.

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

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: In the absence of my colleagues from the New Democrats, I will take this time slot as MPP for the riding of Barrie.

The House probably is well aware how delighted I am that the McGuinty government is moving forward on bringing in new laws and measures to protect Lake Simcoe through the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of the Environment, John Gerretsen, and very much the parliamentary assistant, MPP Kevin Flynn, for their hard work and dedication to this cause. My colleague has spoken to me a number of times of his visits to the watershed, to the area, telling me of the people he has met and the insights he has gained and the co-operation he has received, and has kept me very apprised of all that he has done to make sure this is an exceptional piece of legislation.

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As has been said, Lake Simcoe is a critical resource and a great treasure to the people who live and work and play in the city of Barrie. Kempenfelt Bay, which is that portion of Lake Simcoe on which we sit, contributes hugely to our quality of life. People from Barrie indeed care very much about Lake Simcoe and about the quality of water and the sustainability of the ecosystem. Public information sessions that were held—it seems some time ago, but I guess it's not all that long ago—in Barrie were very well attended. I know Minister Gerretsen and I were there at one in the east end and he commented to me that he had not attended for some time such an excellent session with such a variety of groups and individuals from a number of backgrounds, and about the very positive manner in which they contributed to the process. So indeed we have listened and the government of Ontario has listened, and we now move forward in our development of the protection plan.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker and the House, for this opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speeches made by the Minister of the Environment and the member for Oakville on Bill 99, which is An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed. I'm certainly supportive of protecting Lake Simcoe. I know that we'll be hearing from some PC members; the member for Simcoe North has had a private member's resolution on this issue before, and the member for York-Simcoe is also very much affected by the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Speaking for the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, I would like to ask for help in our area as well. The member for Oakville talked about how impressed he was with the pilot project to do with Phoslock. That has come up in my riding as well, to do with the Sturgeon Bay

area, which is just north of Parry Sound on beautiful Georgian Bay, part of the UNESCO world biosphere reserve, and certainly a spectacular part of the world. Sturgeon Bay and one other body of water in Parry Sound–Muskoka, Three Mile Lake, have both had problems with blue-green algae. Certainly the Sturgeon Bay association in the Pointe au Baril area have specifically asked for help with the possibility of using the Phoslock process in Sturgeon Bay to try to clean it up, so I would ask the government to not forget about the beautiful coast of Georgian Bay. I certainly want to see work done in Lake Simcoe, but, speaking for my constituents, I would also like to see some attention paid to Sturgeon Bay and Three Mile Lake in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Okay. We'll return to the government. The member for Oakville has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It certainly is a pleasure to reply and to hear some of the positive comments that we're hearing.

What people have said on a number of occasions is that the work we're doing on Lake Simcoe is work that we're hoping can be translated to the rest of the province. It's an example of how we can protect a watershed, it's an example of how we can approach some of the problems that have plagued that watershed, and we're hopeful that this is going to begin a process that is going to allow this to be turned around. So it's great to hear the support from all sides of the House for this, because I think that not only is this an exercise and a process that is going to be a successful example of how we can grow sustainably in a watershed, but it's also going to provide some learnings that we'll be able to apply to other areas of the province of Ontario in an innovative and very exciting way. So while all the focus may be on the Lake Simcoe area and its watershed right now, I think those of us who have a more visionary outlook on sustainable development—and that certainly is a lot of the groups we were able to work with within the Lake Simcoe watershed—will see this as an example of what happens when groups are able to work together, when the levels of government are able to work together and when everybody brings their best ideas to the table with the overall intent being that we're going to clean up what is really a natural treasure. It certainly is a provincial treasure but, when you look around the entire country, I think you'll see few places that are as beautiful and as well used and utilized as Lake Simcoe.

It's really encouraging to hear some of the support from all sides of the House. My thanks for the co-operation that I've received from members of the other party and certainly from all the community groups—the hospitality I received when I visited those areas was second to none. These people deserve our support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to take another look at Bill 99, the Wayne Gretzky bill, as

it's known in some quarters; also referred to as the Lake Simcoe act.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I call it the Mike Harris second majority bill.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'll be sharing some of my time with that gentleman who is actually speaking right now, the gentleman who introduced this concept into the Legislature in 2006. As it was just mentioned, Garfield Dunlop, the MPP for Simcoe North, pretty well got the ball rolling based on his lifelong experience with not only the lake but the watershed and adjoining issues.

I do note, however, that today's debate time, as it has progressed, has been indicative a bit of the slam-bam-ram-it-through approach. We were notified of this debate, I think it was just late Friday, something like 3:30 Friday afternoon, and we've seen a bit too much of this during this fall session. I think of the WSIB legislation. That was speeded through for members of this government to get in the good books with some of their cronies. The pre-budget hearings—we are in a very sticky economic situation right now. To ram through pre-budget hearings before Christmas, when they're normally held throughout the end of January and on into February—I'm concerned the kinds of things we hear before the finance committee the week before Christmas may not have much relevance next April, when the budget kicks in. So I think it's very important that we continue to get this right and continue with the debate.

Because the notification was late Friday for this third reading debate, I wish to commend Rob Willett in my office, who worked on Saturday and Sunday; Debbie Osske worked over the weekend. Work was previously done under some of these last-minute deadlines, which to me indicate poor planning. Bobbi Ann Dwornikiewicz in my office, and also David Isern, had to jump into the fray with very little time, just before the clause-by-clause deliberation before the committee.

I understand that we can likely expect this law to be on the books, as it were, by the end of this day. So I'm not sure what good it really does to, in a sense, continue to debate this afternoon a piece of proposed legislation that appears to be already a done deal.

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I wish to remind people of work that was done over the past year or two by John Tory in the form of an eight-point plan for Lake Simcoe. It included a number of issues:

(1) Funding: an immediate call for \$12 million to be disseminated over two years, matching that federal government funding to support a Lake Simcoe action fund to speed up the cleanup.

(2) to develop a new governance structure for the lake, again, working with stakeholders;

(3) to create a Lake Simcoe charter;

(4) to increase and streamline funding for not only water but also waste water infrastructure for projects that impact Lake Simcoe, impact the Lake Simcoe watershed and other areas across the province;

(5) to end the dumping of primary sewage into our water;

(6) to hire more conservation officers to protect the lake and rebuild the Ministry of Natural Resources so it can better maintain not only the health of this lake but other water resources across Ontario;

(7) to conserve more green space with a land conservation challenge fund. Again, it would apply to areas like Lake Simcoe;

(8) to invest in better GO train service through the Lake Simcoe area, again, to reduce pollution, the dust that is stirred up by highways—and anybody who parks a vehicle at Queen's Park is well aware what their vehicle looks like at the end of the week with the dust that gets blown in. Primarily, it would be from the Gardiner Expressway, the 427 and the QEW.

So, better transit, a positive impact on smog, a positive impact with respect to climate change—all issues that have been discussed, all issues that threaten the health of this particular lake.

I just wanted to reiterate a few of those points. I feel they're very important to keep in mind as we continue to discuss the bill that's before us today. I will say, at least the McGuinty team did allow the general government committee to hear from the public. That was on November 17, and with that in mind, today I hope to provide some insight on what we learned during that time since we last discussed this in the committee of the whole—it was in this House—time spent in committee consulting as well as hearing from those who were impacted, either directly or somewhat indirectly, by the nature of this proposed bill.

As you will hear, a number of familiar themes were raised during these public submissions, including governance, funding, shoreline buffers, protection from lawsuits, committee representation and composition of committees, the enforcement of regulation and the transition to regulation. It's important to reiterate right from the get-go that there are 350,000 people living in the Lake Simcoe watershed. There are another 250,000 people on the way, we're told, over the next 25 years. Ontario Nature testified before the committee. They indicated a doubling of the human population in this watershed in the coming years. I raise this as a warning of what we have in store with regard to the human footprint that will be unavoidable, no matter what kind of Lake Simcoe protection plan this government conjures.

That said, I would like to share some of the recommendations that we heard during committee hearings. The input from delegates was significant. Just in the last hour or so, we can tell it's had some impact on some of the deliberations.

First up: the Innisfil District Association. This is a ratepayers' group with about 700 members. They had a very thorough report in which they highlighted a number of concerns. The recommendations that they brought forward I noticed were reiterated—they came up time and time again in a number of other groups. I don't know whether they all hired the same consultant; obviously there was an awful lot of communication amongst the various deputants, and that's a good thing. Innisfil

district's number one concern was lack of transparency and how transition regulations are going to work under the new legislation. They stated: "If people continue to see sprawling, unsustainable suburbs sprouting up in Simcoe county over the next 10 years, they're not going to believe your government has addressed the environmental health issues of Lake Simcoe." This group felt that government had not adequately anticipated the response to this apparent contradiction, adding there was need to "set strict development regulations accordingly." This group also saw a lack of clarity when it came to the plan and with respect to shoreline development restrictions, stating that they must apply to residential redevelopments, resort development servicing, and include a shoreline restoration plan.

The Innisfil group also pointed out concerns with regard to alterations of the shoreline, as it pertains to the Big Bay Point project development, stating that the project represents a situation of a developer being allowed to dig an inland lake of 30 acres to accommodate a 1,000-boat-slip mega-marina which connects to the lake. This would seem to not only pose a further threat to the deteriorating condition of Lake Simcoe, but also to be unjust and unfair.

I'll continue their point: "The government must provide protection for its citizens from strategic lawsuits...." These are the SLAPPs, strategic lawsuits against public participation. They go on to say, "Lawsuits outstanding against our members, lawyers and other critics of the Big Bay Point projects now total over \$90 million." This act is "meaningless unless residents can speak out openly against projects that threaten the environment. This government should move quickly"—this is one of their recommendations—"as Quebec has done, to guarantee that citizens be allowed to participate free from the chill of developer lawsuits."

As I recall, either this presenter or one of the presenters somewhat furtively turned around and looked at the audience and indicated that he was subject to a \$1-million lawsuit. I found that a little disturbing. We had these hearings just a few days after Remembrance Day, and we all understand why people stepped up and fought on our behalf. It was to have those kinds of freedoms: to be able to not only assemble, but also to speak up without the kind of intimidation that was conveyed to us by some of the people who came before the committee.

This brings me to some comments about this SLAPP program. SLAPP stands for strategic lawsuits against public participation. The province of Quebec introduced legislation against this kind of intimidation. In fact, our legislative research person assigned to the Standing Committee on General Government provided some information on these kinds of lawsuits. "SLAPP" is a term used to describe lawsuits initiated by plaintiffs, typically corporations, to stifle criticism of their actions. Such lawsuits are often filed in environmental and land disputes against members of the public or public interest organizations. The legislative researcher made a number of points for us, for our information.

(1) Very few of these SLAPPs end up going to trial. However—this is understandable—critics charge that such suits are typically filed to divert the defendants' resources and shift the venue from the political to the legal realm, where the plaintiff enjoys the advantage.

(2) Most of these SLAPPs plead multiple causes of action, such as defamation and interference with contractual relations.

(3) Defendants and other critics may become intimidated and cease their political interventions as a consequence.

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The issue of intimidation is somewhat near and dear to my heart. I represent Haldimand county and Caledonia. I have witnessed a significant amount of intimidation over the last two and a half years and, I might add, going on 200 years with respect to the land dispute around Douglas Creek Estates subdivision, Six Nations and the Caledonia area. In fact, as a member of this Legislative Assembly, I might notify you of this: I've been named in a multi-billion dollar lawsuit. My name is on a lawsuit, something in the order of \$260 billion, because I choose to speak out with respect to land disputes. It would clear out my pension plan if I had one—I guess that goes for everybody in this room.

Now whether you're named in a million dollar lawsuit or in a \$260 billion—I have trouble getting around that figure and so does my wife, because she opens the mail—I find that does intimidate one; it does prevent one from freely and openly speaking out on some of the things that we believe in and speaking out, in my case, on behalf of the 107,000 people I represent. I sensed in the room during those committee hearings—at least one deputant indicated they felt intimidated to speak out on behalf of the 700 people or so people that they were trying to represent with respect to the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Going back to Quebec, on June 13, 2008, Quebec's Minister of Justice—and I should check my notes: it indicates here he introduced a bill that was titled Bill 99. Now that's awfully coincidental, however, the long title of this Quebec bill: An Act to amend the Code of Civil Procedure to prevent abusive use of the courts and to promote freedom of expression and citizen participation in public debate. That bill amended Quebec's Code of Civil Procedure to allow the courts to dismiss a court proceeding deemed to be abusive if the claim or proceeding "is clearly unfounded, frivolous or dilatory"—I'm not sure; I assume that "dilatory" means to delay or to obstruct. What is a dilatory? I throw that across to the members opposite.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Dilatory is like John Tory.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Again, I'll have no delay or obstruction at this point—"or in a conduct that is vexatious or quarrelsome. It may also consist in bad faith, in a use of procedure that is excessive or unreasonable or causes prejudice to another person, or in a perversion of the ends of justice, in particular if it operates to restrict freedom of expression in public debate."

This Quebec bill allows the courts to order the payment of a provision for costs, declare that a legal action is abusive, condemn a party to pay the fees and extrajudicial costs of the other party, and order a party to pay punitive damages. That was from Legislative research; I thank them for that. Apparently, in Quebec Bill 99 received first reading, was sent to committee in October; however—and I'm afraid we in this House know how this story plays out—it died on the order paper when the provincial election was called on November 5.

Back to some further comments from the Innisfil group. In their submission they go on to state that the Lake Simcoe coordinating committee that is called for in section 19 as well as the science committee are both considered to be very essential advisory bodies. However, they have no real powers. That aside, the group advocated that environmental groups should be well represented on the Lake Simcoe coordinating committee, and to use their words, in order to provide "transparency, co-operation and public credibility." Essentially, they felt that public and environmental interests are underrepresented in the governance provision as it was written. Later, they also reported concerns with section 26 being too restrictive on wildlife and healthy habitats, feeling that areas of land adjacent or close to the shoreline of Lake Simcoe should—and again I'll read part of their submission, "land within a 100-metre distance to the lake, shoreline, ... tributary of Lake Simcoe, as defined in the plan."

