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Monday 22 September 2008

Lundi 22 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Monday 22 September 2008

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Lundi 22 septembre 2008

The House met at 0900.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR
ONTARIANS ACT, 2008**

**LOI DE 2008 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE
L'ACCÈS DES ONTARIENNES ET DES
ONTARIENS AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE
LA SANTÉ QUALIFIÉS**

Mr. Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / *Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.*

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

Hon. David Caplan: It is truly an honour for me to rise here today as Ontario's Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I will be sharing my time during this debate with my very able parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

As you know, today's agenda includes second reading of our government's proposed legislation, Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act, which I'll refer to as Bill 97. This bill was introduced in the last legislative session by my predecessor, Minister George Smitherman, based on the work of the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's—Laurel Broten's—comprehensive report on removing barriers for international medical doctors. I trust that the member will be discussing this in debate later this morning. This bill is a continuation of our government's tireless efforts to systematically remove barriers for internationally trained physicians and other health professionals.

I think it's important to note that the core of our success is in recognizing that the challenge is a shared responsibility—responsibility between government, the educational institutions and the regulatory colleges. Each partner has a critical role to play in making sure that

Ontario is best positioned to compete in an international market by being an employer of first choice. Bill 97 recognizes this shared role by expanding the mandate of all of Ontario's 23 health regulatory colleges to acknowledge that access to health care is a matter of public interest. That's a very critical element of Bill 97, because traditionally, the colleges have worked to protect the public, setting standards around registration and practice. Today's bill, Bill 97, recognizes that it's not only important to protect the public from bad practices, but that improving access to health care services must remain our collective goal and a shared responsibility, as I've mentioned. This is an important priority for this government. We've been working hard to increase the number of doctors working in Ontario's health system. In fact, Ontario has already grown its capacity for integrating and welcoming internationally educated physicians to the province by more than doubling the number of training spots, residency spots, for physicians coming from other jurisdictions over the last four years. In fact, today in Ontario, we have more than 630 internationally educated health care professionals training within our world-class medical education institutions. I'm pleased to tell you that Ontarians already do have the services of more than 5,000 internationally trained doctors right across the province. These 5,000 physicians represent almost a quarter of our physician workforce, and they are a vital part of a strong and diverse medical community.

We've worked tirelessly to create pathways for those who previously have not had a route to practice in this province. Today, the debate and the consideration of this bill, brought forth by my predecessor, Minister Smitherman, allows us to take the next step in removing barriers by helping to ease the way for qualified international medical graduates, otherwise known as IMGs, and other internationally educated health professionals as well, to enter our health care system.

Bill 97 further dismantles some of the barriers that prevent qualified, competent, practice-ready, internationally trained physicians to provide care to Ontarians. By creating a shared sense of purpose and urgency around the need to fast-track the practice-ready physicians to work in Ontario as soon as possible, we have already begun to reap the rewards of this important partnership with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. I'm pleased to tell you, Speaker, and to inform this House that over the summer we have begun collaborating with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on changes that would ease the transition to practice for internationally trained doctors. The college's co-opera-

tion is vital to accomplish the goals that we've set out. Last Thursday, just last week, on September 18, the college passed a motion to make it possible for doctors fully licensed and practising in the United States or other parts of Canada to become registered in Ontario without further training or additional exams.

I want to congratulate the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario for their demonstrated leadership in working with this government to make health care more available and more accessible to Ontarians. The college has worked diligently to remove barriers to physicians to register in Ontario, and they are doing so in a manner that will accomplish our goals around access to health care services without compromising the standards that our citizens expect from their physicians.

Let me tell you more about the government's success to date. In addition to the over 630 international medical graduates who currently take advantage of our government's funded training and assessment opportunities in Ontario, the province exceeded its target in 2007-08 and offered 235 IMG training or assessment positions in that year. We expect the total number of positions offered for 2008-09 to exceed last year's record-breaking total.

The 2008 College of Physicians and Surgeons reported that the number of full-practice certificates issued this year to IMGs was the highest in over two decades. That statistic also marks a long record of an increasing number of certificates for IMGs. Bill 97, therefore, is of vital importance to Ontarians—vital because it would improve their access to family doctors by making it easier for qualified, internationally trained doctors to practise here in the province.

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Bill 97 is intrinsic to meeting the two principal priorities that our government has defined for health care over the next few years and that Ontarians overwhelmingly endorsed about a year ago. Our first priority is reducing wait times, with a focus in particular on emergency departments. Our second priority is improving access to high-quality family health care.

We chose those priorities carefully, and it's critical to the continued success of Ontario's health system transformation, as well as for the well-being of the people of Ontario. In this regard, Bill 97 would help to increase the supply of doctors needed here in the province today and in the future. That's particularly important in helping to ensure that people have access to health care in the community rather than relying upon emergency departments for non-emergency health care.

I urge all members of this House to fully support Bill 97, to make sure that no one living in this province must make do without a doctor.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to join Minister Caplan and speak in support of Bill 97, Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act, 2008. I want to begin with special thanks to Minister Caplan, former Minister of

Health George Smitherman and the Premier for their unwavering support of a vast array of legislative, budgetary and policy initiatives that form part of our government's comprehensive plan to improve access to care as well as to further opportunity for internationally trained doctors seeking to practise medicine in Ontario.

Since 2003, our government has taken many significant steps to increase access to health care and to remove barriers for international medical doctors. When our government came into office in 2003, one of the first things we did was increase residency training positions so that more international medical graduates could get the training they needed so that their skills would be best put to use on behalf of Ontarians. Today, more than 5,000 internationally trained doctors are practising in Ontario, representing almost one quarter of the physician workforce. Approximately 630 IMGs are currently in residency training, and we have made significant financial investments to support the training and assessment of internationally trained doctors through the operation of HealthForceOntario's Access Centre for Internationally Educated Health Professionals and the Centre for the Evaluation of Health Professionals Educated Abroad.

But, despite our best efforts, barriers remain. Bill 97 is the next step in breaking down these barriers, a step that began almost one year ago when I was asked by our then-Minister of Health George Smitherman to chart a way forward that would break down the barriers that prevent internationally trained doctors from entering into practice in Ontario.

Knowledge of the existence of these barriers is not new, and unfortunately, it is one with which we are all too familiar. You only need to pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news. It is the stories of the lives of internationally trained medical doctors and the reality of the lives that they live, here in Canada or abroad seeking to come to Ontario, that warmed my heart, but also made my heart heavy. It is an issue that I spoke about in my maiden speech upon my election in 2003, and I am committed to seeing that real and meaningful progress is made so that we can better welcome and integrate international medical doctors into our province. It is in this aim that our government seeks to put in place Bill 97, Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act.

Bill 97 would, if passed, change the mandate of all regulatory colleges to acknowledge, for the first time ever, that access to skilled and competent health professionals is a matter of public interest. Our aging population, shifting demographics within the health care profession and Ontarians' desire to provide safe, accessible, patient-centred health care demand that we accelerate and improve the integration of international medical doctors as part of a comprehensive health human resource strategy.

Bill 97 lays the foundation for the college to work with our government to break down the barriers preventing internationally trained medical doctors and graduates from practising in Ontario. Bill 97 is one part of our government's action plan for change.

The five-point action plan for change set out in my report on removing barriers for international medical doctors has as its goal improved access to health care by accrediting more internationally trained doctors, and includes fast-tracking, simplifying and streamlining the registration process for doctors already practising in Canada, the US or any other country with a comparable health care system to our own; helping internationally trained doctors enter medical practice in Ontario with the creation of a transitional licence, which will allow them to practise under supervision while they complete required education or gain specific practical experience; undertaking assessments more efficiently to allow internationally trained doctors to get on with their education and integrate into the Ontario medical system; providing individualized bridging support, which would include cultural and language education, mentorship and hands-on training; and developing coordinated, individualized assistance for those seeking to transfer their international medical skills and knowledge into another area of the health profession or related career.

In seeking to relocate to Ontario, internationally trained doctors face a number of barriers including lack of Canadian job experience and references, challenges with respect to credential recognition, misinformation regarding certification and registration, and in some instances, limited language and communications skills. This action plan seeks to assess and assist candidates based on their individual skills and educational background.

Since the release of the action plan in June, in a matter of days we moved forward to improve access and remove barriers that exist, beginning by introducing legislation that makes access to health professionals a matter of public interest and puts in place a legislative framework that better reflects the partnership that must exist between the government and the regulatory colleges when it comes to ensuring access to quality medical care in Ontario. I can't think of a better way to demonstrate our government's commitment to health human resources in our province than by partnering and working in consultation with our 23 regulated health professions to ensure that Ontarians have access to skilled and qualified health professionals to provide them with the care they need, because this is truly, truly in the public interest.