I have a bit of a problem with a set distance in metres. It may be okay for a municipal park, for example, but not so much Mother Nature. Mother Nature doesn't really operate on these kinds of boundaries and restrictions. If there was a very large marsh based on a very significant aquifer, 100 metres isn't necessarily good enough. Again, it referred to the shoreline of Lake Simcoe, and I just think there are still some people who may not think in terms of watershed. We're talking about the watershed, not just the lake, not just the shoreline. I know that would be of interest to the 12,000 or 14,000 cottagers who may ring the shore, but we're looking at the watershed in its totality, hence the value of having the involvement of a group like the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority.

But going further, the group argued for permanent protection of natural area, including meeting habitat guidelines, and pointed out, rightfully so, that forests filter contaminants from the land. Their report indicates that the Innisfil wetlands area has been drained over the years, and currently the municipality has only about 15% to 17% forest cover. That's well below the guidelines from Environment Canada.

So, just to summarize their presentation—and I focused more on this group than some of the others, because they did pretty well cover the watershed—I would collapse it into five major points: They feel the act should apply equally to marinas, resorts and residential developments; it should have an early effective date; not allow significant shoreline alteration, and buffers should be a

minimum of 100 metres; targets for phosphorus, surface impermeability and natural cover must follow the advice of the scientific advisory committee; and there should be adequate and sustained funding for the plan.

We also heard from another group, EarthRoots. They told us that the Lake Simcoe Act, like any piece of environmental legislation—there are certainly areas that need some more work. They stated their anticipation, and I quote, “problems with the soft, ambiguous language. We have legitimate concerns that the use of the word ‘significant’ insinuates a level of threat that is open to interpretation, which, therefore, could be used to disregard threats not deemed to be ‘significant.’” Then they advised, obviously, that the language be strengthened.

Again I quote, “In particular, the committee’s 100-metre naturally vegetated buffer recommendation ... must be followed.” The greenbelt’s 60-metre buffer is insufficient for effective wildlife corridors.

I don’t recall if they were referring to a 100-metre wildlife corridor just around the rim of the lake. Wildlife corridors would be necessary, obviously, in the thousands of kilometres of streams that drain into Lake Simcoe. Having travelled the area several times this summer, I think it’s an area that still has fence rows. If they can be allowed to continue to expand in shrubbery and trees—again, I grow cash crop, and we find if you can give up eight rows of corn, maybe 16 rows of corn along a fence line, you have over time a wildlife corridor. Much of it seemed to be focused just on the shoreline. We have to think about the whole watershed.

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They added, “Since the Lake Simcoe Protection Act is modelled on acclaimed laws that already exist in Ontario, notably the Niagara Escarpment plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, it is imperative that our government learn from the mistakes and omissions from these pieces of legislation.”

They questioned the real priority being placed on hydrological integrity when water-intensive operations such as aggregates and golf courses are allowed to flout the rules surrounding the Ministry of the Environment’s permit-to-take-water process. They indicated that Newmarket and Aurora have been experiencing declining groundwater levels for over 10 years. They called for a moratorium on any new or expanded golf courses in the greenbelt and recommended, “It is ... essential that the government address the urgent need to protect this vital watershed and prohibit any new golf courses or any new aggregate operations in this protected area.”

I don’t recall hearing from gravel pits, sand or stone quarries. I don’t recall any testimony from golf courses. That concerns me, when legislation gets put on a bit of a fast track.

Another group, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers’ Associations, made a number of recommendations. They called for equal representation of all stakeholders, strong enforcement of regulations and real consequences for offenders. They want a funding plan for sustainable planning and implementation over time.

Another group that presented—it’s referred to as BILD, which stands for Building Industry and Land Development Association—is an association that is the result of a merger of UDI, the Urban Development Institute, and the Greater Toronto Home Builders’ Association. They have 1,500 members and they’re affiliated with the Ontario and the Canadian Home Builders’ Associations. The report was presented by Joe Vaccaro. It’s a fairly detailed submission, outlining the rigorous land use planning regulatory regime that has already been developed in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Vaccaro went on to list just about every piece of related legislation you could think of, including the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, the Nutrient Management Act, the Planning Act—including Bill 26, the Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act, Bill 51, the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act—as well as a number of provincial policy statements, the Ontario Heritage Act, the Greenbelt Act, the greenbelt plan, the Places to Grow Act, Places to Grow, the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the South Georgian Bay-Lake Simcoe source protection plan. The intent there, I think, was just to indicate the kind of legislation that they end up dealing with during the course of their business.

Then they listed all the local plans and policies that are involved in land use decisions more locally—the County of Simcoe Growth Management Study, the Intergovernmental Action Plan for Simcoe, Barrie and Orillia, Ontario regulation 170/06, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, the draft Simcoe area growth plan, the official plan review for Simcoe county, Planning for Tomorrow, which was done in York region, Growing Durham from Durham region, and Liveable Peel, Peel region.

Then they got into some more recent technical studies that they are involved in, including: the Watershed Report Card in 2008—it was a report on Lake Simcoe—the Assimilative Capacity Studies for the Lake Simcoe Watershed and Nottawasaga River; the Natural Heritage System for the Lake Simcoe Watershed; the Lake Simcoe Basin Wide Report, written in March 2008; the Benthic Macro-invertebrate Sampling and Analysis of Lake Simcoe; the Lake Simcoe Hydrodynamic and Water Quality Model; Assimilative Capacity Studies: CANWET Modeling—they just wanted to remind the committee of a lot of the rules and regulations that they are involved with. They wanted to also remind the committee of the Premier’s statement that the new act, if passed, would not apply to existing approvals, respecting the long-held principle that land use planning, legislation and regulation should be applied on a go-forward basis. Obviously that’s very important to that group; they support the stated purpose of the bill, underlining that through the development applications process, the BILD members, in their view, have made significant, substan-

tial investments in infrastructure and restoration efforts which in turn have played an important role in the continued rehabilitation not only of the lake but also of the watershed.

They registered their concern; in their view, the act does not reflect the work undertaken by LSEMS, the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy. He went on to say, "LSEMS is comprised of representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Environment, Energy and Infrastructure, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Natural Resources, as well as Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada, the regional municipalities of York and Durham, the county of Simcoe, the cities of Barrie and Orillia, the towns of Bradford West Gwillimbury and Innisfil, the townships of Oro-Medonte and Ramara, the Chippewas of the Georgina Island First Nation and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority." It suggests to me that what we're attempting to do today with this legislation is in many ways to create a very large umbrella over many, many diverse and sundry players.

He also indicated—this was the BILD presentation—that through LSEMS, "BILD, along with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Ladies of the Lake/the WAVE and Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, have been engaged through the LSEMS working group and through various partnerships," indicating that phosphorus levels have been reduced from more than 100 tonnes per year down to 67, and the water quality has seen some level of improvement: "Over the last eight years, as both public sector, institutional, tourism and population growth have increased, the LSEMS program was successful in lowering the phosphorus levels in Lake Simcoe." They do recognize that there is much more work that needs to be done, and the LSEMS structure provides "a valuable blueprint for future work."

They also recommend "that the legislation be amended to reflect and acknowledge the need for the scientific committee to outreach and consult with the scientific practitioner community" and those who actually work in the watershed. They did caution, "Section 18 is silent on the membership and composition of the scientific committee, providing no ministerial rationale for those appointments nor identifying the necessary expertise required to serve" on the committee. They recommended the amendment to section 18 regarding the membership—again, essentially asking for representation of the scientific practitioner community that serves Lake Simcoe and also calling for membership drawing from experts in the areas of municipal water, waste water treatment, storm water management and sustainable development.

They go on to say, "Without some amendment to the current committee structures, the concern is that the decisions made by the committees become disconnected from the local authorities and the practical realities in the watershed."

Funding came up: "Bill 99 does not address funding. In fact, the bill, as currently drafted, does not compel the

provincial government to provide funding of any kind. Respectfully, I would say to the provincial government that the plan cannot be downloaded on ... local municipalities. BILD has recognized and applauded the government for uploading services from the municipalities. Funding from the province is critical in dealing with existing threats to the lake and what is currently in the ground and in the water."

1450

In their conclusion, BILD recommended that the act and the plan clearly articulate that they do not apply to existing approvals.

Another group, Environmental Defence, came forward, and again we were informed of the spectre of SLAPP: strategic lawsuits against public participation. Environmental Defence felt these kinds of suits are serious and a real threat to continued citizen-led advocacy to protect the lake. They went on to say: "It would be a cruel and perverse outcome to launch ... new rights and responsibilities to protect the lake, in a community ... paralyzed by the sight of neighbours ... having to pay millions ... in cost awards and legal" fees.

The Ladies of the Lake submission touched on a number of similar points—points we've heard so far today—and highlighted their concern with transition regulation. They stated: "To prevent development that is absolutely contradictory to the intent of the plan, and other new inappropriate developments that might sneak in before the plan goes through, why not make the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and plan effective from that December 6, 2007, date so no more development that might be harmful to the lake can take place?"

They also echo the sentiments with respect to governance, and I quote: "The Naked Truth Citizens' Action Plan" devotes "a whole section to ... this. 'Now is the time, to integrate the scientific and research endeavours of the NGOs, governments and institutions, to communicate and collaborate ... as a means of developing awareness and buy-in.' Sections 18 and 19 of the act call for the creation of a Lake Simcoe science committee and a Lake Simcoe coordinating committee. These new bodies are crucial," this group stated.

It went on: "Paragraph 6 of subsection 19(4), regarding the appointment of committee members, says the Lake Simcoe coordinating committee should include 'other interests, including, in particular, environmental and other interests of the general public.'"

They remind us that the LSEMS working group "recommended that there be equal representation from industry, the public and government.... And when it says that industry or business should be included, we should keep in mind that business is a lot more than the development industry," as they stated in the committee.

The Ladies of the Lake's report to the committee concluded with the following: "Fortunately, this great lake and beautiful watershed is not completely ruined yet, but the rampant me-first thinking in all sectors has got to change if Lake Simcoe is going to be an integrated eco-model, where the economy and the environment are in sync with each other."

We heard from a group called the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, a group that started the WAVE program. As they indicated, they worked with 6,000 homeowners—6,000 lawn owners—to reduce the use of fertilizers containing phosphorus, a great idea. Personally, I have never put fertilizer or any pesticides or herbicides on my lawn. I have a farm, and I really question why you would put fertilizer on a lawn. It just makes it grow more, and you have to mow it. In my view, why encourage it?

One of the coalition comments centred around designated policies in the act. The act distinguishes between designated policies and those that are not designated. The way the act is presently structured, a designated policy has a much higher status than a policy that is not designated. They went on to say that the requirement that a decision must conform with a designated policy provides strong protection for giving legal effect to designated policies, while the “‘have regard to’ requirement, with respect to other policies” affords no protection at all. This distinction, they mention, occurred in a number of sections of the act. They suggested that, given the extent to which the plan is comprised of policies that are not designated, the plan would be meaningless because these policies will have little effect. They asked, “How can this plan be enforced?”

These groups raised questions: Did this government introduce the wrong legislation? Should it have been closer to the greenbelt type of legislation or the Oak Ridges moraine type of legislation, given the tremendous migration of people projected to go into this area? This is an environmental bill. To what extent can it handle a migration of people into this watershed which, according to Ontario Nature, will double in the next 25 or 30 years?

I’ll just move through this; I know Mr. Dunlop is eager to speak to this as well. We heard a submission from Councillor Alison Collins-Mrakas, of York region. She advised us that York region is the “fastest-growing region in the entire country.” I don’t know whether she saw that as a positive or a negative, but to that end, she reminded us that while this is a necessary plan in Bill 99, it’s also a costly one and will require considerable resources. She raised the question, “How will it be funded?” I asked the same question, and I’m sure that many of the municipalities that are in or partly in the watershed would ask that same question. As the councillor appropriately stated, “Objectives of the plan are moot if there’s no financing in place to implement” the plan.

Another concern was with regard to water extraction, and made reference to the science advisory committee, where it stated—I quote that report: “The amount of water taking and its effect on the hydrology in the watershed is expected to increase and requires more study.” It was noted that at present, “Water extraction for water bottling does not appear to be an issue,” but future demands are expected to increase. “Taking into account the variability resulting from climate change” and other stressors, “we can anticipate a supply-and-demand conflict” with demand trumping supply. Again, this is an

environmental bill. It’s not going to deal with population growth and the attendant demand on drinking water and the pressure from waste water.

The final submission: I want to make mention of the Holland Marsh Growers’ Association. I recently purchased a 1953 Chev 1100 three-ton stake truck. It was originally used in the Holland Marsh to haul out crates of produce, and more recently to haul tobacco down my way. The plates on it are 1968. I’m in the process of trying to get this monster running. The Holland Marsh Growers’ Association represents 10,000 acres within three municipalities. It’s an organization going back to 1923. Their spokesperson, Jamie Reaume, reminded the committee that farmers have long been recognized as stewards of the land and “environmentalists,” long before the word was used. I know that applies to our farm property. Over a number of generations, we have put in several hundred acres of trees on our land in southern Ontario.

1500

Mr. Reaume’s concern: Farmers “are now being named as the sole target for the reduction of phosphorus levels in Lake Simcoe, despite the fact that the city of Barrie is well over its capacity level for development and, during peak capacity times, dumps raw sewage into the lake system....”

Over the past two decades, farmers, as I think many well know, have reduced their inputs—their usage of fertilizer and pesticides, for example—by more than 50% and will continue to do what is best for the communities of which they are an integral part.

Mr. Reaume went on to say that this House must be reminded that we already have a Nutrient Management Act in place, we already have the Clean Water Act. This is an add-on to that kind of legislation.

I could go on. We had a number of excellent presentations, not only from the Lake Simcoe—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You already went too far.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I’ve just been told I went on too far.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Keep going. Use the hour up.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I think I have 15 minutes left.

I also heard from our separate umbrella organization, Conservation Ontario.

I’m just going to ask Garfield, did you want to do 15 minutes?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, never mind.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Will you get a chance tomorrow? I don’t think so, with this group.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Don’t worry about it. Keep going. Use the hour up.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Okay.

Conservation Ontario is the umbrella organization that represents all of Ontario’s conservation authorities. The spokesperson here was the general manager, Don Pearson. He submitted a number of comments on the organization’s behalf.

In partnership with their member municipalities and the province of Ontario, conservation authorities manage

watersheds in which more than 90% of Ontario's residents live and work. We know in parts of northern Ontario, with crown land, you don't have the management through a conservation authority.

Conservation Ontario is on record as supporting Bill 99. They spoke to a number of specific aspects of the proposed legislation which they believe will strengthen the act: First off, acknowledge and reinforce the important role of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority—and I agree with that one—and avoid duplication of regulation and effort. They did acknowledge that the tools available to the conservation authority are not adequate to address issues such as future growth, and hence the need for the proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

Mr. Pearson also stated that conservation authorities are in full agreement that the best way to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed is through an integrated watershed management plan.

He went on to say that Conservation Ontario supports the concept of a provincially mandated watershed plan for the protection of Lake Simcoe and the ultimate approval of such a plan by the province, but recommends that the proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act respect and acknowledge the watershed management agency role that is mandated through and to the conservation authorities, through the Conservation Authorities Act.

Mr. Pearson also strongly noted that they had a serious concern that the Conservation Authorities Act is not noted in subclause 4(j)(ii), especially given the obvious parallels between the intent of the proposed legislation and sections 20 and 21 of the Conservation Authorities Act. They went on to say that the plan must avoid duplication of existing programs, such as watershed planning. We received a number of recommendations from Conservation Ontario: "We recommend"—I won't get into the numbers but subsections of the Conservation Authorities Act as provincial legislation that provide protection for the Lake Simcoe watershed, and that the Lake Simcoe protection plan be built upon, in their words:

"We understand that it would be inconsistent with ... procedural rules to amend ... section 27" of the Lake Simcoe act, which allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulation that designates, for the purposes of the act, the participating municipalities for the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority.

They went on to say the effect of such regulation "is to provide the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority with jurisdiction over the entire watershed of Lake Simcoe, but ... only for the purposes of the LSPA." So they strongly advise that this be accomplished through an appropriate amendment to the Conservation Authorities Act.

Accomplishing the expansion of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority under this Conservation Authorities Act would remove potential ambiguities regarding the conservation authority's jurisdiction and provide for the necessary power to levy the municipalities

for the implementation of the full watershed management plan. As well, it removes the administrative and decision-making inefficiencies, essentially creating, they propose, a Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority board for the purposes of this particular bill that we are debating.

The second recommendation that the standing committee unanimously supports is that Bill 99 delete a number of subsections and make a number of amendments. The standing committee supports, again, a number of other recommendations. I'm not going to get into clause-by-clause right now in the House on that one.

We heard from another municipal councillor by the name of Virginia Hackson. Ms. Hackson is a third-term councillor for the town of East Gwillimbury in the regional municipality of York. She had been a member of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for eight years and is currently in her second year as chair. She took time to address three key issues which she believed would strengthen the proposed act, acknowledge the role of the conservation authority and avoid duplication of effort.

"(1) ... build on the protection of the Lake Simcoe watershed, include reference to the Conservation Authorities Act. Section 20 of the Conservation Authorities Act allows an authority to establish and undertake, in the area over which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and mineral" resources.

She recommends—again, I'll try and summarize some of this—a number of amendments to increase the efficiency of watershed processes as they relate to the conservation authority, vis-à-vis the proposed Lake Simcoe act.

We had a submission from Deborah Beatty, past president of the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation and a member of the board of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition. She made the point from her perspective at committee that, "As the pending legislation reads, there is a serious potential for duplicating existing legislation and adding another level of bureaucracy." She concluded her presentation by stating that the public would like to have a more meaningful participation in the decision-making. She was opposed to the current structure, where LSEMS, in her words, "are all government" officials. She also reminded the committee that we need more legislation that complements but does not duplicate some of the successful measures that are now in place.

1510

In speaking with the one farm representation that came before the committee—we do have a nutrient management framework; we have the Nutrient Management Act. There was a proposal put forward which may include nutrient trading or offsetting. We know that section 30 of this bill would amend section 75 of the Ontario Water Resources Act to establish water quality trading. We all know about the—well, maybe we all don't know about a deal that was signed this past summer by the province of Ontario with respect to air emissions trading. I do try and

explain to people in the coffee shops—or I ask people, “Are you aware that the province of Ontario has signed a trading deal with the state of Nevada?” It does take people a back. Some people indicate to me that that makes about as much sense as signing an air emissions trading deal with the state of Arizona, and I then inform them the province did that as well, and also with California.

Again, there has been work done on emissions trading. We know the very successful program a number of years ago, a deal that was signed by President Ronald Reagan and the Prime Minister of the day, Brian Mulroney, on emissions trading, which was a very successful program in alleviating the impact of acid rain. We now have much discussion with respect to carbon dioxide emissions trading. Again, one would hope that can be done at the federal level. It is confusing when you have the state of Arizona signing an agreement with the province of Ontario. It’s very difficult for people to understand just how that works and how much Ontario pays Nevada or how much Arizona pays Ontario.

I would hope that this legislation underlines the importance of further voluntary tools. You can’t mandate everything. I think of tools such as the stewardship program. I think Jamie Reaume made mention of that. We have an indication that this government will be allocating funding through the farm community to deal with phosphorus loading, and hence try and ameliorate some of those problems with high phosphorus coming into the lake from the tributaries and hence less oxygen and less herring, less coldwater fish resources.

Pilot programs: There is a track record, certainly in the farm community, with best management practices and performance monitoring. The research is there with respect to monitoring. I sincerely hope that the intention of this legislation goes with the carrot rather than the stick. As far as the carrot, there is an excellent program; much of it has been pilot-tested in my home county of Norfolk. This is the ALUS program. ALUS stands for alternative land use services, essentially a system based on society, through their taxes, through government, paying landowners and farmers for the services they provide in the form of an environmental good. This is something that is obviously not delineated within this legislation, but something that would serve the Lake Simcoe watershed well.

Funding was not specified in this proposed bill, and we all know that any plan to preserve and protect Lake Simcoe is going to cost a fair bit of money. I read a discussion paper where it was estimated it would cost something in the order of \$163 million to implement measures to reduce non-point sources. There are a number of programs that may be utilized to fund some aspects of this plan. Again, I go back to an excellent program from the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ontario stewardship program, which, working with landowners and real people, has had a very significant and positive effect on the environment.

Thank you for the hour, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I’m delighted to be here to speak about the Lake Simcoe act. Specifically, I had a chance to meet with my colleague the MPP for Oakville, Kevin Flynn, who serves as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, a job I had in the last mandate. So we had a great chat, and we were talking about the history of this bill.

To try to set for the House some context, one of the first things we did as a government, when we formed government in 2003, was to pass the “You spill, you pay” act. That’s how it was referred to, the idea being that if you spilled something in the water, you had to prove that you hadn’t done it. If you couldn’t prove that, you would have to pay the cost to help the people downstream, who had to pay for the cost up until we passed that act.

We followed that up with the Clean Water Act, another piece of seminal legislation that I was involved in. The best thing about the Clean Water Act was that it enshrined the concept of the stewardship fund.

I say to my friend from Haldimand–Norfolk, who spoke for an hour on this bill, that I have met with the people from his riding, the people in Alice, the people behind that. As a matter of fact, they came to my riding and made a presentation—the idea that it’s very important for us to have the concept that Lake Simcoe, as one of the largest freshwater bodies of water in North America, is a shared responsibility and that we want to encourage stewardship of that fund, and that when we have two great requirements of society that are in conflict—the need to have sustainable development but also to have a sustainable environment—we have to have people come together.

So I want to commend my friend the parliamentary assistant, who has been working with Minister Gerretsen on this bill and trying to find the right balance so that we can have Lake Simcoe for future generations and also have a prosperous economy, something which is even more important today than it was last year. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’m pleased to rise and comment on some of the points which the Progressive Conservative critic for the environment, Toby Barrett from Haldimand–Norfolk, has raised. I think it’s important that we are at third reading debate for Bill 99, although I must say that one of the roles that we in opposition can play is to anticipate issues and raise concerns, and I must say that over two years ago, on November 23, 2006, in fact, there was a Progressive Conservative resolution on this very issue.

I’m going to highlight one point which I think is very important when we discuss Bill 99 and moving forward. It says, “Recognize the development pressures that the Oak Ridges moraine and greenbelt legislation and Places to Grow Act have placed on the Lake Simcoe watershed.” To me, that’s an indication two years ago that the members of the opposition, and in particular our member from Simcoe North, were talking about the leapfrogging in development and what that is causing for communities

within Ontario, and that we have to be aware of that when we bring forward legislation, and, quite frankly, fund it appropriately. Bill 99 has an awful lot of value, but we need to put the infrastructure in place to ensure that it is successful.

I would hope, considering the current economic pressures that Ontario is under and that of course the Liberal government will have to face in the next number of months, that they don't simply table Bill 99 and the Lake Simcoe act and forget that they actually have to put some money behind the action.

1520

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am very pleased to join this debate. I've already spoken on the Lake Simcoe act, in support of it, largely because my colleague from Simcoe North was a visionary in bringing this legislation forward. As my colleagues opposite will remember, he put forward a resolution in this House in 2007 because he was responding to his constituents. I am very proud of him for doing that. The fact that the government has adopted Garfield Dunlop's measures speaks volumes to his commitment to his community, but also to the fact that what he wants done is the right thing to do, and that's why the government has adopted his measures.

I just want to say that this is a very encouraging thing because as a private member, Mr. Speaker, you will know that people often say the initiatives that you bring to the Legislature will not go anywhere. I beg to differ because we see all the time pieces of legislation coming from private members on this side of the chamber that actually do impact law.

This bill that Garfield Dunlop first raised is now going to be adopted by the Liberals and we'll all support it. My colleague Sylvia Jones, through Bill 94, a revolutionary piece of legislation that would give children who are disabled more access to tax breaks through the RDSP, brought forward legislation that was adopted yesterday by the Minister of Community and Social Services. So Sylvia Jones deserves a big round of applause, along with Garfield Dunlop and, of course, John O'Toole, revolutionizing the way we deal with our cellphones in cars. Frank Klees has been on the cusp of street racing.

Good pieces of legislation come from this side of the House—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —and I'm really proud of my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: In terms of this legislation, I'd like to thank the people, especially the Ladies of the Lake—they're the ones who really led the fight. They were the brave souls who worked and sacrificed and used all kinds of intelligent initiatives to bring this lake to the attention of all of us. They are the people who deserve the credit:

all the ordinary folks who care about the water they drink, who care about this precious lake.

Sometimes we don't do enough to thank our environmental grassroots organizations like that one organization that really went out of their way to fight for this kind of recognition. Our government listened to those people who care deeply, and we're proceeding with this type of protection.

This lake I think is typical of a lot of watershed areas in southern Ontario that need comprehensive, source-water, watershed protection. It's not just the lake itself but it's the 30-odd rivers and streams that flow into the lake that also have to be looked at, as this will be part of the comprehensive plan.

Having been involved to a little extent with this type of initiative, I know how difficult it is, but I think people are on the side of sustainable protection and reducing carbon footprints because that's what ultimately makes good environmental sense, good economic sense. These are precious resources that cannot be taken for granted, and this bill ensures that for generations to come Lake Simcoe will be a reservoir for wildlife, all kinds—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Mike Colle: —of precious species that we need to protect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Brant, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. Formerly Brant and now Haldimand-Norfolk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Sorry, Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the feedback. I'm looking forward to the third party and to speeches this afternoon from other government members because we have to be assured that this proposed bill, if it becomes law—it may get pushed through today; I don't know—has to be something more than window dressing.

I know that the member for Dufferin-Caledon mentioned the importance of funding this type of program. The federal government has what they refer to as the Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund. There's \$30 million there to accelerate the restoration of Lake Simcoe through nutrient reduction, fish habitat restoration—I understand that the sport fishery within that lake does not naturally reproduce itself. I know that bait fish are not reproducing, because the Lake Simcoe guys come down to get bait fish from Port Dover harbour on Lake Erie to take up to Lake Simcoe for the ice fishing—it's somewhat of an artificial arrangement. There's federal funding for increased science and ongoing monitoring of the lake.

We have to go beyond just a piece of legislation that may put a plan on top of a plan—we heard the warnings about duplication and overlapping legislation and overlapping plans. We very clearly heard the concerns about the tremendous increase in population growth on this lake. Garfield Dunlop has set the bar very high. I just hope this bill is up to the challenge of dealing with that very high rate of population.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate this opportunity to speak, and having had laryngitis when this came before the committee, I appreciate the ability to speak again. To those who showed tremendous patience last week while I squeaked away at the microphone, and to the Chair, who very honourably read out my amendments, most of which lost—I think all of them lost—I’m appreciative of the aid.

Speaker, as you know, Lake Simcoe faces profound challenges. It’s a lake that has been subjected to substantial development. It’s a lake that is dealing with overloads of phosphorus, leading to algae and weed growth. It’s a lake where the natural fish stocks are in decline—there are 65 endangered species. There are more and more beach closings because of *E. coli* contamination.