I want to take a moment to thank the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, with whom we have been working in partnership over the summer to ease the way to practice for internationally trained doctors. In fact, just this past week, the CPSO approved proposals in order to allow doctors licensed in other parts of Canada and the US to move to practice in Ontario without further training or additional examinations. The new policy will come into effect December 1. This is a significant move forward for those doctors already practising in Canada or the US who want to relocate to Ontario.

The next step for the CPSO is to facilitate registration for physicians from other jurisdictions beyond North America with a comparable health care system to our

own. Consultations with respect to these pathways to registration are currently being undertaken by the CPSO, and we look forward to continuing to work with them to break down more barriers for these international medical doctors.

I want to extend my appreciation for the work done by the dedicated professionals at the Ministry of Health as well as at HealthForceOntario, when it comes to meeting Ontario's health human resource needs, in particular with respect to opening doors for internationally trained doctors.

I also want to take a moment to thank the more than 100 municipalities that came forward to our government to indicate their support and encouragement for the work we were undertaking, in partnership with them as well, as they seek to work with us to ensure that communities right around the province have the access to the medical professions and care they need. I look forward, as we continue debate on this bill, to sharing with this Legislature some of the many communities that came forward in support of this legislation.

Ontario has the opportunity to take some very bold steps. A healthy Ontario means access to safe, quality health care services. Too many Ontarians do not have access to a family physician, yet every day we are reminded that there are many, many qualified, safe and competent international medical doctors who have chosen or would choose to come to Ontario but who cannot practise medicine here.

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Bill 97 is one part of our government's comprehensive plan to bring Ontario into the 21st century, to improve access to medical care in our province and make real and meaningful progress when it comes to better welcoming and integrating international medical doctors. I hope that all members of this House will join us in this endeavour and stand in support of Bill 97. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to comment on Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. My comment is, it's about time this government did something to address a very serious shortage of doctors, nurses and other health professionals. Certainly, the government has been missing in action this summer as we've moved from one crisis to another.

This Liberal government of Mr. McGuinty has been in power now for five years. Over that time, the doctor shortage and the nursing and other health professional shortages have been getting worse. In fact, recently I was cc-ed from my own riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka on a letter from West Parry Sound Health Centre, Lakeland long-term care and Belvedere Heights long-term-care home written to the College of Nurses emphasizing the nursing crisis that they are facing and suggesting some improvements: first, graduate more nurses; second,

match some of the other provinces, the one-year permits instead of the six-month permit, as I believe we have here in the province; and making opportunities to hire third-year nurses, as other provinces do.

But here we are five years into this government and things are getting worse. And what do they bring in? They bring in a one-page bill to address the crisis, where they just put a little more responsibility on the College of Nurses. That's their answer to the crisis that's been building for the last five years. I think, as has been the case over the summer, this government is still missing in action. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France G  linas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in the House this morning to speak about Bill 97. The NDP certainly has a proud and long history in Canada of leading efforts to improve access to public health care for all people. We welcome legislation that will improve the effectiveness of our health care system and that will strengthen medicare.

I also take this opportunity on the first day of this new session to congratulate MPP Laurel Broten for the work that she has done in her report on removing barriers for international medical doctors, which she submitted March 31. The report is at the base of the new law. It is a report that is well researched. It looks at other professions in Ontario. It looks at the way other provinces in Canada do their recruitment. It also gives us a worldwide perspective as to how recruitment can be done. It was certainly well written, worth reading, and a good piece of research done by this honourable member. I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate her on that work.

Bill 97 talks about international medical graduates. Although the title of it talks about many health professionals, it is really focused on physicians. The move done by the CPSO, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, certainly goes in this direction. I would say it's a bill whose time has come. For physicians practising elsewhere—basically, physicians who are practice-ready who live here in Canada certainly had a hard time coming into Ontario. This should make it a little bit easier. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to echo the comments of my colleague from Nickel Belt and praise the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for an outstanding report, on which Bill 97 is based. It certainly brings to bear not merely her own legal training but her many years of advocacy in this and other similar issues.

Why do we need to do this? There are a number of fundamental reasons why our government in Ontario needs to act and continue to act. Rapid growth is one. In the next 12 to 15 years in the GTA alone, the population is going to grow by four million people—not grow to, but grow by, four million people. There are already existing

shortages in various critical areas. For example, in my own area in western Mississauga, what we need are vascular surgeons. We have not merely a number of vacancies, but those who perform the work are getting on in years. In many other areas, anaesthetists—a word I always have trouble spelling—are in very short supply. Many of today's doctors are baby boomers, just like many of us around the House. These are all men and women between the ages of 42 and 62. Sooner or later they're all going to retire, and to our health system, it's going to seem like they all retire over the same weekend.

This bill contains the needed due diligence to ensure that the quality and standards required are maintained. As one physician in our area put it when he was chatting with me in a meeting not that long ago, "You know, when I was trained in Egypt, men and women had two arms and two legs, one in each corner, and fundamentally, when you open them up and practise on them, everything is still in the same place here. We all have to learn the way Canada does medicine, but our skills transfer transparently."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's great to be back, and I'm pleased to have this opportunity to reply briefly to the new Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as his parliamentary assistant. I do want to congratulate the new minister on his new responsibilities. I look forward to working with him, as I've got a whole file of problems in my office, and I'm going to be bringing them to your attention; you can be assured of that.

We all know that the government took the summer off, and unfortunately there are a lot of problems before the Legislature today that remain unsolved and unresolved. So we've got a lot of work to do this fall, Madam Speaker, as you well know.

Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, which we're discussing this morning, is one page. It looks more like a private member's bill than anything else, but I understand that the government is trying to make a point that they are going to be forcing the regulated health profession colleges "to work in consultation with the minister ... to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals."

This bill is fine. It just appears to be an effort by the government to shift the blame for the problems, in terms of adequate numbers of health professionals, onto the colleges. As we know, there needs to be a great deal of action on the part of the government to resolve this problem. Certainly, enhancing and increasing the number of international medical graduates will go some way to help solve the problem. But as we know, there are about a million Ontarians who do not have access to a family doctor at present. They don't have access to that confidential relationship that's based on trust. They're forced

to go through their own devices perhaps to a clinic or whatever medical care they can possibly find, and this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by this government. As I said, I have a whole list of health issues that I want to raise with this government this fall, and certainly this is one of them—I have constituents who have brought this to my attention. We look forward to positive action from this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the members for their comments. I want to reiterate that Bill 97 is part of our government's comprehensive plan to break down the barriers for internationally trained medical doctors. The bill places a duty on health regulatory colleges to work in partnership with the government. That is a type of approach that our government has taken since first being elected in 2003: working in partnership with those stakeholders and with communities that are seeking to put in place the same type of structures, breaking down barriers and increasing access to health care right across the province.

I would say to the members opposite who are critical of Bill 97 that they need to make sure they get in better touch with the communities they represent, communities that I can name—Bancroft, McKellar, Erin, Wellington North, Halton Hills.

0930

Many communities in and around the areas that colleagues on the other side of the House have the opportunity to represent have taken the time, have passed resolutions, have come forward to our government saying that they support the steps that are being taken because they too want to work in partnership with the province to increase access and break down those barriers. The partnership approach is working, it has worked. We've seen progress since the June introduction of this bill and the release of the report through to amendments brought forward by the CPSO last week, with respect to those physicians who are currently practising in the US or in other provinces who may seek or want to relocate into Ontario to make sure that Ontarians have increased access to physicians and the health care that they need.

The partnership will continue, the work will continue. We look forward to doing that work and to making sure that this province is one where all Ontarians have access and those barriers have been broken down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to begin by offering my congratulations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I look forward to working with him. As my colleague has already said, many problems remain in the health system and we hope that, working together and encouraging you to take some steps and your supporting some of the recommendations that we put forward, we can indeed improve the health system in the province of Ontario for the people who live here. The problems, regrettably, are getting worse and, in surveys that have

been undertaken, the public is acknowledging that the situation is worsening. So there's lots of work to do, and we look forward to encouraging you and supporting you in making it better.

I would like to turn now to Bill 97, the Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act, 2008. I think it is important to point out—because I do believe there has been an attempt on the part of the government to confuse what is actually in Bill 97 and to misrepresent the bill. There is one sentence only in the bill, and that is—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I would ask the member to just be careful about the rules. Thank you.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would just remind people in this House and those watching that the bill says only this: "It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals"—end of the bill.

It doesn't say that this is going to improve access to foreign-trained professionals, as the government likes to tell the press that it does. It doesn't. This bill only says that it's going to force the 23 colleges in this province to take over the responsibility of addressing the shortage of health care professionals.

This bill, in some respects, would be more appropriately entitled an act to download responsibility for the shortage to the colleges. It is shifting the blame for the problem to the colleges. It's an indication that perhaps they've been negligent in the past. It's also an acknowledgement of failure on the part of government to address the needs of Ontarians to ensure that we have the appropriate number of health professionals in the province to meet the needs today and into the future.

Part of the problem is that five years ago when Premier McGuinty was elected, he promised to recruit and retain more doctors. Five years ago, he said that nobody would go without—five years later, and we still have almost one million people without a family doctor.

I just want to give you an example. We have two people who live in the Kawartha Lakes who wrote to us, Michael and Donna Hollingworth. They're two of the about one million Ontarians who don't have a doctor, and they say:

"We have been diligently looking for a doctor since our doctor notified all his patients, through the local press, that he would be ending his practice in Bobcaygeon effective June 26, 2008. Needless to say, we were in shock, and having never been without a doctor, we started looking into our options. We've called medical centres in Peterborough, Lakefield, Bridgenorth and Fenelon Falls, and the response we received was always the same. Right now, we are six months late for our physicals. Fortunately, we are both in good health as retirees in our 60s."

Another example of the one million people who don't have a doctor—we hear from Terry Jackson:

“My husband and I live in Acton, along with my 94-year-old dad. Our doctor, after 20 years, retired. My husband had cancer during this time, so we had no family doctor to follow up with the surgeon. My 94-year-old dad, even though I begged, could not get one of the new doctors to treat him or come to the house for shots for flu. My father was unable to attend the doctor’s office, as there were stairs and he is in a wheelchair. My dad has since gone into chronic care, and still no family doctor. It’s been an awful two years.”

You see, this is the situation in the province of Ontario today. The situation has worsened. Indeed, the number of communities designated as underserved has increased from 2003 from 122 to 139. And they’ve certainly taken some communities like my own, Kitchener–Waterloo, off the list—and I’ll talk about that—recently.

As well, if you take a look, since 2005, the number of doctors who are leaving this province because of the environment in which they’re finding it difficult to practise has increased year after year. You know, part of the problem is—I had a call from a family of a woman in her 70s who was to have heart surgery in London. Well, the woman got on the table, the intravenous had been hooked up, and she was told that they couldn’t do the operation because there were no beds. “Come back tomorrow at 8 o’clock.” Well, the lady came back at 8 o’clock the next morning with her family, and again, no beds. So she was told to come back again the following week, on Tuesday. Now, I can tell you her family doctor was stressed, because he knew his patient needed the operation ASAP.

But, you see, we have a critical shortage of beds in the province, and as a result, surgeries are being cancelled. It’s very difficult for family doctors who know that their patients need treatment not to be able to do anything. In fact, I get calls all the time, as do my colleagues, from people who have been told by their family doctors, because they can’t get the MRI or they can’t get the surgery they need within the period that would be appropriate, “Call your MPP.”

This is the system we have in the province of Ontario today: people who are desperate for help, who either don’t have a family doctor or who have a family doctor and the family doctor can’t get them in to see the specialist that they need for treatment of whatever condition they have. This government has not improved this situation since 2003. As I say, the number of underserved communities has worsened. The number of doctors leaving the province since 2005 has worsened. It’s not an environment in which physicians want to practise.

The other thing, of course, that is really of concern to Ontarians—and we see it reflected in some of the letters that I’ve read—is there are about 2,600 doctors who are nearing retirement age. They could leave at any time. If the situation is dire and a crisis today, it will only worsen. As well, we know, according to the Ontario Medical Association poll, that 83% of people believe the doctor shortage negatively affects economic growth in their

communities. I certainly hear that from chambers of commerce when I travel, that yes, if they don’t have the doctors they need, they are not going to be able to attract new businesses to their community. Again, that has an economic impact on communities.

0940

The other issue of real, grave concern is the fact that of the medical school graduates we educate in this province, a third of them are leaving the province within two years of completing their training. So we have a desperate situation. We don’t have enough doctors, and this government has failed to live up to the election promise to make sure that we do. This Bill 97 is an admission of failure, and they’re saying, “It’s now up to you, the colleges, to make sure not only that we have the doctors that we need, but that we have the other 22 health professional groups as well.”

I believe this bill shows that the government is abdicating their responsibility. The job was too tough, too difficult, and I guess most of all, they have never had a comprehensive plan of action, which is absolutely necessary and which we have been recommending. We have recommended that the government implement a comprehensive, long-term physician recruitment strategy; moreover—not just physicians, because we have other shortages in this province as well—that they establish an independent human resource planning body for health care professionals.

You see, they haven’t identified who is going to live in this province five, 10, 15, 20, 25 years from now. What are the needs of those people going to be, based on the ages of those people? We know that the bulk of those are going to be older people who will require much more care than today, and we need to make sure we have the appropriate health professionals to identify their needs.

I also believe that it’s time to create another school of medicine. The last school of medicine was announced in northern Ontario by our government in 2001. We also increased medical spaces. It’s time to continue on that path. We need a new medical school. We need to continue to expand the medical spaces in the province of Ontario. Yes, we can break down the barriers for foreign-trained professionals—and we must. However, we need to be able to train our physicians in this province, because the reality is that all other countries throughout the world have similar problems, and we should not be trying to poach health care professionals from other countries who desperately need them as well.

Let’s take a look at Bill 97. This is the type of statement that the government makes. On June 16, they said that Ontario is introducing new legislation that would ease the way for internationally trained health care providers to practise in the province. The bill says nothing of the sort. It doesn’t mention internationally trained health care providers anywhere in the bill. It’s only one sentence. Again, they did the same thing September 19. They boasted that in June the government introduced legislation that would ease the way for internationally trained health care providers. But this bill

makes no reference to international medical graduates or foreign-trained doctors.

When we had estimates this year, because of this statement that didn't seem to align with the one sentence of the bill, I asked the minister, "Where does it say in the bill anything about foreign-trained doctors or international medical graduates?" The minister had to acknowledge and confirm that the bill didn't make any statement. He said that the legislation was a statement to bring influence of the patient's circumstances into the work of the regulatory bodies. So it is certainly not accurate for the government to say that this refers to international medical graduates; it's not there. It's the one sentence, and that's all that it is.

But despite the government's claims to have done so much for foreign-trained professionals, we keep hearing from people who express concern that their experience and their education are not taken into consideration. I received an e-mail on September 21 from Dr. Lisa Yip, who writes, "I was excited to hear the announcement in June" by Minister Smitherman "that the province would be introducing changes to reduce barriers for foreign-trained physicians to practise in Ontario. Many of my colleagues were very pleased when they heard that the government was planning to implement important changes ... to allow well-trained international graduates to practise in Ontario.... Thus, it was to my great disappointment that when I contacted ... to find out how a foreign-trained physician could begin the process of coming to Ontario, I was informed that there were no actual changes in place."

Of course not. The bill doesn't introduce changes.

She goes on to say she's a specialist in Kitchener-Waterloo. She hears about the difficulties patients have in not being able to receive optimal health care due to the lack of physicians, and she says her waiting lists are growing, making it harder for her to provide patients with timely care.

She says she has a brother who was trained outside of Canada. He grew up in Kitchener-Waterloo. Despite the fact that he wanted to get into medical school and the fact that he has a master's degree, he wasn't able to, and he's one of the 200 or so doctors who ended up studying in Ireland. Of course, he's looking to return to Ontario, but she stresses that as a result of him not being able to find a space here, he has had to pay for this entirely at his own cost.

I think this reinforces the need for us to expand the spaces, to have a new medical school, because we can't continue to—we really have a two-tier system. For many, many people, they simply wouldn't have the financial resources to be able to afford to go out of Canada to qualify as a doctor.

She reminds us that there are many foreign-trained Canadian doctors like him who receive their education here and points out that the majority of them don't come back here because, you know what? It has become very difficult if you've trained without any financial support. She says that "despite the excitement generated from the

... announcement in June, it is with great frustration that I find out that there are no actual changes to reduce the barriers."

So despite what the government says, there are some huge problems that do continue, and, as I said before, the bill and what the government is saying don't quite come together.