This is a beautiful piece of Ontario that is under profound threat and, frankly, those in the community, those environmental groups in Ontario, those in local environmental organizations around the lake have for years been pushing very hard both to defend the lake and to ask the government to step in because, in the end, it’s their power that’s necessary to ensure that this lake lives, thrives and provides recreation and sustenance to hundreds of thousands.

Ladies of the Lake, Campaign Lake Simcoe, Environmental Defence—David Donnelly is here in the east gallery and has personally been deeply involved in all of this. He in fact is currently dealing with a strategic lawsuit against public participation problem, something the member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke about earlier. All those people have fought hard for a long time. Notwithstanding what they had to say in their deputations, when they called for changes to the bill to make it far more effective, they’ve called on parties to support the bill so that at least this tool, with whatever limits it has, is available for protecting the lake.

I, for one, am willing to support the bill although, as people well know, and I squeaked it out in committee, there are substantial changes that I think are going to be necessary to make the bill truly effective. I worry profoundly that the bill, as presented and as amended, is not going to do the job, and that is a huge burden on this government.

There are a number of amendments that were suggested by the citizen and environmental groups that came forward, and those amendments were ones that I put forward: first of all, and I think most importantly, the recommendation that any proposal for development that had not gotten all of its approvals in place, I think by December 6, 2007, should not have been allowed to go any further. In particular, there’s one development, Big Bay Point, that would have been caught by that.

1530

In the course of the hearings I had a chance to talk to one of the political staff working on this bill. I understand only about 5% of the shoreline of Lake Simcoe is still in its natural state, which is quite an extraordinary thought,

that almost 100% of that lake has been transformed by human hand over the last few centuries. It’s no wonder, given that reality, that one sees declining indicators of health for that body of water—no wonder at all. So when one puts forward a resolution to try to stop further damage, I would say that that’s a reasonable resolution.

We had Anne Golden speak to us—well known in Ontario, well known in this Legislature. I asked her, specifically, if this bill were amended with a resolution to say, “December 6, 2007, if you don’t have all your final approvals in, you’re not going forward,” politically, legally, is that doable? Given her considerable knowledge and experience, I think her answer is a credible one. She said yes, you can do it. You’ll get some heat but you can do it and, frankly, you should do it. That amendment died and I think that the government is going to have more damage to deal with because those projects go forward.

There were recommendations from local groups, from environmental groups, that there be a 100-metre shoreline setback to preserve wildlife corridors, and frankly, as well, to have as much natural vegetation, trees and so on as possible as a way of buffering the lake from the impact of development around it. That amendment was defeated.

I have to ask, if you are going to restore this lake, if you don’t have adequate buffers, how are you going to have natural systems that will protect the waters of the lake? How will you protect the animals and the fish that live in the lake? How will you ensure proper interaction between shore and body of water? Without that 100 metres, I don’t think you’re going to have it. That amendment was defeated.

People came before us and said that, in this bill, the ability of municipalities to set stricter standards than the bill provides for is disallowed. This is a disturbing pattern. This was the case with the Pesticides Act. It wasn’t reflected in previous legislation we’ve seen here around smoking. Generally speaking, municipalities have been allowed to set a higher standard for protection of human health, for protection of the environment, and I think in this case that’s a mistake. I don’t know all that went into it, but I have to say right now that giving municipalities the ability to set a higher standard is something that helps drive politics in this province.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence has spoken before to this issue and pointed out some interesting cases in which the province has taken a lead, and he’s correct, but I have to say that very often you will see municipalities take the lead, set a standard, and the province will follow afterwards.

I find it interesting to see what’s going on in the city of Toronto right now with plastic bags. The city of Toronto is actually taking an initiative there that I think will reduce the amount of plastic bags that go into the waste stream. The initiative that was taken at the provincial level was far weaker. It was a voluntary program in which I couldn’t detect a pulse that would indicate life in the years to come. What I saw was a very interesting photo opportunity. What the city of Toronto is doing in

negotiating with the plastic bag manufacturers and the wholesalers, the retailers, is actually concretely making a difference.

Here on Lake Simcoe, leaving with the municipalities their power to set a higher standard for protecting the lake, for protecting the environment, is in the interest of the province as a whole and the interest of every person who travels to that lake, every person who comes upon that lake and every person who lives around that lake. So again, I think the initial failure, inviting the bill to exclude the power of municipalities and then a failure to amend the act to protect the power of municipalities—that's a substantial shortcoming.

It was suggested to us in committee by a number of deputation that there should not be a process whereby unelected hearing officers could amend the protection of the lake. There are political decisions that rest on the political shoulders of ministers, Premiers and cabinets. Those political decisions should be left in the hands of those who can be held accountable for them. It was a mistake to write the bill that way in the first place, to cut out political input and accountability, and a mistake not to amend the bill.

Lastly, in terms of amendments, there's no question that if you don't enforce the act, it will be of no consequence. It will be an interesting piece of paper. People will get to wave it around. You will get to swat flies with it. In the heat of summer, you will get to fan yourself with it. But in the end, if left unenforced, it will simply be an interesting curio, something that schoolchildren will read about years from now when they trace the slow decline of Lake Simcoe. The situation we're dealing with is not as severe as that of the Aral Sea in the former Soviet Union, but you can see how a body of water, through multiple demands, can decline and ultimately become useless to those who live around its shores and who wish to travel to avail themselves of its natural wealth.

We are in a situation where we have a bill that is, in my opinion, flawed but potentially useful. It depends to a great extent on whether the government will enforce it and whether the regulations that arise will in fact put some teeth into it.

I can now say: Liberal government of this province, the fate of Lake Simcoe is in your hands. You have written this instrument. You have created it. You have said, "These are the powers we need to ensure that this lake lives and thrives." Well, make it work.

If you don't make it work, many will point out where you went wrong. I think what the citizens and the environmental groups had to say in their presentations made tremendous sense. They were asking for reasonable things to protect a body of water that hundreds of thousands depend on and, frankly, millions enjoy.

I want to go back to a point that was made by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, and that strategic lawsuit against public participation. That I found an extraordinarily disturbing reality of what is going on politically in Lake Simcoe. I have had experience working

with citizens' groups organizing around difficult and contentious projects. I've had an interesting education in practical politics at the municipal and provincial level. It is very clear to me that if citizens and the lawyers who work for them stand to be subjected to huge lawsuits that may well strip them of their assets, their life savings, the ability to speak freely in this society and act within the framework of laws that we have put in place is profoundly diminished—profoundly diminished. If in fact people become fearful of exercising their democratic rights, fearful that should they speak out against a powerful developer or company they risk the kinds of legal penalties that many are now facing—let's set aside the penalties. Let's say they win their cases entirely. The cost and the effort of defending themselves in court, the anxiety of something like this hanging over you, that diminishes our democracy.

In the course of this whole process, my hope would be that the Minister of the Environment, who has seen this process—I have no doubt he has been briefed very thoroughly—will take it upon himself to talk with his colleagues and say, "If we're going to defend the environment in Ontario, we have to make sure that the citizens are defended so they can speak and speak freely." That is a tangential but vital lesson that's come out of this whole process.

I don't think I need to say an awful lot more. Others have gone into extraordinarily great detail. I think the essentials are this: The bill should go forward. I find it unfortunate—I think it's a substantial mistake—that it has not been amended in the ways that were suggested by citizens and environmental groups. So be it. The Liberal government has it on its head to save or write off this lake. My hope is that they will be alert enough to take their responsibility seriously and save the lake.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening attentively to the member for Toronto–Danforth and to his very cogent analysis of the bill and some of its weaknesses and some of its shortcomings, and I agree there are some. I just know that the government hopefully will continue to look upon this as a work in progress, really, because this is just a template in terms of putting that comprehensive plan in place. I think that's where it's incumbent upon all of us to ensure that this process continues to engage people in a meaningful way and that there are proper adjustments made as we go along, because this is the beginning of a very long-lasting initiative. That's the way I look upon it.

I certainly think that we have come a long way in Ontario. I can remember when I first started to talk about establishing a greenbelt in Ontario, and many people said, "Oh, you can't do that. What about property rights?" I said, "Most of the property is probably owned by the crown anyway." But we have a greenbelt now. I remember when I first started talking about the Oak Ridges moraine. People said, "Where is this marina up in Oak Ridges?" I'd say, "No, it's the rain barrel for all our

rivers and lakes, and if you contaminate the rain barrel with all that pavement and development up there in Richmond Hill, you're going to basically destroy our water sources." The public came outside. I can still recall one night in Richmond Hill that we had 2,500 people at a meeting asking to protect the Oak Ridges moraine. That's when the previous Tory government woke up and said, "Wow. Maybe we'd better do something about this Oak Ridges moraine."

I do want to again thank all the environmental and grassroots groups that have been involved—Environmental Defence, the Ladies of the Lake. As I said, they're the ones that usually lead, and then politicians start listening to them. That's why we have to keep our ears to the ground and remember that this is no one's property; it is everybody's property. It's everybody's water; it's everybody's lake.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I too rise, and actually to thank the member for Toronto–Danforth for his comments because I believe that at the end of the day, on balance, they were quite supportive, and he suggested some things that perhaps could improve the bill. I think, as with any major piece of legislation that makes the sort of change that's being envisioned by something of the magnitude contained in Bill 99, you would expect that you would have transitional provisions. This bill, to date, I believe has been a perfect example of how we should consult with our partners and how people who have what might seemingly be different opinions, perhaps—stakeholders from the agricultural sector, from the urban sector, from the environmental sector—have come together on this bill. To date, I think it's been a perfect example as to how legislation should be passed and how it should be carried forward in a co-operative sense. I believe that sense of co-operation is going to continue as we move forward and actually adopt the plan. I think we can't do that until it leaves this House.

It sounds like, from what I've heard, we're going to get support from every side of the House on this, and there have been some suggestions as to what should happen after that support is attained. I suspect we will have another debate as this moves forward as to what should be included in the bill and what shouldn't, but when you look at some of the groups we've been able to work with in the past—Environmental Defence, it's been noticed, Campaign Lake Simcoe, Ladies of the Lake, Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority—these are all groups that have brought their best advice to the table. I'm sure they're going to continue to bring that advice to the table as we start to implement what will be transition provisions that will see the enacting of this bill in the real world. Right now, it exists on paper and it exists I think in the minds of all of us here. By moving forward, by supporting this bill, we allow this bill to become real and to do the sort of things it was always envisioned to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Seeing none, I return to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Eglinton–Lawrence and Oakville for their comments.

There's one point that I wish I had mentioned previously, but now that I have a few seconds, I can mention it. In the course of the presentations by the citizens' groups, one thing they referenced a number of times was the commentary of the Lake Simcoe science advisory committee and the fact that they didn't see enough of that reflected in the legislation. In fact, in some instances the legislation seemed to diverge very sharply from what the science advisory committee had put forward. So I say again to the government, in this case, if in fact you've done a scientific analysis of the needs of the lake—what's necessary to make sure that it's alive, that it doesn't just become an algae- and weed-choked wet area, that it actually has coldwater fish, that it actually has a full range of animal life—then you should be paying very close attention to the science advisory committee's recommendations and you should be reflecting its analysis both in your legislation and in your concrete plan to go forward.

You have a huge responsibility on your shoulders. You cannot let a lake like this, a central part of southern Ontario, simply choke up, fill up with algae and weeds. You have to take concrete steps, and they have to be steps based on an analysis of the best science available showing what are the most effective steps that anyone would take to make sure the lake's future is protected.

So I'll close with that, to urge the government to go back to the scientific advisory committee's assessment and to make sure their recommendations are carried through.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to stand and debate today on what's happening with Lake Simcoe. I want to bring up a few points.

When we're looking at these things, I always try to ask—and in this particular bill it would be one of the key components. When we're making a decision, we need to ensure that we look to the future through the eyes of the children of today. What, effectively, I mean by that is that when we're making a decision, we have to ask what is going to be the impact on our kids or their kids, so that we can make sure we're making the right decision for the long term. Sometimes it's hard decisions that are being made.

There are a lot of things that are talked about. Lake Simcoe has a long and proud history in the province of Ontario, right from its name and its origins. You can talk about certain things, whether it's outhouses and the impact that outhouses can have on a watercourse—for example, if an outhouse is too close, there are the nutrients that flow through that outhouse, and of course if it's right on a watercourse, if there's a spring there it can flow right into the watercourse and cause contamination. So we want to make sure that a lot of those things are placed in proper areas to ensure that they do not do contamination or do minimal amounts of contamination.

Some of the other things that were mentioned: A number of members were talking about the municipalities having an impact or input into what takes place. I'm not always so sure that's in the best interests of a watercourse. The reason is that if there is a double lot, a 200-foot lot, the municipality can actually see two 100-foot lots there that have two facilities or two houses or two units on them that are taxable components. Where you have a single 200-foot lot, you have a minimal impact that's done on the watercourse, if it's in that area, because you cut in half, potentially, the amount of individuals or groups or organizations that will use those areas in making sure that the lot size has a specific impact.

I can remember a biologist by the name of Bruce Ranta asking, what is the maximum number of allowable units on a watercourse to process before one more just kind of breaks the camel's back? I'm not sure that we know. But if we're talking about municipalities and their input on deciding, I think that it's not always the right decision to make sure that, yes, we can get two units and tax twice as much, as opposed to a single 200-foot which would have less impact and would be better for the watercourse. Municipalities think in their best interests as well, and sometimes the tax revenues have a decision-making process that I'm not sure is always in the best interests of those water areas.

One of the other things that was mentioned was the 4,000 feeder streams that come into the area there. When you're talking about streams, part of the problem—most people don't realize this—is that the average stream requires a minimum of 36% coverage in order to maintain a cool- or cold-water status. What that means is that if there is not enough shade to cover that stream course 36% of the time, then the water has a tendency to heat up. When water heats up, it then flows into the main body and—guess what?—you can have as much as 10 degrees of temperature difference by what is flowing into that watercourse. What happens then? Bacteria start to process and move forward, and you have more contamination. That's why you get closed beaches etc.

1550

We talked about tree-planting, and the impact of tree-planting and what can take place there, but if you don't take into consideration the fact that you need a minimum of 36%—and I know that from one of our own streams in Oshawa that flow into Lake Ontario. It only has 12% coverage, but when you look at it you think it's a great and wonderful spot. The same thing takes place with Lake Simcoe. You want to make sure that those streams have a minimum of 36% coverage in order to maintain a cool- or cold-water status. Otherwise, you develop a warm-water fishery. Now we're seeing fish like bass coming into the Oshawa creek on a regular basis, as opposed to the natural salmonoid that used to flourish in there.

Some of the other areas, as well, use any dams or water-retaining devices. I use the example in Oshawa because I've worked on it substantially with a lot of groups and organizations, but the same effect can take place when you're dealing with places like Lake Simcoe.

What I'm talking about is a dam that takes place in the water. We have two: one at Camp Samac and one main one at a local golf course. The water sits in the dam, the sun comes out and heats up the water, the warm water rises to the top and then flows over the top of the dam. The difficulty is that you will find as much as 10 degrees of difference from the top-water temperature to the bottom-water temperature. So what we need to ensure, wherever possible, is that we have bottom-flow dams.

It was a simple matter of explaining this to the Boy Scout camp at Camp Samac, and every year, once the dam fills up, they open up the draw from the bottom and they draw the water from the bottom and that changes the water temperature, or maintains it, by as much as 10 degrees, as opposed to a top-flow dam. It has a huge impact on the watercourse and algae and all the other things that take place.

If we can look at some of those small things, like making sure that we plant trees along—and I know the Minister of Agriculture is in. We talked about a lot of access for a lot of farm communities that wanted to be able to water their cattle and things like that and, over time, there were a lot of trees removed. But if we can replenish those trees along the stream courses it would do a couple of things: one, to provide the shade, and the other aspect is the amount of erosion that takes place, and siltation. Siltation takes place in a number of ways, and that's because of the erosion. The rainfalls come down, then they have peaks and lows in the watercourse and it will wash away. As it washes away the dirt, it causes siltation in the streams, which covers all these spawning beds. If we plant trees along that, the root system within the trees provides the shade to keep the water cool, and they maintain the stream banks to minimize the erosional impact.

Siltation takes place in a number of other ways, and one of them is through the developments. That's why, when you're seeing a new development along an area, you'll see all these—they look kind of like fences. Actually, they're siltation retention devices to stop any of the rain when it comes down, when they're doing a development, from washing the topsoil right into the stream, which kills the beds. It's that siltation that chokes the eggs, or chokes those spawning beds, for a lot of the fish species that are out there or that should be out there.

There are a number of things that could be addressed in those specific areas to talk about, whether it's tree planting or whether it's bottom-flow dam feeds, to make sure that the watercourses take place.

I know the Minister of Natural Resources is in, but I'm surprised at one thing that was mentioned by the Minister of the Environment. My understanding was that there were some deep-water ciscoes that were starting to replenish themselves in Lake Simcoe several years ago. A deep-water cisco, for those who don't know, is like a herring. They are coming back now. They're a primary bait-fish that is fed on by a lot of the other fish in Lake Simcoe. That's a very positive sign, because the nutrients at the bottom—there was talk about oxygen depletion

and that's usually because, as the plants break down and dissolve, they eat up oxygen when they're breaking down. My understanding was that there are deep-water ciscoes that are now starting to appear, which is replenishing back into the lake, which is a great food source for a lot of the other target sport species, or game species, as they call them. This is really positive news for Lake Simcoe and a lot of the other areas.

One of the other things that they should look at is the need to think outside the box in a number of areas, and I'll give you a perfect example. Most people don't realize that with most two-stroke gas engines, the outboard engines, prior to about, oh, 1990 I think it is, 25% of the fuel will go back into the environment, just in the way the process works. The new outboard motors are far more fuel-efficient and don't contribute in the same fashion. But the older ones would spit out a lot of the fuel, and as much as 25% can go back into the fuel. This was verified through the alternative fuels committee that I had the pleasure to sit on in the past. Now the difficulty was that the fuel, when it got put back into the gas, used to sit on top of the lakes because the fuel was lighter. It caused a bit of a different problem, which wasn't that environmentally bad, in that it would evaporate into the air. When you were sitting there, you would see all those spots of gas or oil, it looked like, on the lake. And it used to evaporate into the air, so it wasn't necessarily contaminating the water.

The difficulty now is that they use an oxidizing agent in fuel to make it burn better. I think MMB and MTB are the two oxidizing agents that are used in fuel to make it burn better so it's more combustible and far more efficient in the engines. The difficulty with these two things is two-fold. One, it's a carcinogen and, secondly, it's heavier than water and separates from gas and will actually go to the bottom of the lake. Now guess where everybody's intake is when they're drawing in from the lake to take their showers or use in their cottages and the facilities there? They're drawing it in from the lake along with these other components that are separating from gas and settling on the bottom of the lake.

Ethanol is another one that would be far more efficient in lake areas. So one of the things that they could look at, or hopefully the committee will be able to try to address, is possibly any of these locations making sure that ethanol is the oxidizing agent in the fuels that are used in the lakes. That way you will minimize the carcinogens that are put in, that are heavier, that separate from gas and actually flow to the bottom of the lakes and accumulate—they're accumulative as well. So that's another thing that could be potentially looked at in a fashion that may be able to make sure that the lakes are far cleaner. Actually, anything that we can do to move the four-stroke outboard engine much farther—they're far more fuel-efficient, far less polluting in the environment. They are costlier and heavier, but they're much better for the environment, and any time we have the opportunity for opening lakes—I know that in the Kawartha Lakes, Highlands Kawartha park, one of the potential ones for

non-residents, potentially could have been anybody coming in that wanted to use a boat, so long as it was a four-stroke motor, would be given a permit to use it, in order to encourage the promotion of the far less promoting four-stroke engines out there. I know the member from Peterborough is listening very attentively, and hopefully—I'm not sure if he knew all these different aspects about fuel and aspects like that, but anything that we can do along that.

One of the other areas that is a bit concerning is that the people who own a cottage all want that pristine southern beach. They want to be able to have the proper exposure for the sun there and they like to have lots of sand and everything else. They have a tendency to cut down all the trees along the shorelines, and when they're doing that they're destroying the habitat in those areas. One of the difficulties is that spawning habitat—and if at all possible, yeah, it's nice to have a small section of sandy area so long as it is natural and self-occurring—

Mr. Mike Colle: Throw a log in the water; that's what I say.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Throw a log in the water. Well, actually that's something else I could talk about when we're talking about these pristine spawning areas. Over history—and I know one of the lakes up around the Wilberforce area—there used to be a lumber mill in the area and all the slabs were thrown off. I know in other areas up the Sault Ste. Marie way, when they were drawing the logs in, a lot of them sank to the bottom. They sit on the bottom and they create a bit of a good habitat for some spawning areas and protection areas for baitfish. Baitfish will accumulate around those logs. If you have an aquarium and just put a rock in there, you will always find that the fish will accumulate near the rock because there are several aspects of protection that are included in that. The same thing happens with the logging industry for baitfish areas to accumulate, and guess who feeds on the now-protected baitfish that have a chance to rear and get larger? That's the sport fish, which helps out the industry considerably. So when you are talking about habitat, we want to make sure that a lot of these shorelines maintain the current shoreline that is out there and ensure that the habitat or the spawning beds are well taken care of. If you notice, in the springtime you will see a bass or a perch protecting its nesting area. There's an actual nest right there and you always wonder why they are there, and that's just the species protecting and ensuring that it can grow and live.

We want to make sure that some of those habitat areas are well protected, and anything that we can do without destroying the shoreline, yet still having our little piece of paradise, so to speak—finding the balance points is something different. People want that pristine shoreline and beach, but we're not the Caribbean. We have a different kind of aspect here and we try to bring that little piece of heaven as much as we can.

1600

Some of the other aspects that need to be addressed:

A lot of the cottagers—sometimes I'm reluctant to say this, because you inform those who don't realize it—will

pour the antifreeze down the drains. You can get the non-toxic correct stuff to use, but a heck of a lot of them are using windshield washer fluid. I try to tell these people, "Look, when you're doing that, where do you think that fluid is going? It's going right into your lake. You wonder why there are no fish in that lake? It's because you're polluting it." "Well, it's only a little bit." "Yes, but if every cottage on this lake did that, you're polluting it far more than you can imagine and the impacts are far more negative."

We just have to watch how we take care of this earth because, as was mentioned earlier on, we're only given a short period of time to take care of it in the best way we can, and we have to make sure that we all look at it in a positive sense.

I know that the Minister of Natural Resources is in the House. What about fish derbies? I know there's no aspect of limiting and controlling the number of fish derbies and the impact on that. We constantly hear from cottagers, and I know, having had the privilege and honour to have sat in that chair in the past, that there were always the two sides: one wanted the economic stimulus in the municipality; and the cottagers were upset with it. There was an industry, before Rick Amsbury, bless his soul, passed on, that was working toward sanctioned fish derbies, whereby it would be a sanctioned derby in support of the ministry, with certain guidelines to ensure that the impact of those derbies was not overly negative on those particular areas in lakes. That might be something, as well, to consider and find out how we can find a balance.

I know the member from Eglinton-Lawrence had mentioned the Oak Ridges moraine and the impact on that. Some of the individuals here may not realize this, but the Oak Ridges moraine was a glacial aspect, where the glacier started to recede, and when they were pushing all the earth forward, it kind of stopped right there. What some people don't realize is that when the moraine was formed, all that earth that was stopped there by the glaciers actually pushes and forces pressure on the ground. Our watercourses in that area, actually being forced down, are then—if you just follow a line maybe a mile from the moraine on either side of it, that pressure then forces the water up, and you'll get a large number of springs coming up in those areas that then flow to the streams that would flow into Lake Simcoe. Those headwaters are some of the things we need to protect as well.

When we talk about the greenbelt or the Oak Ridges moraine, it was protecting the headwaters, to make sure that those streams were protected for a lot of the original species, which would be your speckled or your brook trout in these areas. There are some indicator fish, such as your crayfish as well as your speckled trout, which tell you how clean the stream is. They can kind of tell from that aspect the cleanliness of the stream, because they're very susceptible to pollutants. We need to make sure that we can keep these streams as clean as possible for future generations.

I think I've covered the aspects that I wanted to cover, and I very much appreciate the opportunity. I hope that

some people have gained insight on some of the things that we've looked at. Hopefully, that will be used in formulating decisions in the future, not just for Lake Simcoe, but when we're deciding what takes place with all the lakes in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: As you may know, in the House I have always listened attentively when the member from Oshawa speaks about our natural resources and our waterways, because he does have a great deal of expertise in this area and I learn a great deal when I listen to him.

I was just thinking that many people—I notice the Minister of Agriculture is here—are probably not aware that by naturalizing the creek beds and the riverbeds along the Humber River and the Black Creek, we actually now have brown trout in the Black Creek, right in the middle of the west end of Toronto, which the students from Chaminade high school took from Duffins Creek and brought over in the hatcheries in the school gym. Now there are brown trout back in the Black Creek after maybe 100 years.

If you want to see salmon going upstream to spawn, this September there were salmon this big, three feet or whatever, making their way up the Humber River, trying to jump through the ladders and the damming that takes place. They're right in the middle of the city of Toronto. We never saw that 30 years ago, because the Humber River, the Don, Lake Ontario, all of our rivers and creeks, were basically taken for granted, because there was a lack of education and understanding, like you mentioned with the antifreeze. We had all of these autobody parts stores and shops all along the west end of Toronto dumping all these parts and chemicals down into Black Creek and the Humber River. That has stopped now. You can bring back a river, you can bring back a stream, but it takes a lot of people working co-operatively and intelligently.

You have to know, because the manicured lawns we see in cottage country—why would you go to a cottage and spend the whole weekend mowing the lawn at the cottage? You could stay at home in the city and mow the lawn.

The critical thing is to naturalize your shorefront and make sure that it's in a natural state, with the natural flowers and the natural species that are there. Then you've got great fish, you've got cleaner water, and it's a much better place to be at in the summer, rather than being on your tractor mowing the lawn at the cottage.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to offer a couple of comments on the member from Oshawa's remarks today. Within our caucus, certainly, he's recognized as one of people who knows a great deal about the kinds of things—where we can only listen about the four-stroke engines. But I think that what was really important in the message that he provided for us was the economic

value of the lake and the fact that, as someone who has been involved very directly over many decades in looking at opportunities to support and advocate on behalf of the lake, people don't realize how much it actually contributes to the local economy.

I remember hosting a public meeting several years ago on Lake Simcoe, before it became a little more fashionable. We discussed, for instance, some of the issues around ice-fishing and the important role that the ice-fishing provided in terms of the economy of the communities around the lake and also the kinds of responsibilities that those people needed to exercise in order to be able to make sure that there were fish, supplies and business operators able to support that industry.

I think there's a balance here that we're all looking for, one that recognizes the intrinsic value of the lake itself, the economic benefits that are derived from it, and most importantly in terms of our debate, our responsibility to make sure that it continues to be protected and provide both the economic and intrinsic value that it has for hundreds of years—in fact, thousands.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Any further questions and comments? If not, I'll return to the member for Oshawa, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the comments from the member from Eglinton—Lawrence as well as the member from York—Simcoe.