I guess I would say to you that in Kitchener-Waterloo we had a report come out—and I want to now go beyond just doctors, because we focus on doctors, but we are going to need many, many health care providers in the next 10 years. They actually did a study in my community. It was done by the training board of the Waterloo and Wellington region. It indicates that over the next 10 years, we are going to need an additional 5,000 health care workers. Now, that's a lot, but do you know that that number does not include doctors or pharmacists? That just refers to 16 health care professions that were identified in the report. When the report was released by the Waterloo-Wellington Training and Adjustment Board, Larry Smith, an economics professor at the University of Waterloo, said, "Can you hear this ticking time bomb?" The ticking time bomb of course is that just in Waterloo-Wellington we're going to need 5,000 health care workers over the next 10 years, and that doesn't include pharmacists and it doesn't include doctors. That is quite frightening. Those are the numbers that are going to be required to replace the retirees and to accommodate the population growth from 2008 to 2012. That includes 588 more registered nurses, 511 more personal support workers and 264 more licensed practical nurses. And the retirement bulge, this report points out, is going to be most severe from 2013 to 2017.

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That's why it is so important that this government implement, finally, a comprehensive long-term recruitment strategy and also establish an independent human resource planning body—because we haven't hit the worst yet. In this report they also looked—I've mentioned nurses, RPNs, personal support workers—at dietitians, paramedics, physiotherapists, technologists working in labs, radiation therapy and respiratory therapy.

As I say, that report that required 5,000 more health care workers didn't include doctors and pharmacists. That report also assumed, and probably not accurately, that people wouldn't retire until they were aged 65, and we know that many people do retire before age 65. So this certainly was a concern.

I know that the community was quite surprised at the extent of the projected need, and there was some suggestion that we need to do what we can in order to encourage nurses to postpone retirement. We've talked about doing all we can to make sure that doctors are provided with incentives to postpone their retirement. This is what's happening in our region; this is what's happening in the province. So we need to be taking a look at how we are going to address that particular situation.

Our K-W Record followed up on that particular report because I think everybody was very shocked at the numbers and the fact that it didn't even include doctors or pharmacists. We need to make sure that there is good planning; we need to make sure that we have the appropriate health care workers to respond to the needs of the population; we need to identify what the population is going to be; and, obviously, we need to expand the number of seats in health care courses at both the colleges and the universities, and to encourage more of our students to enter these professions and then stay in them. We know there are people who leave.

I think this report was a warning, and it is a warning that this government cannot ignore. They must take action, and Bill 97 giving responsibility isn't going to solve the problems. This government needs to demonstrate leadership, which they haven't been doing up until this time.

I just want to make reference to some of the nursing shortages that we have in the province of Ontario. There's a lot of concern amongst the nurses, if we take a look at RNAO and what they're saying and at some of the other nurses. In 2008, Doris Grinspun said, "The nursing community is gravely concerned about the sharp slowdown in the number of RNs working in Ontario for the past two consecutive years. To prevent a crisis, the government must act now. You see, despite the fact that the government had promised 8,000 new nurses in 2003 in their first term, in 2007 there was only an increase of 671. And of course, in 2006, there was only an increase of 643. Doris Grinspun writes that this is extremely worrisome because, of course, it has an impact on patient safety and nurse workloads. So this government needs to fulfill its commitment and, as Doris says in the last line, "To prevent a crisis, the government must act now."

Then, subsequent to that, Doris again talks about the need to deliver on the part of the government; they need to fund and open 25 additional nurse practitioner-led clinics, which were promised by the Premier. Of course, she talks about the new commitment of 9,000 that they've committed to this term; they didn't even deliver on the 6,000. She talks about guaranteeing employment for new nursing graduates, full-time. You see, that's another area where the government hasn't lived up to its obligations. I've heard from several graduates recently that they were forced to go to the United States because they were not able to get full-time employment in the province of Ontario. In fact, they weren't able to get permanent employment; they were able to get only about seven and a half months. When you have bills to pay and tuition to pay back, that just doesn't meet the needs of the new graduates. We have to make sure that we continue to invest, keep nurses in the province of Ontario when we've trained them, and we need to continue to attract additional people into that profession. We need to do a better job than what we're doing.

Recently, a woman by the name of Grace Harper, who is very concerned about the nursing shortage and who has written me on several occasions, has gotten together with a group of individuals, and she's talked about her

concern. She says, "Did you know the average age of an RN is 45.6 years, 54% are 45 years and older.... The average age of retirement is 56...."

So, you see, the Wellington-Waterloo report refers to a retirement age of 65, but the statistics, according to the College of Nurses, indicate the nurses are retiring at age 56. She goes on to say that by 2008, one third of the nursing workforce will be eligible to retire. This is all according to the College of Nurses statistics. We have a huge, huge problem if we're going to ensure that we have the nurses who are going to be required to do what is necessary for patients.

She also talks about the Liberal mandate of 2003 to hire 8,000 nurses, and now the new promise to hire 9,000. Then she talks about how they broke the first promise of 8,000 and, again, she says, "According to the stats, they hired 3,480 the first year." Again, there is concern.

She also expresses concern about the fact that the 70% full-time that the government promised has not been achieved. She goes on to state that her group is concerned that emergency rooms are being closed, and we know that. Operating rooms are closed, beds are being closed, because there are not the nurses to care for the patients. We're hearing that in the long-term-care homes as well: their inability to find nurse practitioners, their inability to find nurses, their inability to find family doctors who are going to meet the needs of the residents. In fact, I know of at least one home now that, because they couldn't find a family doctor, is taking these older people into the emergency room of the local hospital in order that they can receive care.

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Grace goes on to say that we need to create a stable supply of nurses, we need to have the retainment and recruitment strategies, we need to expand nursing education programs and enrolment. She says that we need to enhance data collection to improve human resource planning. We need to analyze health trends to match with the required number of nurses. And she warns us that the increase is going to be huge because of the aging baby boomers and the increasing level of critical illness in the population.

They have now met with the RNAO, and they've met with the ONA—they recently met with the Chief Nursing Officer of Ontario—because they urgently want this government to make some strategic changes to address and solve the nursing shortage. Here you have the grass-roots up in Listowel area not seeing any action, being concerned about patients and wanting the government to do what we are certainly recommending; that is, implement a comprehensive, long-term physician recruitment strategy and an independent human resource planning body for health care professionals.

There's a high level of concern, not just among patients but among people in the professions. In fact, we hear from doctors and nurses who are concerned about retiring, because there is going to be nobody left to look after their patients. I recently met with a doctor from eastern Ontario who was in his 80s, and so was his wife,

but they didn't feel they can retire because there would be no one to take over and be the doctor in that little community. These are some of the situations we are facing in the province of Ontario.

I think that something we could do—we need to address the shortage, but maybe we need to do something else and be a little more creative and little bit more innovative, particularly when it comes to nurses. We know there is an impending shortage of nurses, and we know it's going to become more severe, and we know that that applies to all the other health personnel as well. But everything we do today is based on how we are currently utilizing those health professionals. Maybe it's time that we take a look at how we can redesign the work they do and the work environment to maximize the intellectual capital of some of those people, nurses in particular. Maybe we can provide a similar or greater level of care to patients with fewer professional personnel if we redesign our work processes. Maybe we need to take a look at creating a competitive, innovative fund that could take a look at how we can better utilize the people in the profession today and redesign the work and the work environment.

Currently, nursing time is wasted by inefficient business processes and workarounds, resulting in direct time with patients being only about 19.3% of the nurse's time. We need to take a look at other models, not just focusing entirely on increasing the numbers but on how they work, and take a look at the redesign and the work environment. That is the nursing shortage.

I'd like to compare what we did to what this government is doing. They have never had a plan. They've simply said, "We're going to create 8,000 more positions in our first term," which they failed to fulfill. Now it's 9,000, which they'll probably fail to fulfill again. We had, and recognized, a nursing shortage. When we were asked by the nursing profession, we set up a nursing task force in September 1998, and in January 1999, four or five months later, the task force presented their report to me. The task force provided eight recommendations to improve nursing services in Ontario.

The task force's number one recommendation was a permanent annual investment of \$375 million to create 10,000 new front-line and permanent nursing positions. I am very proud to say that our government accepted all of these recommendations and we immediately announced an increase in funding for new nursing positions to approximately \$484 million in the fiscal 2000-01. In March 1999, our government announced that its investment would support the creation of 12,000 new, permanent nursing positions, and that was 2,000 more than the task force had recommended. Other recommendations made by this task force, which included nurses, included providing ongoing education opportunities, human resource planning for nurses and an aggressive recruitment and retention strategy to attract students and nurses who had left the profession in Ontario.