Certainly we've seen brown trout in a lot of the streams, but most people don't realize that brown trout can sustain higher temperatures. You'll find that brown trout can actually live in waters—I'm sorry, not the Celsius—of 76 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit, whereas when you talk about rainbow trout, you're looking at about a four-degree difference less, and then speckled trout below that. So the colder the water, the better it is for a lot of the native species. The rainbow and the brown trout were introduced into the province of Ontario. That's not a bad thing, as long as they're managed in proper ways. When you get to the speckled trout, and you see waters around 68 degrees, you know that you've got pristine water areas that will support the natural species from southern Ontario.

The economic value as well is very important. I know about the ice-fishing and there are a lot of derbies, and there are a lot of municipalities that do very well in supporting these aspects. And there are a lot of volunteer groups whether it's the Metro East Anglers and the OFAH working at Ringwood or—I'm attending a retirement tomorrow night of an individual, Roger Cannon, who worked very aggressively and very hard on behalf of the fishing industry, with governments of all stripes, to make sure that there is a balance out there, ensuring that we have future generations to make sure that all of Ontario can enjoy the great things, the various waterways, whether it's fishing, boating, sailing or whatever aspect of cottage and water life that people enjoy. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

1610

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased to be able to rise this afternoon in third reading of the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, Bill 99. Let me say at the outset that I will be voting in favour of this bill, as I have in its steps through the Legislature, but I do want to take the time to identify some concerns that I have with regard to the bill. Quite frankly, I'd like the government to receive these in the spirit in which they are presented, and these are indicators that I think need a little bit of work, recognizing that a bill has to have regulations that go with it. There's a great deal of reference by the minister that this is framework legislation. I'm suggesting that I have some concerns about where things go from here.

Certainly the very first one I would want to mention is the fact that while the minister has identified \$20 million over four years, when I listen very carefully to the comments that he makes in that regard, it seems to be on the issue of funding research. I have no problem with research. It's been one of the hallmarks of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority over the past many years. In fact, they have an international reputation for the quality of work that they have done on the lake. But I would offer to the government that we need funding for projects as well. We need to see that if we're going to move the bar, we're going to raise the bar, we're going to provide amelioration—it's really expensive.

I know that very often the minister refers to agricultural lands and doing research on agricultural lands and the impact they have. Well, let me just remind you that every kilo of phosphorus that is removed from Lake Simcoe that comes from agricultural sources is 20 times less expensive than that which is taken out of urban runoff. I can't overestimate the fact that there's a difference of 20 times the cost for one kilo of phosphorus to come out of one source over the other. So let us not forget the complexity of this whole issue of runoff and with that complexity, frankly, the cost.

At the risk of repeating myself, I'm talking about a lot of complexities. The next one I want to talk about is the complexity of jurisdiction. Many of us recognize the fact that the watershed is a huge area, and it encompasses many municipalities. It encompasses two regional governments, as well as a county level of government and separated cities in Simcoe county, so you have a great many players. When I mention the cost of taking that kilo of phosphorus out of the urban areas, it's really hard when you're looking at areas that are several kilometres away from the lake—in places like Uxbridge, for instance—to be able to provide a really compelling argument about the importance of spending those municipal dollars on that phosphorus reduction in urban areas, particularly older parts of these municipalities. So you've got the complexity of jurisdiction and, with that, also superimposed by this bill is the complexity of existing legislation.

Let me give you an example of the kinds of overlay of legislation that exist in the watershed. First of all, there's section 3 of the Planning Act, then there's the greenbelt

plan, then there's the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan, then there's the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe of 2006. These are all pieces of legislation. When this bill was first introduced, I recall speaking to it and asking in a rhetorical manner whose legislation trumped whose, because obviously it's a very complicated area. The greenbelt covers part of the watershed but not all. It's the same thing with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act and the same thing with the growth plan. So, in some places, you have all of these pieces of legislation and in others you have none.

The answer to the question is that this proposed bill will override all municipal official plans. That is somewhat unequivocal; that seems to be clear. But what happens later in the bill, in my view, is very disconcerting; that is, the bill says that with all of these pieces of legislation I've outlined, it is going to have to be determined which competing piece of legislation has a higher level of protection. In other words, this bill recognizes that there has to be a hierarchy of protection of legislation, but simply hands it over to the lawyers who are going to have to duke it out on which piece of legislation is going to have authority on a particular area, and to argue which one of them is going to provide the higher level of protection. I see the court looming in front of me when I hear this.

I do not see this as being part of what I would regard as our legislative responsibility. What we are doing here, when it isn't clear which piece of legislation is going to trump the others, is frankly creating a monster for the future. It's going to be left to consultants and lawyers to argue the case for one over the other. I see that as huge costs and bureaucracy and time taken, and then it ends up in a court.

The final thing I want to raise some concern about is the issue of governance. The bill has opened it, I think with justification from those people who have presented, who have demonstrated and certainly explained their frustration with the governance as it now is. But again I feel this is dangerous, in the sense that governance requires a level of accountability, a level of transparency. We're talking about public dollars here, and so we have to be very careful about making sure that whatever the governance model is, there's a very clear line of accountability. People are going to be very unhappy to think that their taxpayer dollars are going into an organization without that corresponding level of accountability.

While I indicated at the very outset that I will be voting in favour of this bill, and while I consider it to be something that is, in many ways, overdue, I felt it was very important to put on the record the concerns I have that I think have not been addressed by this piece of legislation. While it is a centrepiece for the government—as the minister describes it, a framework—a framework has to have some clear directions for people to work in. I think the complication of all those municipalities and upper-tier governments and separated cities that are all players in this—are all going to want to know

that their voices are going to be heard and that there is a level of accountability for their taxpayers. At the same time, the question of this very difficult way, I would argue, in so many cases, to determine which piece of legislation will have a higher level of protection—obviously that will vary according to where it is in the whole watershed—and the importance at the end of the day for the accountability we all have to the taxpayers of Ontario.

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

Mr. Gerretsen has moved third reading of Bill 99. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day.

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IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR DES IDÉES D'AVENIR

Mrs. Dombrowsky, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Agriculture, Mrs. Dombrowsky, has moved third reading of Bill 100.

Would you care to lead off the debate?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm sharing my time this evening with the member from Pickering-Scarborough East. I believe that member is—

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Right here.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:—and that member will lead.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: It gives me pleasure today to be able to rise and speak to Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act, 2008.

I note the clock is showing 59 minutes and change. Let me assure the members who are here that it's certainly not my intent to spend an hour speaking to this bill, in spite of the fact it probably deserves a full hour on the third reading leadoff. But I'm sure there are members with the last bill and others who don't need to have a full hour.

There's probably no better time in recent history, I would suspect, to be talking to ideas for the future than a time like this. What better time, given the economic climate that we're in, given the discussion we're having around the economy, given the talk about the restructuring that's going on, the need to ensure that existing industry remain strong? But, more importantly, increasingly people are thinking about the economic transition

that we in Ontario, we in Canada, we as citizens of the world find ourselves in.

I think that as time marches on there will be few left who will think of this as simply a shift in the economic structures in the workplace of the economies of the world. I think we'll look back on this and probably see it in the same way as those in the mid part of the 19th century may have looked at some of the changes that occurred with the Industrial Revolution. We may look at it as some of the changes we saw in the early part of 20th century as the automobile came into being and moved into its place of prominence and dominance as a public mode of transportation that all consumers had access to, or virtually all consumers. In the future, we'll look back at this time and recognize the structural changes that have occurred in the economy.

Thus, it is a particularly good time for us to be thinking about, talking about and legislating around ideas that will create those new economies, and that will create those new economies here in Ontario in particular.

I had the opportunity during the second reading debate to make some references to a device that we all use in this place today, a device that was thought of and developed out of research within the context of our university and business communities, and it's our BlackBerries. It's a device that a very few short years ago was merely a pager. Just a few short years ago, if you had said "a pager," that would have been a brand-new technology. Now we think of the device for paging information as something rather archaic. Now we have the devices that we wear on our hips, in our pockets, in purses, as something that we are connected to that allows to us do the jobs we need to do. Increasingly, that device, that technology, developed by RIM here in Ontario, is beginning to broaden itself beyond the business sector, beyond the elected sector, to the consumer sector in a very substantive way.

I was watching a bit of TV last night and a Christmas ad came on with a group of young people. The storyline was something to the effect that a young lady had found, tucked away, a gift that was wrapped and she opened it up and it was RIM's new flip BlackBerry Pearl device. She was chatting with her friends and she had this thing in front of her showing them all the wonderful things it can do for her. They said, "What are you going to do, come Christmas, when your parents find out that you've opened the gift?" She said, "That's not a problem. I'm just going to wrap it back up. I'll stick it under the tree and when I open it, I'll do the exuberant, 'Oh, wonderful. This is the best thing I've ever had in my entire life.'" They said, "Okay, that'll work"—the point being that it's now becoming a consumer device. It was developed here in the province of Ontario, and it's changing the way we communicate in the world.

Thus, we need to be thinking increasingly about new ideas, about new opportunities, and we need to provide the structure that encourages new ideas and new thinking and new investments.

There are those who want to contribute to those kinds of innovative technologies, innovative thinking, but they

need the support of government to make that happen. As we talk today here and as they talk in the federal government and the US about loan structures, about bailouts, about strategies to keep companies moving and in place, it's appropriate for us to think as well about how we can support new thinking, new ideas, and how we can support the tax structures around those to get the next generation of activity, the next generation of thinking, the next generation of product developed and into the marketplace in a fashion that we'll be able to use and take advantage of, to create jobs and keep jobs and create wealth within our communities. Thus, we need to talk about the opportunity to do that within a tax-structured basis.

We're talking about turning innovation into Ontario jobs by establishing high-tech companies that will, in turn, provide a boost to the economy. We're certainly going to want to see that happen. We're going to need it. As the Premier said, when Ontario comes out of this economic decline we're in now, we'll come out stronger. We're only going to do that if we have in place the structures that will allow this economy to thrive in the new environment we're going to find ourselves in.

We don't know what that environment is going to look like. None of us here know what that economic environment is going to look like in two years, in five years, in 10 years. I think we can be reasonably satisfied that it's not going to look like what it looks like today. It's going to look like something very different.

What we're into today economically is going to drive the thinking of an awful lot of people, the innovators, those who manage the business climate and those of us who are in the government mode, about how we can participate in the transition in the economic structures of this province and, ultimately, of the globe.

Bill 100 will provide a 10-year corporate income tax exemption for new companies that can turn homegrown ideas into those Ontario jobs and products.

Over the past few months, we've seen developments that are, quite frankly, unprecedented in the world. We wouldn't have thought at the beginning of this fiscal year that we'd see what's happening today. We've been experiencing enormous changes in a variety of sectors. Manufacturing and forestry are just a couple of those. We know it's not business as usual here. It's not business as usual anywhere at this point in time. We know from looking at what's happening in Detroit, in Washington, in Ontario, with the Big Three automakers—as they continue their negotiations to find ways by which they can continue to provide good jobs, high-paying jobs, skilled jobs, and develop new product and continue to function.

When I was driving in this morning, I was listening to the radio, and some of the commentary was around GM's efforts in bringing forward their new product over the next couple of years, the Volt, primarily an electrically driven vehicle. People are turning their minds to those things. People across the province and across the country are turning their minds to the new ways of thinking, new

ways of doing business and new products. We want to be a global leader, not just a provincial leader. We want to be a global leader. We want companies that are thinking about industry here in Ontario to be global leaders in that regard, and we need strategies in place to make that happen.

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We have a plan that we've referenced on a number of occasions, a five-point plan that we're consistently working to enhance and improve. Part of that plan is innovation, and Bill 100 speaks clearly to the need to innovate in universities, in colleges and in research institutes, where we can support the development of new and innovative ideas that can be brought to the marketplace and commercialized, and in commercializing those, create new jobs and new products within this province.

Now, the BlackBerry is a tool we wear, but who would have thought even just a few years before that we would have something called the Internet? We didn't create the Internet here, but we're certainly taking advantage of it.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Thank Al Gore.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Yes, and we could probably thank others. We could probably thank the US military, initially, but certainly former Vice President Al Gore was a leader in identifying the importance of the Internet and how it could develop in the form of the World Wide Web. We have companies, innovations and activity, and university and college development, that are now dependent on the introduction of that structure not so many years ago.

We continue to want to not only innovate but provide opportunities for tax-incenting companies and corporations to invest in Ontario and to continue their investment. Bill 100 does exactly that in providing corporate tax exemptions for a period of up to 10 years for companies that are developing and commercializing new products as a result of research done here in Ontario.

We can't just innovate; that's part of it. If we take another initiative—I mentioned the five-point plan; I know I digress just marginally, but I think it's worth referencing some of the other investments that are important in getting us through the period we're in and supporting this economy on a going-forward basis. Certainly our investments in infrastructure are a big part of that.

The Premier, in question period the other day, was making specific reference to some of the infrastructure initiatives, more than 100 major construction projects in this province at this point in time, whether they be our hospitals, court facilities, colleges, universities, roads or bridges. In referencing things like our hospitals and court facilities as infrastructure projects, each of those, as they are up and running, are going to need to have new technologies to make them work effectively. The Durham consolidated courthouse, with which my friend from Oshawa is very familiar, is going to be a very substantial project, with video conferencing capacity to assist in not having to bring prisoners from one location to the court

at a given point in time. Doing some of that by video conferencing will ease the process.

Video conferencing is something that is relatively new as well, and one would expect the technology for that to dramatically change over the next 10 years. I don't know what it's going to look like; I doubt anyone here does. But I would speculate that what we will see in the video transmission of information will be dramatically different in 10 or 15 years than it is today.

For those who were watching the presidential race south of the border just a few weeks ago, as I expect most of us in this Legislature were, one of the major channels—I can't remember which one, and I won't try to guess—was doing some holographic imagery where they actually had their newscaster placed with a blank screen behind them but could have them appear in 3-D within the context of everything that was going on. It's a very interesting technology, somewhat experimental from the media standpoint, but I think we'll look back on those kinds of things 10 years from now and say, "That's fairly commonplace."

Ontario should have the opportunity to be part of developing those kinds of new technologies. Bill 100 is one way in which we can encourage, through business tax-incenting, researchers to look at those kinds of opportunities in technology at our universities and colleges, and research institutes to bring those products to commercialization, to bring them to the marketplace and find a niche, whether it's a niche in video conferencing strategies in Ontario, in Canada or throughout North America or elsewhere. So the opportunities exist.

We are dependant as a province on the talent and the ingenuity of the people in this province. If we can find means by which we can tap into that talent, if we can find additional means by which we can take that ingenuity and harness it in some fashion, if we can find means by which we can incent that in some fashion through those organizations and institutions that are put in place to do exactly those kinds of things, it's the type of thing we should be doing. It's the reason that I believe the Premier, in our second year in office, put in place the Reaching Higher plan. It spoke to the need to invest in post-secondary education, in our colleges and universities.

This, frankly, is an opportunity to advantage some of that investment. Bill 100 is a way of taking advantage of some of these investments we've already made by saying, "We're investing in our colleges and universities; we're building their capacities." Why not take advantage of that through a tax incentive structure so that they will be encouraged to develop the products, to commercialize products, to move into the marketplace. That will take that initial investment in the training of young people in a research capacity and turn it not into one job but into 10 jobs or 100 jobs or, might I say, tens of thousands jobs here and elsewhere? Those jobs may develop, ultimately, outside of Ontario. They may even develop outside of Canada. But when they do or if they do develop there, they will have to look to us for that expertise to maintain that structure and enhance that structure.

So as much as the Ideas for the Future Act will help us commercialize products here, I would think in the longer term we would be pleased to see if there was capacity for those technology ideas to be commercialized elsewhere in addition and then take advantage of the skills and talents we have here to support that. It would be a good thing for the province of Ontario and a good thing for all the people of Ontario.

We want to support innovation in our colleges and universities here in the province. It's why the Premier established the Ministry of Innovation and Research. That's why, during this mandate, he has appointed Minister Wilkinson to head up that ministry, and the minister is here this afternoon because he understands as well or better than many of us here in this place about the importance of innovative ideas within the province of Ontario.

I had the opportunity yesterday, along with Minister Wilkinson—not yesterday; I should correct myself. You lose track of the days around here, this being Monday—late last week to participate with the minister in an announcement around one of his initiatives with a company, Purdue Pharma, in Pickering, part of my riding. The province is, through a partnership, investing—I think the number is \$5.3 million—

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's \$4.9 million.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: —\$4.9 million into an investment there, making it \$32 million plus. It will do a couple of things. They're going to be hiring as they complete that program, that project, and roll out the development of new drugs, not only drugs that are going to be used here in Ontario or here in Canada, drugs that are going to have worldwide patents, ones where we will be the principal or sole provider of that drug on an international basis. The minister was there not only to make the announcement along with the Premier but because a company like Purdue Pharma Canada, which has companies internationally, was competing with the US, Singapore and Beijing for this investment. And because we saw the wisdom of having an innovative strategy in place to invest in this company, they've opted to make that investment here in Ontario. Not only will that create jobs in short-term construction and not only will it create jobs to continue manufacturing products they're already making, that investment will do very much like Bill 100 will do, only they're doing it now because their products are already in the marketplace. They'll be creating new drugs, new technologies for the treatment of illness.

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There are multiple opportunities for us to be able to take advantage of the talent, the ingenuity and the skills there are in the province of Ontario, particularly the new generation: those who are coming through the system now, those with the really the new ideas, those with the really great ideas, those who are willing to reach beyond the boundaries of conventional thinking to help make this province what it needs to be in the future.

Bill 100 may seem like a small step. It may seem to some that it's fairly marginal. We all know—we'll hear it

said here before long, I'm sure—that many companies don't reach corporate profits for a period of time from initiation. That's the reason there's a 10-year period of tax exemption for these corporations when they start up. It gives them not only the opportunity to get ramped up, but to take full advantage of the corporate tax exemption provided under Bill 100. It focuses attention on some very specific areas, because from all the research that has been done, we see those as opportunities for real growth in the future—the real next generation of opportunity in the province of Ontario.

It's a pleasure to be able to stand for a bit of time this afternoon to speak to Bill 100. I am anxious, as we move through this, to see and hear from others in the Legislature. I'm anxious to have the opportunity to hear the balance of the debate as it continues. The economy is moving quicker than any of us might have expected. It's no longer moving at 60 miles an hour on the 401; it's moving maybe something beyond what we might have seen with the space shuttle on its return, and the objective would be to have it move at the speed of light; in essence, to have new innovation in this province sooner rather than later.

We want to build on existing measures to tax cuts that have already been made in the province. This is one element; it's one focused area. It's not by any means the only thing we have done in respect to the tax cutting and tax elimination where it has been deemed appropriate. The elimination of capital taxes in the manufacturing, forest and resource sectors, in a retroactive fashion, was part of that. Changes in the tax structure for small business on the education side are part of that. There are many examples where we have worked in that regard. This is an incentive for new opportunity. We believe it's one of the fundamental parts of the five-point economic plan, and that's the innovative part of the strategy. This is going to play a significant part in this.

If passed, the Ideas for the Future Act, 2008, is going to help us sustain the high quality of life we enjoy today. To do that, we need to change the way we do business and the way we think. But particularly, we need to create high-value jobs that ensure that all Ontarians continue to have a prosperous future.

I look forward to the debate, and hope that when the debate is finished, all members of the Legislature can find themselves able to support Bill 100.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments with respect to Bill 100, the Ideas for the Future Act, 2008. I would say at the outset that it is something that we in the Progressive Conservative Party could support. It is something that, as far as it goes, we certainly need to be doing in the province of Ontario. Certainly we would agree that we need to be bold, we need to be innovative. Particularly as many sectors in the manufacturing economy are under fairly significant stress right now, we need to be thinking outside the box and looking for solutions.

This certainly would appear to be one of them, but I would say there are several impediments to allowing this bill to be as effective as it otherwise might be. One is the fact that it's not an exemption but a refund. We all know how that goes. You pay the tax, write out a thousand pieces of paperwork and submit the application, and then you wait. I think there needs to be some kind of guarantee that you're going to receive this in a fairly quick timeline in order to be able to take full advantage of the exemption.

Secondly, it is only available to certain new businesses. It doesn't qualify existing businesses that commercialize new intellectual property, but only ones that are in existence. That further narrows the eligibility and the types of businesses that are able to apply. Then it's only available to eligible commercialization businesses, which means that it's only applicable to the types of businesses that fall into the government priority areas. Again we have something that's restricted even more.

While we would hope this would be a broad-based, innovative type of legislation, it is something we can support, as far as it goes, but we wish it could have gone further to stimulate other areas of the economy that also need help from the government at this very critical time in our troubled economy.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to commend my friend from Pickering–Scarborough East, because he attempted, in some 25 minutes, to wax eloquently on a bill that I am sure he realizes is going to do next to nothing to solve the financial crisis and the economic crisis facing this province and the people of Ontario. He waxed so eloquently in talking in hyperbolic terms of how this is going to help in research and innovation, and I listened intently for the entire period for him to try to put a figure to it, but of course he did not. Being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, I was sure that he was going to talk about how many millions or billions of dollars the government was going to flow into this great and mighty program, but he did not. I guess, sadly, the reason he did not is because the costs of this proposal are absolutely infinitesimally low.

According to the Ministry of Finance, to which he is the parliamentary assistant, the proposal will cost \$5 million in its first year and then jump to the huge amount of \$7 million annually in each of the 10 years that this program is supposed to take place. To put that number in perspective, that is somewhere between 0.005% and 0.007% of the provincial budget when fully costed out. That doesn't sound like the initiative is really a priority of this government. In fact, it is not. It is a feel-good announcement. It is to pretend that something is being done, when in reality the government is putting very little toward this bill at all.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to thank the former mayor of Pickering for his insights into this bill. This bill, the new ideas job fund here, for the commercialization of new

ideas, is \$10 million, but it's got to be taken in context. This is also part of the government's \$1.1-billion Next Generations of Jobs Fund, which is really enhancing all kinds of new ideas, and then the advanced manufacturing initiative we have, another \$500 million. So that's quite substantive—over \$1.5 billion for new ideas, new jobs.

I hope this bill will help resolve my pet peeve, and that is the big 50-gallon water heaters we have in our basements boiling away this water, useless things that we all have to have. They're at home cooking right now as we're sitting here. I keep saying to myself, "Why can't we in Ontario get someone to use some of this money the government is putting forward to develop one of those little Portuguese on-the-wall water heaters?" They're on-demand. They cost about \$300 to \$500 in Portugal; you can get them in South America, you can get them in Italy, in England.

That's all I want, a company in Mississauga, a company in Pickering, in Oakville, somebody to build these little Portuguese water heaters that I can put in my house.

Mr. Michael Prue: They sell them at Home Depot.

Mr. Mike Colle: I asked at Home Depot how much these on-demand water heaters cost. They're \$2,000, and the thing is made in, I think, Czechoslovakia, and then another \$1,100 to install it. So I'm going to pay \$3,300 plus tax etc.?

I don't know if the member will listen to me, but maybe this idea fund will get me one of these little cheap on-demand water heaters. I don't want that water cooking away in my house right now. I want to shut that off, and when I go take a shower or wash the dishes, I want to turn it on. I don't want—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I don't know how he got into hot water heaters. I like my hot water heater. I like to take a shower; maybe the member opposite is not so inclined.

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But notwithstanding that, I represent a high-tech area of the province of Ontario, the former city of Kanata, and I want to tell you how useless this bill is. Basically, this bill would finance the hiring of 50 to 70 engineers over the period of the time of this legislation, for 10 years—50 to 70 engineers; such a small number of people who would be involved in innovation for our province.

The other thing that I would like to ask the parliamentary assistant for the finance minister is, why do we need this bill? I mean, you can create a program tomorrow. The best thing about the bill is the title. There's nothing else in the bill. You can create this program tomorrow without any legislation. This Legislature costs the taxpayers over \$100,000 a day for us to sit here. Why didn't you create the program, make it a little bit bigger so you could hire another engineer and forget this useless piece of legislation we have in front of the House?

Mr. Mike Colle: What a cynic.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It doesn't make any sense. You don't need it. This is a feel-good bill. Let's deal with

the real issues of the day. Let's deal with the economy. Let's deal with the auto sector. Let's deal with real issues. This is a sham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to member for Pickering-Scarborough East, who has two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: As always, I certainly appreciate the comments that are made from around the House. I don't necessarily always agree with them but I appreciate the fact that the members take the time, whether from Whitby-Oshawa, Beaches-East York, Eglinton-Lawrence or Carleton-Mississippi Mills. There will be lots of—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I said I don't necessarily agree with them.

One can always be somewhat picayune and say this amount of money is not going to do all of this. My reference to Purdue Pharma—our investment of \$4.9 million is creating an opportunity for an investment by them of over \$30 million initially, creating 50 high-tech jobs as they roll the program out, and at the same time an opportunity to create new products that will be worldwide.

I appreciate the member from Eglinton-Lawrence's comments. He wants to get down to the nitty-gritty—just give me something I can use; give me something practical out of this; give me something that is going to make sense. It brings us in part back to what our friends at RIM have done over the years. When we talked about that as being—some of us said, "What's all that about? Why would you think about doing something like that?" And now we take it for granted as, if not a necessary, certainly a desirable tool.

This bill is intended and will incent innovative activities through our research institutions, our universities and our colleges and over time, I'm confident, will produce exactly the kinds of outcomes that we're looking for at this point: new opportunities, new ideas, new jobs in the next generation of job opportunity in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I understand that we have unanimous consent to defer our critic's lead on Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent of the House to defer the leadoff speech by the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Bill 100, the corporate tax refund for new companies that commercialize research: My goodness, it sounds like such an august and wonderful thing that's being presented here. I have to tell you, I sat through the first reading, the second reading, committee, and now we're here listening to waxing-eloquent speeches of everything this is going to do. You know, it's going to spend the entire amount of \$5 million this year and \$7 million in perpetuity, and as I said in my comments, that's 0.005% of the budget of this province. That's how much is being invested in innovation and

research under the guise of this bill. We have very serious concerns about the effectiveness of Bill 100 in creating new innovation and new economic opportunities in Ontario.

When the bill was first put forward, I listened to the Minister of Finance. I even wrote down what he had to say because it sounded like it had so much promise. Minister Duncan said, "This bill is meant to attract individuals with great ideas from all across Canada to set up their businesses" in Ontario. "It would help launch the next wave of Ontario's innovators by helping companies keep more of their income to invest and grow. It would also reinforce the critical role that universities and other public research institutes play in our economy and the next generation of jobs."

If anyone listened only to that, they might have some hope; they might think that something was actually being done here; they might think that the universities are going to have all of this money that's going to flow in; and they might think that these companies, which are struggling, might see some tax dollars and a few things coming their way. But I don't think that that's what's happening at all.

Perhaps the minister didn't talk to those in the venture capital business who might actually benefit from a program like this being proposed—if, in fact, the program had any money. But we have talked to the venture capitalists, so I want to tell the House and the parliamentary assistant—

Mr. Mike Colle: That's an oxymoron—"venture capitalism."

Mr. Michael Prue: It's an oxymoron because the government no longer does anything for them.