The reality is that there were approximately 8,555 additional full-time equivalents created from the fiscal 1998-99 to December 2000. Also, according to the

College of Nurses of Ontario, in 2000, there was a higher percentage of nurses employed in nursing in Ontario than in any of the previous 10 years. Again, we did move forward on all of the recommendations and we did make a difference. That stands in stark contrast to this government, which makes promises and then breaks them and can't fulfill them. We need to have a human resource plan.

In fact, this government, after announcing 8,000 new nursing positions in 2003, spent \$91 million in January 2005 eliminating 757 nursing positions. We've heard over the summer that there are more cuts that we can expect. There have been various reports about nursing positions being slashed or positions not filled at the Rouge Valley Health System, the Leamington District Memorial Hospital, the West Nipissing General Hospital, Toronto East General and St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton. This is of concern to people in the province of Ontario, obviously, that they would be losing access to these very valued and critical members of the health care team.

So I urge the government today to develop a long-term plan to hire the nurses that you've promised and to increase the number of RNs working full-time to 70%. You're on the record as saying the province should try to improve working conditions for nurses and other health care professionals; I would ask you to do exactly that. Because if we are to provide a continuity of care to patients, improve health outcomes for patients and improve job satisfaction for health care professionals, we need to achieve these nursing targets.

I want to just go back and take a look at the doctor shortage, because again, I believe that our government was able to demonstrate that we were capable of taking action and addressing the needs that became abundantly clear. We took the following steps: We did increase the number of Ontario medical school spaces by 30%. We did expand the new northern family medicine residency programs by increasing the number of entry training positions by 25%. We did announce the first new medical school in 30 years, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. We did provide free tuition and incentives to those willing to practise in underserved areas and in primary care family practices. And, by the way, we did do that for nurses as well, and the government conveniently did away with that.

But we did listen, because in 1999, we did have a committee that took a look at the whole issue of physician supply. We recognized that the physician workforce was aging. We recognized that the 10% reduction in medical school enrolment was having a very negative impact. We also recognized that Ontario's population was not only getting larger, but was aging. So the committee took a look at how we could respond to the current and future needs.

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Dr. McKendry did the first report. He was a teacher at the Ottawa Hospital. It was a fact-finding mission. We

wanted to find out what was the scope and nature of our physician supply, our mix and our distribution.

Subsequent to that information, we set up an expert panel under Dr. Peter George, the president and vice-chancellor of McMaster University, in order to undertake longer-term planning for Ontario's physician workforce.

So again, we had recommendations, and I've told you about some of the recommendations and what we were able to identify. The government has actually had the benefit of those recommendations reflected in some of the changes that took place.

But the government is overlooking the fact that according to CPSO's 2006 annual survey, the profession is aging. They're working less than full-time—this is the doctors. More doctors are retiring and they're working less, so the number of patients without a family doctor is increasing. Older patients are increasingly being forced to go to emergency rooms—crowded emergency rooms, I would say to you—where they are left to seek treatment because they don't have a doctor, or to a walk-in clinic. They don't have the professional health care that they require as they age.

In addition, and this is a new factor that needs to be considered and addressed, these older patients require treatment for chronic diseases. Increasingly, as we have more older people, the number with chronic diseases is increasing, and they do not have regular, ongoing care or management of their chronic disease from a physician who can track their progress. That's another reason for making sure that we have a long-term strategy.

We don't have a body today, or a process, dedicated to assessing societal health needs, we don't have a body to develop the physician or health workforce plans to meet those needs, and we need to have the capacity to plan and manage our health workforce. We need to do that now, because I think everything indicates, and I've certainly tried to point out, that the situation is only going to get worse.

We also have to bite the bullet and recognize that we need technology. This government, in the course of five years, has not been able to put in place that technology to provide to our health providers and to patients. They've been totally missing in action. We need to establish a permanent, independent office of health workforce policy and planning to monitor and anticipate health care needs and determine the most appropriate mix, supply and distribution of professional skills and services to meet those needs. That office should work with the Ministry of Health to develop a model for projecting and monitoring the effective supply of health care professionals in the province.

We haven't seen that, and it is having a very serious consequence on our health care situation as we continue to see the government now threatening to perhaps close emergency rooms in some of our hospitals throughout the province of Ontario. We hear about maternal care leaving community hospitals. I think we're going to see hospitals closing in the future. I don't think people are going to be able to count on hospitals continuing to be open in their

communities. I think they are going to be losing some of their services. They are moving to larger hospitals, and I think the public needs to be alert to that fact. If we don't have the human health professionals that we need, we are increasingly going to see a closure of emergency rooms and other services moving out of communities, and people are going to be forced to travel more and more than they are today. We certainly hear of that happening, as we continue to hear about the wait times in emergency rooms and some of the other situations that are related to the deterioration of our health care system.

I guess all of this is a result of the fact that this government has no plan for health care. They have made promises but we have never seen a comprehensive plan. I don't know if you know this or not, Madam Speaker, but the Liberals did in fact make a commitment to develop and publish a 10-year strategic plan for health care. They made that commitment under the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006. In a 2007 ministry press release, the McGuinty Liberals promised this report would set out a vision, priorities and strategic directions for a health care system over the next 10 years.

So far, the government has broken, once again, another health care promise to the people in Ontario. They are unable to produce a plan to address the very serious gaps in the health system. Whether it's improving access to care for patients, whether it's modernizing our health infrastructure, whether it's shortening wait times or promoting good health—and we need to continue to focus on good health promotion—Ontario requires a long-term vision, a vision this government has failed to produce.

When the other Minister of Health was confronted during the Standing Committee on Estimates this year, he responded to the question as to why he hasn't done this: "It's true to say, and I have to take the responsibility that we haven't hit our marks on this." He acknowledged they didn't have the strategic plan ready.

We continue to throw money at the system, we continue to make all these knee-jerk responses to situations, but we don't have a strategic plan. So how will we ever know if we're meeting the needs of our population? How will we ever know if the money that we're spending is achieving improved patient outcomes? We simply don't know because we don't have a strategic plan.

The former minister suggested that the report would be published some time in 2008. However, when we asked the ministry officials to specify a date, they couldn't do so—again, another promise and another broken promise. In fact, the former minister's exact words were, "I think that the difficulty that we were in"—why they didn't have it ready before—"was that the window last year got too close to the election."

If they couldn't develop the strategic plan last year in 2007 despite their promise, in order that we would have better health care planning, they've had a year since the election to get their act together and develop a strategic plan.

The ministry and the minister have continued to say on several occasions, "We're going to have a plan. We're

going to release a plan.” In June 2006, the Minister of Health sent a letter to all the chairs and CEOs of the Ontario LHINs saying, “Our government is in the process of developing a 10-year health system strategic plan to be made public next spring,” meaning 2007. In December of that year, the minister told members in the Legislature that he would develop the 10-year plan over the coming months with an expected release date in spring of 2007.

Well, here we are. It's the fall of 2008, almost two years later, and we still have no plan. I would say to you, it's actually hindering the ability of the LHINs to move forward, because they have no idea what the strategic plan is for the health system over the next 10 years. If you don't have a plan, you can't meet the needs of the people in this province. It's time that this minister, hopefully, will come forward and not delay any longer in bringing forward a plan.

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Today this government is spending 46 cents of every dollar on health. Even without a plan, spending on health care is projected to rise to \$42.4 billion next year. Today we have a situation where people are operating in the dark. Health care providers are doing the best they can without a clear sense of direction. People in this province deserve better. They need to know where the government intends to go. They need to know what plan is in place to address the needs of the critical shortage of health professionals. They need to know how hospitals are going to be able to address the deficits. There are many things they need to know—and they don't.

They deserve to know how the challenges of the rising costs are going to be met. You can't continue to have that health budget go up every year. Currently, we don't even know if those increases are improving patient outcomes. How are we going to address the needs of that increasingly older population? How are we going to respond to overcrowded emergency departments? How are we going to respond to the need for more long-term-care beds? Because we've got a serious problem in many communities. The letters continue to flock in, and of course we hear from the stressed workers in long-term-care facilities that they simply can't respond to the needs of the increasing frail population in the long-term-care homes.

This government has no plan. They have operated without a plan since 2003, and probably that is why when the research is done and the respondents answer, they see the situation worsening since 2003. That is despite the fact that this government introduced a health tax. This government promised in 2003 that they wouldn't increase our taxes. Well, in the very first budget they introduced a health tax. They said it was absolutely necessary. You and I know that that just goes into general revenues. And there are people in this province now who, despite the government's promise not to increase taxes, are paying somewhere in the neighbourhood of 900 additional dollars per year. We know that the health tax also unfairly forces lower-income people to pay more proportionately.