I'd like to fill him in on the details of our discussion with several industry groups that represent companies that invest in the commercialization of research. They have told us in a nutshell that it takes eight to 10 years for a venture capital company to be profitable. So when the government offers money and says that it's a 10-year program, the reality is that most of the companies that are setting up today and would be eligible won't even be profitable until the time that the bill ceases to exist. Most of them won't be profitable at all. If you're not profitable, you don't pay any taxes. If you don't pay any taxes, you can't get any rebates from this bill. This bill is going to do absolutely nothing, which is why the government set \$5 million, 0.005% of the budget, or \$7 million, 0.007% of the budget, in order to finance it.

Companies in commercial research in the advanced health and biotechnology sectors need those eight to 10 years to become profitable. Giving a company a 10-year tax break when it takes eight to 10 years for them to earn taxable profits means that, overall, this program is almost valueless. That explains why the costs of the proposal are so low. How is \$5 million going to help this sector? Why would the minister introduce a 10-year tax refund of a bill that won't put commercializers of research ahead?

Ontarians see through this charade. Bill 100 is no opportunity for the McGuinty Liberals to pat themselves on the back, although I saw a lot of back-patting going on

over there, a little bit of cheering here and there, but there is nothing here at all.

Those who invest in new companies commercializing research aren't concerned with the income tax structure. The problem that they have is a lack of capital. The venture capital market took a hit when the technology bubble burst in 2000-01. Although the technology sector has recovered, the venture capital sector has not. The real problem in Ontario is that venture capital is not finding its way to these new industries.

Here are the reality and the ugly numbers: Between 2000 and 2006, first-time venture capital financing decreased by 92%. The problem isn't going to be resolved by \$5 million. Venture capital in Ontario has decreased by 92% in the first six years of this millennium. The number of companies benefiting from first-time financing went from 187 companies in the year 2000 down to 41 in the year 2006. So only about a quarter of the companies that were able to receive venture capital at the turn of century into the new millennium were receiving it in the last year for which we have statistics, in 2006.

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In Ontario, venture capital investment fell from \$750 million to \$685 million, back to the 1988 levels. That's much different than other provinces, which saw a 9% increase, or the US, which had a 13% increase in venture capital investment. So Ontario is lagging way behind, and what is the government's answer? The government's answer is this bill, which is going to do virtually nothing. While Ontario had 88% more venture capital than Quebec in the year 2002, that gap narrowed to 13% in 2006. So we are getting worse and worse in terms of venture capital, while people all around us in the United States and in other provinces are getting better and better. Some funds have simply stopped trying to raise capital because of the total lack of interest. There's no light at the end of this tunnel, absolutely none.

It is important to mention that venture capital is critical to the creation of long-term, high-paying jobs in this province. Venture capital is about getting cash to start-ups in new ventures, new innovative fields like biotechnology, green energy, computing and telecommunications, so that they grow into successful companies. We all know about RIM. We all know about companies that have been successful, and venture capital was important to them. Retail venture capital funds contribute \$2.3 billion to the Ontario GDP annually, and that is thousands of jobs. Contrast \$2.3 billion in something that actually works with \$5 million in this bill that's going to do virtually nothing.

But the McGuinty Liberal response to the venture capital crisis has been totally, completely and utterly inadequate. They created a \$165-million venture capital fund, a token amount that industry insiders say will do nothing to help.

Bill 100, with its \$5 million this fiscal year and \$7 million next year, will do that much less. This government has taken a huge step backwards, while offering the paltry \$5 million, by eliminating the 15% tax credit

for labour-sponsored investment funds by the end of 2010. I don't understand where this government is going. Here is a pool of hundreds of millions of dollars that wants to get into venture capital, that wants to help resource new industries, that wants to look at innovation, and this government is cutting it off in 2010. I don't understand this at all.

Labour-sponsored investment funds are pools of venture capital flowing largely to companies that commercialize research in the advanced health technology and biotechnology sectors. That's what they do. That's what they've done since their inception, and that's what they want to continue to do after 2010, but this government is bound and determined to get rid of it, and I don't understand that. Is this your solution, \$5 million versus hundreds of millions of dollars of potential money? I hope not.

The credit provides additional incentives for investors to put up some of their money in riskier assets. These funds have \$2.9 billion in assets in 645 Canadian companies, and these companies presently employ over 70,000 workers, but this government is bound and determined to get rid of the program by the year 2010. By cutting the tax credit, the government is signalling that it doesn't want to encourage investors to take the risks necessary to develop new technologies in companies that create jobs in the long run. "Don't take that risk. We are going to take that risk with our \$5 million; don't you take it with yours. Don't you take it with your \$2.9 billion; we'll take it about our \$5 million." I want the government to understand how poor this is. I want them to understand that what they're proposing is no substitute.

The government has replaced good policy with gimmicks. Here's a quote from a publication of the Ontario Retail Venture Capital Association: "Ontario's commercialization agenda will flounder without a steady supply of venture capital and its research dollars will never translate into real companies with products, sales and employees." We need to get venture capital back into Ontario. The first thing we need to do is restore the labour-sponsored investment tax credit and enhance the credit's benefit; make sure that the credit can only be used to finance start-ups and target certain critical sectors. Let's create stronger incentives for putting money into venture capital. That's the first thing.

Secondly, we need to create a substantial capital pool, more than the token amount of \$165 million that this government has put forward, to get cash quickly into the hands of small start-ups which can turn new discoveries into sustainable jobs.

Since 2000, we have seen the venture capital market dry up. The financial crisis is leading investors to keep their money under their mattresses, and they are in no mood for any riskier investments that characterize venture capital. It's almost certain that the decline in the venture capital market will continue.

We continue to see signs of bad times ahead for venture capital just across the street. You know, I remember all the hoo-ha and everybody so excited about MaRS

across the street. I remember the Minister of Research and Innovation so excited about MaRS across the street. The MaRS building was, with so much fanfare, the centre that would be the focal point of research commercialization in Ontario. We learn now, sadly, unfortunately, that the MaRS building at the corner of College and University has been halted, as it was decided that the \$300-million expansion just wasn't worth it during these tough times.

Hon. John Wilkinson: That's private money.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, there it is. The minister tells me it's private money. I know it's private money. There isn't venture capital to put into that private company across the street.

We need to have the money flowing so that we can have exciting projects that you—only months ago the minister was up here telling us how wonderful it is, and now he is saying that it's private money. Well, yes, it is private money, and it has dried up.

Here's what Premier McGuinty said when unveiling the centre in September 2005. Pretty witty words, I might add, in 2005 when he quoted: "Instead of sending researchers into space, we've made space for researchers. Instead of visiting Mars, we have brought MaRS down to earth. Instead of spending billions on interplanetary travel, you can fly here on the Red Rocket for \$2.50. We really have found a better way."

Yes, a centre for research may be important, but ultimately, developing innovative technology is about money. When private sector sources of cash disappear, there is bound to be trouble. The money has disappeared; there is trouble. The government's solution of \$5 million simply doesn't cut it.

Tony Cruz, the CEO of Transition Therapeutics Inc., a company that develops new treatments for people with diabetes and Alzheimer's, located in the MaRS building, said this to the *Globe and Mail*, and I quote: "Everybody's getting killed. Everything is down to the lowest levels you could ever think of.... There is just a lack of cash."

Bill 100 isn't going help the company or others like it. The province's token venture capital pool is simply not enough to get cash to the companies that need it. Without cash, these companies go broke before getting job-creating products to market.

If the minister is so concerned about getting these job-creating products to market, then the minister should be advocating for adequate funds. If he's going to pay for it from the government itself, I suggest \$165 million is not enough into the venture capital. If this bill is to do anything, \$5 million won't even fund one real project, never mind all of them.

Quite frankly, we are perplexed that there is so much government support or government member support for a bill that is so weak. A strengthened and enriched labour-sponsored investment tax credit would help give cash to companies that need it. So would a larger and significant capital pool that small start-ups could access. The Liberals have decided to put commercialization photo-copies before real high-tech growth policies.

In committee, we all stood there and we had all of two deputants come forward on this bill. They were talking about the bill and what could be done.

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Actually, I thought the most innovative, the most logical, the best one, came from the graduate students' association of Ontario. I'm not sure if that's their exact title. They were advocating on behalf of researchers in universities and colleges, those graduate students who go into applied and pure research. What they suggested is that if the government put \$5 million into the hands of graduate researchers and split this up 1,000 ways, giving each graduate researcher some considerable amount of money—I think what they were suggesting was 333 researchers in total at \$15,000—this could actually have a far better benefit than what the government is proposing here. It's money that would actually be spent. It's money that would actually allow the graduate students to continue in their research rather than leaving the applied and pure research in the university to go elsewhere to find employment. They suggested that this was the way that the government should be looking.

I listened to them, and I thought that they had made a pretty good suggestion. I know it wasn't on all fours with the bill, and I know in the end the government members ensured that it did not go through, but it seemed to me that that was the real answer. If we've only got such a limited amount of money, would it not make more sense to put it into applied and pure research? Would it not make more sense, if that's what we were doing, to help the universities and the graduate students who are ahead of the game, who are doing real yeoman's work in their field, to use venture capital for the businesses themselves? Of course, that was voted down; of course, that didn't go anywhere, because the government wants to look at a feel-good policy.

The whole sorry tale is unfortunate, because the industry has put real proposals on the table and the McGuinty Liberals have virtually ignored them all. Press releases and quick announcements have been their priority.

Now is the most important time to make real investments in start-ups. Good governments work to ensure that sustainable jobs are secured to help weather economic storms. We should be filling MaRS with good high-tech companies today, not waiting for the economy to pick up tomorrow. If the government really was serious about new high-tech jobs, then they would be stepping in to assist what is happening at MaRS.

Bill 100 is not going to create the jobs, as claimed by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Research and Innovation. New Democrats await a real venture capital fund. That is the only thing that is going to work. This bill is a very sad reflection of what is actually needed.

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm so glad that I'm here this afternoon. I can't think of the number of things that my good friend from Beaches—East York got wrong in his statement.

First of all, it's not a \$165-million Ontario venture capital fund; it's \$205 million. And then he talks about these insiders he knows who are saying that this is inadequate. I can tell you that \$205 million, which represents a \$90-million investment by our government, has been matched—some \$115 million—by the following partners, who he obviously does not think have a good sense about venture capital: the Royal Bank, Toronto-Dominion Bank, OMERS, fonds solidaires, Business Development Bank of Canada, and Manulife. I'll stand with those partners any day when it comes to making investments in venture capital. That is \$205 million.

I agree with the member that venture capital is struggling right now. Thank God that this government had the foresight to create this fund right now, because if it wasn't up and running, I think it would be very difficult to create it today, given what has happened in the economic markets.

That is added to, for example, the new BlackBerry Partners Fund—some \$150 million from the private sector.

The other thing I wanted to mention is phase two of MaRS. The government's investment of over \$77 million means that MaRS, this tremendous centre of innovation, is up and running in full. The private sector is considering doubling that size. They want to make an investment of \$300 million. That's all private sector money. So they have decided, because they have three sites—one in New York, one in San Francisco, one in Toronto—because of the market conditions, to put a six-month pause on a construction site which was four months ahead of schedule, as they redouble their efforts.

So we're very happy that Alexandria group is still committed to this city, and I would not be cynical and think that somehow the sky is falling in. It is important for us to continue to make these investments. That's why we spend some \$400 million a year on research and innovation, which the member obviously thinks is not that much money.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to comment on the points made by the member from Beaches—East York. I think he raised some very valid aspects of Bill 100, most particularly how narrowly this bill will cover and how few sectors of our economy will benefit from it.

There are, of course, no incentives for existing businesses to commercialize new intellectual properties. The mining, the forestry, the agricultural and the manufacturing sectors: none can apply—and, of course, most notably the auto sector. So as meagre as the tax exemption bills offered in Bill 100 are, the sectors of our economy that we should be discussing and we should be incenting in this chamber were not even touched with Bill 100.

I think it's a truly unfortunate situation that we have a bill entitled Ideas for the Future Act and yet it doesn't cover the very sectors in Ontario's economy like agriculture, mining, manufacturing, forestry and, of course, the auto sector, none of which will be able to have any

kind of benefit when Bill 100 is passed by the McGuinty Liberals. It's an unfortunate indication of the priorities that the Liberal government has chosen to bring forward for debate. Instead of discussing innovative ideas and bringing forward positive suggestions on some of those sectors that are in desperate need, we are narrow casting on Bill 100, and so few Ontario businesses will be able to tap into it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Seeing none, I'll return to the member for Beaches—East York, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I had anticipated a few more questions and comments from such an august group here, but I do thank the Minister of Research and Innovation and the member from Dufferin—Caledon for their comments.

To the Minister of Research and Innovation, he contends that my numbers are not right. I believe that they are right, but there's the difference: You say it's \$205 million and I think it's \$165 million. But notwithstanding that, I was very taken with the fact that he did not attempt to defend the bill itself. He attempted to attack my position that there wasn't enough venture capital money. Does the minister honestly believe, even if his figure is right, \$205 million, that that is sufficient venture capital money?

I would hazard a guess that it is not enough at all. I would hazard a guess that since we have gone from sort of the engine in Canada, from the place where most venture capital once came to this province, to a place where less and less is coming and there are continuing declines in venture capital each and every year—there was no comment about that. All it was was a quibble over whether my figure is right or his figure is right. Quite frankly, there is no defence of this bill. He did not try to defend the bill because there is no defence. The \$5 million that is going to be spent on this bill is not going to do what is necessary to get businesses operating. He knows full well that it takes eight to 10 years before a company that needs the money is going to be eligible for it under this bill. Almost no companies that are started up today and that would be eligible will ever receive a dime. He knows full well that this bill is nothing more than a sham. He did not try to defend this bill at all but simply to attack me on a figure which I contest with him. Whether it's \$205 million or \$165 million, I leave that to the bean counters. I just know that this bill is not going to do what it purports to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House adjourned at 1720.

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Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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