We have a government that moves from crisis to crisis, if they move at all. Over the course of the summer, this government has largely been missing in action. We've had long-term-care problems. We've had physician shortage problems. We've had the outbreak of listeriosis. This government seems to think that if they don't speak, if they don't utter a word, if they just are not there, the situation will go away.

Look at C. difficile. If you take a look at how other governments across Canada and around the world handled C. difficile and you take a look at this government, which preferred to bury its head in the sand, and didn't want to undertake and to do an inquiry or any sort of investigation to find out what happened, why did it happen and how could we ensure that it didn't happen in the future—there's just no attempt. There's no attempt to respond to issues with a comprehensive plan. It's simply knee-jerk reaction. And now what is the government going to do this week? They're going to release the number of people that have C. difficile, but only if it's over 10. That information isn't going to give us the answers we need. We know that C. difficile continues to be prevalent in our hospitals—it's in our long-term-care homes—and this government is still not tackling the root cause of the problem and doing everything it can to make sure that people don't die in the future or that outbreaks are contained. They don't want to know, because I think they're afraid of what they're going to find, and maybe they're going to be found negligent because they didn't seriously respond to the situation in the first place, unlike other governments in Canada and other governments throughout the world. It's easier just to pretend it didn't happen and put up a wall and say, “We're now going to release the numbers.” Well, the numbers aren't much good without knowing how it happened, why it happened and what we are going to do to make sure it never happens again.

We've had lots of letters from the families of loved ones who have passed away. They can't comprehend why this government isn't prepared to undertake an investigation of what happened and why it happened—an inquiry—and also to develop a plan of action. This government just isn't capable, and hasn't been capable since 2003, of looking at any issue and being prepared to acknowledge that there's a serious problem, and then to embark on and undertake a comprehensive plan of action. So I urge this new Minister of Health to adopt a different tack and recognize that people in this province deserve better, and take a look at the solutions. We've brought forward some solutions today. For example, if you're going to address the shortage of health care professionals, establish an independent human resource planning body for health care professionals, implement a comprehensive long-term physician recruitment strategy, create a new school of medicine in order that our young people can receive their education here and aren't forced to go out of the province and pay for their own schooling and then come back here. We need doctors. Let's train the doctors here.

We currently have a two-tier system. Yes, there are some people who can afford to go out of the province, but there are many others who simply couldn't afford to do so. We know that we need the doctors. Let's create that new school of medicine. And let's remember that the situation is growing more dire every day, and it is absolutely necessary that this government develop the strategic plan they have promised. I will tell you right now that the LHINs are operating as 14 independent bodies with their different priorities. In fact, they're starting to look outside the province, to the United States, for some best practices. So we now have almost 14 mini-ministries of health doing their own thing, and that's because you have not developed that 10-year strategic plan that would give guidance and vision and help all the health professionals in this province know what needs to be done and where you plan to go, and that ensures, at the end of the day, that we're going to be able to meet the needs of the Ontario population, recognizing that that population is aging and that their needs are going to be increasing. We need to address the issues of emergency room overcrowding and the shortage of health professionals, and we certainly need to put more focus on health prevention and health promotion.

The problems are huge. I urge this minister: You have an opportunity to put a new stamp on the Ministry of Health. You have the opportunity to articulate a vision and a plan, and you have the opportunity to ensure that we in the opposition, and people throughout the province of Ontario, work with you in order that, collectively, we can address the needs of our population.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to the comments from my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo going through some of what this bill will do and what it won't do. It was most interesting to listen to some of the statistics for health care professional shortages specific to her riding. When I heard 588 registered nurses, 511 personal support workers and 264 licensed practical nurses for the riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, I would say these are the kinds of statistics that are also very real in my riding.

We all recognize that although Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, talks about all health professionals, when you look at it, it is very focused on physicians. We all agree that between half a million and, as my colleague said, a million Ontarians do not have access to family physicians. We also realize that there is a shortage of other health care professionals. She described it in her riding, but I would say it is even worse in my riding and in most of northern Ontario, my riding being in northeastern Ontario.

We support that we need a plan to better manage health care human resources in this province so that we have the right mix and the right distribution throughout

Ontario. We also support the honourable member from Kitchener–Waterloo's stance that more needs to be done in health promotion and disease prevention.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: The member for Waterloo started off this morning's debate with some unfortunate language, but perhaps the extremely negative approach to this morning's debate is rooted in the fact that when the members opposite had the opportunity to take steps with respect to this file, they did not do so. They were unable to or, perhaps worse, they were unwilling to do so.

Bill 97 and the proposed amendments to the RHPA recognize the health regulatory colleges as key partners in ensuring that Ontarians have access to an adequate number of health care providers to meet their health care needs. The health colleges will now have to consider this duty in all aspects of their work as health profession regulators, in particular when setting the requirements for entry to the professions, and the important role that the registration requirements play in governing access to the profession is something that the member, as a former Minister of Health, should know and understand.

There are approximately 5,000 Canadians, for example, who are currently practising in the US, and our government has heard from many of these physicians that they would like to return. The recent announcement and the work that we have done with the CPSO over the summer, arising with the most recent announcement, will pave the way for those physicians who wish to return to the province.

Over the summer, we also made significant progress when it comes to access to health care providers. The newly negotiated OMA agreement creates another unprecedented partnership between the government and the medical association that will ensure that 500,000 unattached patients will be connected to a primary care provider by 2011. We've worked hard over the summer to deliver on these important commitments that are part of our desire to provide adequate health care, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to congratulate the new Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on his new responsibilities.

I would like to provide the minister with some information and draw his attention to York region as an area that I will be discussing with the minister in some detail over the coming months, but I want to point out to him that my riding of Newmarket–Aurora is within one of the fastest-growing regions in the province of Ontario, and over the next three years will account for some 18% of the annual population growth in this province alone. That means that each year, our hospitals in York region and other health care services will have to provide treatment to, on average, about 30,000 more people every year. That means that the current situation of underfunding of our hospitals and all health care services is a major, major concern. I would ask the minister, as we look at this legislation, which is long overdue—that, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo so eloquently put

it, is but scratching the surface of what really needs to be done.

What we're looking for is a comprehensive plan, as my colleague indicated, that not only with regard to the doctor shortage but the shortages of specialists and other health care services, not only in York region but across the province, is adequately addressed.

"I'm told that I have cancer," I was told by a constituent this past week, "but it looks as though I'll have to wait at least eight weeks to see a specialist." I hear comments like this almost every day. It's up to this new minister to take on his responsibility to ensure that health care services are adequately planned for in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to talk about Dr. M., a gentleman who lives in my riding who was trained as a surgeon in Iran. He is now working as a baker. He earns \$9 an hour, and in fact Dr. M. took part in our \$10-an-hour campaign. Dr. M., now five years after McGuinty was elected, still works as a baker in Parkdale–High Park and still makes under \$10 an hour, except that now the only difference is that he travels back to Iran for six months of the year to work as a surgeon. Why, we must ask? Because it would take him, he was told, 10 years to become accredited in Ontario.

Our hope—not just my hope, but our hope across Ontario—is that finally, Dr. M. gets to practise surgery in the province of Ontario and doesn't have to work as a baker anymore. The question before us is, will this thin little bill, this one-page bill, make a real difference in the life of Dr. M.? I wait with bated breath. I'm enthusiastic. Let's hope it does. I'll certainly be following it very closely and I'll certainly report back to the House in six months to see if Bill 97 allows Dr. M. finally to get the accreditation he needs. Because we know that recent immigrants don't have the money to put themselves back through 10 years of training. There needs to be a graduated system and they need to be earning in the health care system while they become accredited. If this bill does the trick, I'm all for it. Somehow I doubt it. I've been waiting five years, as has everyone else in Ontario, particularly those foreign-trained medical professionals to be able to practise their craft.

So again, we look forward to this as a mini step forward where a mile step forward is required. Mostly, I want to see Dr. M. working in surgery.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response? The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I thank the members for Nickel Belt, Newmarket–Aurora, Parkdale–High Park and Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I think everybody acknowledges that this is but a tiny step forward and certainly it is important that the colleges do what they can. However, at the end of the day, the province needs to be the one in control. It is the province that needs to develop a comprehensive plan of action—a strategic health plan, a

10-year plan, a plan that they promised to us and have failed to deliver. Because until that time, we're not going to be able to identify what our needs are and how we can best address them.

Despite what the government says about all of these IMGs getting access to practising in the province of Ontario, I received an email from a Dr. Singh writing on behalf of a group of international medical graduates—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Can I ask the members to please respect the member who is responding to the questions and comments and to take your seats, please?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I guess I'll get my time back.

The pain that they're going through and how misguided—he says here, "[The] government feels that we are superhumans who can do all the work ... like working in a factory, [and] then do volunteer work in some hospital, then read ... the challenges of a new country too...." He says that when a doctor comes to Canada, it appears they have four paths. If they're superhuman, they will work as a doctor in Canada; secondly, they can go to the States and work there, because there are more residency spots and they are easily accepted; third is to drive a taxi or work in a factory—and, by the way, that is what most of them do; or they can fly back to their native country.

This government needs to do more for our foreign-trained doctors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Before I call for further debate, can I just ask the members—I know everybody is excited for the first question period after the break, but we do have further debate happening here before we get into question period.

The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Actually, given that that would be my one-hour lead on this topic, I was wondering if I could start tomorrow.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I wonder if I can move that we recess until 10:45.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Is it the pleasure of the House that that carries? Is there unanimous consent on that, then? Thank you.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The House recessed from 1041 to 1045.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, to welcome the grade 12 Canadian and world politics class and their teacher, Jen McCreary, from Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. I trust that everyone had a fine summer.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Welcome to everyone back for another session. I welcome the Premier back from his missing-in-action summer holiday. We hope that he's rested up and finally ready to notice that Ontario's economy is in serious trouble, and that a lot of the blame falls squarely on his government's policies. Ontario's economy has effectively flatlined; almost 43,000 jobs lost in June and July alone. People right across the province are worried about their future, their kids' future, their savings. They want meaningful and effective action, not more of the blame game stunts.

Premier, will you immediately bring in an economic update that will provide tax relief to struggling families and businesses, and jump-start our economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to be back. I'm delighted to take the question and I look forward to engaging my colleagues on all sides of the House in an important debate about what we should be doing for the strength of this economy.

I will admit that there is a real anxiety in our province when it comes to our economic state at present and our future, but with that anxiety I think there's also an understanding that I'd ask my colleague opposite to acknowledge, that there are some powerful global economic forces at play that are having an impact on us not only here in Ontario but throughout North America and the world. I read this morning in one paper that the US is contemplating a \$700-billion bailout for the financial industry there. That's going to affect the confidence of the US purchaser and that's going to have an impact on our economy. So I'd ask my friend to acknowledge that there are some forces at play that are having an impact on the Ontario economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: No one denies that there are external factors that the Premier and his government cannot really deal with, but there are things he can do at the provincial level. But he has been effectively in denial about the failure of his own government's economic strategies. Several months ago a number of groups, including OPSEU, called for an economic summit to deal with a deteriorating economy, but the Premier clearly preferred to stay at the cottage, apparently oblivious to the almost daily job loss figures falling down around his ears.

Premier, when will you accept the clear evidence that your economic policies are failing Ontario? Start following the advice of independent and objective experts and immediately reduce taxes on the kinds of investments that preserve and bring good jobs, jobs that we need right now today.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate that we've come to the nub of it so quickly. They want us to cut taxes and they want us to cut taxes in dramatic fashion. The last

time I calculated the total tax cut that they were looking for, it was \$5 billion. That's a one-point plan: They want us to cut taxes by \$5 billion. They're not prepared to admit that that would compromise the quality of our schools, the quality of our health care and the quality of our protections for public safety, like the safety of our water, for example. We have a five-point plan. We're cutting taxes to the tune of \$3 billion over the course of four years. We're also investing in the skills and education of our people; we believe in retraining our workers who've lost their jobs. We're investing in infrastructure and innovation, and in partnerships with business. That's a comprehensive, thoughtful approach to growing this economy. We reject the notion that the only thing we need to do is cut business taxes by \$5 billion.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You listen to the Premier and it makes you wonder if he was not only on holidays but in cryonic suspension over the summer and didn't catch any of the news. It's not just people in the official opposition; it's experts that you rely upon. When he wouldn't hold a summit, the official opposition did, and the Bank of Nova Scotia told us that Ontario is the only province that will have zero economic growth this year. One of your key economic advisers, Dr. Roger Martin, told us that Ontario's tax rates on investment are among the highest in the world, and "We have one of the dumbest tax structures on the face of the planet." Premier, if you want to ignore us, okay. But why aren't you listening to advice from the best and brightest? Why are you turning your back on steps that could turn Ontario's economy around?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend doesn't like to acknowledge that we're cutting business taxes by \$3 billion over a four-year time frame.

I took the opportunity this morning to deliver a speech—I want to reach as many Ontarians as I possibly can. I want them to understand that if we were treated fairly by the federal government, then we could keep more of our own money—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my colleague opposite understands that we send \$20 billion to Ottawa for distribution to the rest of country. If we could keep more of our own money, then we could cut more taxes, then we could invest further in the skills and education of our workers, we could benefit more innovation, infrastructure and partnerships with Ontario business. It's time now for all Ontarians, but especially members opposite, to stand up for Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance. Let me first say, though, that it's a relief to see the Premier here today, having apparently escaped from the kidnappers who held him hostage all summer long.

To the Minister of Finance: Six months ago, you tabled a budget projecting Ontario's economic growth for the year to be 1.1%. More recently, as of September 10, the Bank of Nova Scotia predicted that Ontario will see a 0% economic growth rate this year. According to your own budget figures, this will result in an \$800-million loss in provincial revenues. Can you rise and inform the House how much below projections revenues in the province are as of today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The budget laid out a number of assumptions. As per the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which that member voted against, we table those numbers as they become available. The first-quarter financial numbers show that we continue to track the numbers that were laid out in the budget.

We consult all those economists, including Scotiabank and others, around the numbers that go in. Obviously there have been downward revisions in their numbers. Some numbers are not performing as well as we projected in the budget; others are actually performing better, including employment growth.

When the second-quarter numbers are available, they will be tabled, according to the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, and we will do a fall statement at the appropriate time.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The problem is that the minister's major assumptions are wrong. He's way off on our growth rate. Six months later, he is off on sales taxes, and his US economic growth rate is also wrong, trending below his projections, which could mean another \$150-million minimum loss in revenue to the province. Minister, that's almost \$1 billion in revenue below your projections, and I remind you that we're now about six months into the fiscal year.

I ask you to stand up in the assembly today and let the members here and the taxpayers of Ontario know how big the hole is in Dalton McGuinty's budget.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite fails to mention that retail sales are up from budget projections, interest rates are lower and wages and salaries are actually up, in spite of challenges in parts of our economy, and those have an impact on numbers as well.

We are still collecting second-quarter financial numbers. As Toronto-Dominion Bank's economics unit recommended, if there is a need for adjustment at the time of the fall statement, that's the appropriate time to do it. When those numbers become available, we will table them in this House and we'll have a full and frank discussion about all the challenges in the economy. But to repeat what the Premier said, this government has a five-point plan that's responding to the challenges in this economy. It's better than the one-trick pony of tax cuts we see over there, which aren't going to solve all the problems for all the people.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I've already outlined two of his indicators that show about a \$1-billion hole in his budget six months into the fiscal year. Minister, I understand it's

hard to tell the 800 families who face job losses at John Deere in Welland that there is even bad news that the government is sitting upon, yet to release. I know it's difficult to tell people in Windsor, in your own community, who lost jobs in the auto, auto parts or hospitality sectors, that there is bad news on the horizon when it comes to revenues and your ability to keep your own promises.

But Ontarians have a remarkable capacity to deal with tough times if they have a government willing to tell them the facts. They want a Premier who's on the job, not on a long, luxurious summer vacation. Minister, I'll ask you one more time: Will you immediately table an economic statement and tell the people of Ontario the truth about your finances?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are challenges in the economy, and our five-point plan addresses them. The member forgot to mention that employment was actually up 14,000 in the month of August, up 50,000 since December, that wages are 4.6% ahead of where they were and retail sales are up.

This government has a plan. I can tell the member what my constituents don't want to hear. They don't want to be told time and again that they get \$4,000 a year less in employment insurance benefits than an Albertan. My unemployed constituents, the unemployed constituents—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: The minister may want to clarify that unemployment insurance across Canada—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Unemployed people in Windsor, at John Deere and elsewhere don't want to be told that we should give another tax cut to big oil companies. They want a comprehensive plan that deals with skills training, that invests in infrastructure—\$9 billion this year. That's the right plan. The numbers are mixed, but this government's plan is working. We'll continue to pursue the balanced policy mix that we have to date.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. When it comes to sustaining jobs, the McGuinty government ship is fast taking on water. Last week, we were treated to a reshuffling of the deck chairs on the McGuinty government sinking jobs ship. One of the deck chairs has a new name on it, but it's already taking on water. My question is this: How many jobs does the Premier expect will be created by his not-so-new Minister of International Trade?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to congratulate Ms. Papatello on her new appointment. I want to thank her on behalf of Ontarians for the work that she's done. I also want to acknowledge that we need to do more. That was one of the reasons for the modest reorganization of our government, to split that responsibility into two, so we have now a minister responsible for economic develop-

ment and a minister responsible for international trade and investment.

To answer the question directly, we want as many jobs as we can get our hands on. We want to assert ourselves in a global economy. I want the minister to be doing as much travel as possible. We know that there are real opportunities out there. But it brings me back to something I said a little bit earlier. If we could keep a little bit more of our own money, stop sending \$20 billion to the rest of the country, we could do a lot—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I notice the Premier studiously tries to avoid answering the question. But here is the puzzle: This year alone, the not-so-new Minister of International Trade has already been to India, China, Mexico, Belgium, France, the UK and Italy, to name just a few. Here is the tally, and it almost reads like that MasterCard commercial: ribbon cuttings, at least three; jobs created in Ontario, not many; the value to the 230,000 Ontario workers who have lost their jobs, worthless.

Given this track record, will the Premier admit that his not-so-new Minister of International Trade is nothing more than a diversion from the McGuinty government's sorry record of failing to sustain manufacturing jobs—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that the list of the countries that the minister has visited speaks to her work ethic and her devotion to her responsibilities. It takes a lot of work and it takes return visits. It takes applying yourself to the development of long-term relationships in order to land the kinds of major successes that we will land here in the province of Ontario.

1100

I understand the frustration felt by families who are caught up in these economic forces which are absolutely beyond their control. But we do have some control. That's one of the reasons why we have this minister with new responsibilities. That's why we continue to invest in job retraining opportunities for folks who have lost their jobs. That's why we continue to invest in tax reductions. That's why we continue to invest in infrastructure, so that we can create jobs in the short term and enhance our productivity in the long term.

But I say again, if we could just keep a bit more of that \$20 billion—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again I note the Premier's studied effort to avoid answering the question.

Premier, if you go one province to the west, Manitoba is a manufacturing province. They're not losing manufacturing jobs; they're gaining manufacturing jobs. Just over the last few weeks, Quebec is gaining manufacturing jobs, manufacturing solar power equipment, manufacturing wind turbines for wind power. But the Mc-

Guinty government continues to sleep while jobs are lost in Ontario.

New Democrats have laid out a real jobs program for you. Bring in a buy-Ontario strategy such as we see in the United States in terms of transit equipment. Bring in a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit. Bring in reasonable industrial hydro rates. You don't need to send a minister around the world tallying up more frequent flyer points; you need to get serious about—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend may not be prepared to recognize this, but I think Ontarians recognize that we are Canada's manufacturing heartland. I think they recognize as well that manufacturing in North America today is really, really tough going.

I think they also acknowledge that during the course of the past 50 years we have been honoured to provide support to other provinces around the country and help them build up the quality of their public services and further strengthen their economies. But we're saying that if we want to continue to play that role during the upcoming 50 years, then at this point in time we should be allowed to keep a bit more of that \$20 billion that we keep sending to them. We could further cut our taxes. We could put in place further manufacturing strategies. We could do more to retrain folks who have lost their jobs. We could invest in infrastructure and innovation like never before if we could just strengthen this province so that we could in turn strengthen our country.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier: The Premier seems to already want to engage in the blame game: Blame someone else. But I say to the Premier, rather than jet-setting your not-so-new minister to foreign locales, I would encourage the Premier and his not-so-new minister to spend some time in communities across the province, communities like Welland, because Welland lost more than 1,000 jobs in just one week: 800 at John Deere and 235 at GDX Automotive.

My question is this: When will the McGuinty government finally get to work sustaining good-paying manufacturing jobs in places like Welland, instead of jet-setting around the world?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Obviously, we feel for the folks in all Ontario communities which have lost jobs, and we're working as hard as we can together with them in those communities to strengthen their economic opportunities, including providing retraining opportunities for them.

My friend opposite does know as well that we've been in touch with the John Deere folks and they've told us the same thing over and over again: "Your dollar is too high. Because of that, we are not prepared to maintain that investment in Canada." We don't have control over the value of the dollar, and I think, in fairness, the federal government has limited control over the value of the

dollar, but there are other things that we can do and are doing. That's why we're investing in retraining opportunities. That's why we're prepared to partner with Ontario businesses to help them reinvest and to further strengthen their businesses so they can hire and maintain their existing workforces. That's why we're continuing to invest in infrastructure.

My friend opposite says we're not doing anything. If he checks the record, he'll see we have a five-point plan, and we'd love to accelerate that—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, Manitoba is also a manufacturing province. Manitoba also has to deal with the high value of the Canadian dollar. But they're adding manufacturing jobs in the manufacturing of buses and transit vehicles, adding manufacturing jobs in the aerospace sector. So other provinces are managing this. How? A reasonable industrial hydro rate, a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit and strategies like a Buy America strategy. Ontarians are simply asking when the McGuinty government is going to implement some of these practical strategies that are working in other provinces. When is the McGuinty government going to stop blaming everyone else, anyone else, and do something practical to sustain jobs in communities like Welland?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague opposite understands that our manufacturing sector is many, many times bigger than that of Manitoba. He will understand that Ontario dollars are on this very day making their way into Manitoba to help support the economy there. He will know that the federal government has in place a western economic development strategy to help Manitoba and the other western provinces. He will know as well that there is no such program in place to support southern Ontario, home to 10 million proud Canadians and home to Canada's manufacturing heartland. He knows all that stuff.

What he's not prepared to accept is that we are working hard and well with Ontarians. We're cutting business taxes, we're investing in retraining opportunities, we're investing in infrastructure, we're investing in innovation and we're partnering with Ontario business and we're going to keep working as hard as we can so that when we emerge from this global economic slowdown, we will be stronger than ever before.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: What I don't accept, Premier, is that your sole response to the loss of tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs is to create a new minister of international junkets. That's what I don't accept. What I don't accept is that while over ten thousand good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost in the forest sector in northern Ontario, not one paper mill, one pulp mill, one sawmill, one OSB mill has closed in Manitoba. What I don't accept is that while transit jobs are being lost in

Oshawa and Windsor and Welland, transit jobs are actually being added in the province of Manitoba.

The question is this: When will the McGuinty government stop offering up PR solutions like a new minister of international junkets, stop blaming everybody else and actually get serious about sustaining manufacturing jobs, whether they are in Thunder Bay, Welland, Windsor or Oshawa? When are you going to get serious about sustaining manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, just so my colleague is aware, since January of this year Ontario has created 60% of all new Canadian jobs. If at some point in time, he wants to stand up for our province, he can use that.

When it comes to manufacturing generally, we have, as you know, eliminated capital taxes for that sector and we did that on a retroactive basis. We're also continuing to cut the business education taxes for our manufacturers. We are continuing to invest in a small business deduction by enhancing the threshold. He'll know that we're also helping manufacturers by better supporting the capital cost allowance. He'll know about our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. He'll know about our Next Generation of Jobs Fund. In short, he knows about the billions and billions of dollars that we have devoted to strengthening manufacturing in the province of Ontario.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your government is denying thousands of young people apprenticeship positions in this province in high-demand trades through your artificially high apprenticeship ratios. Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in North America where you need three qualified electricians just to train one apprentice. If your government would agree to change the ratio so that one electrician could supervise and train one apprentice, then thousands of new apprentice positions would open in the province, creating thousands of jobs.

Almost on a daily basis there are contractors who have to turn away apprentices. They cannot take them on because of the high apprentice-to-journeyman ratios and they're forced to turn them away. These young people are going to BC and Alberta, where the apprenticeship ratios are one to one—one electrician training one apprentice. You promised to look at this issue when I raised it, and my colleagues raised it before. What have you done? Will you agree today to lower the apprenticeship ratios to a one to one?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

1110

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for his question, and I want to thank the member for his interest in terms of skilled trades and apprenticeships. I'm very

proud of our government's record. In our first term in office, we were able to increase apprenticeship ratios by 25%, and we're on track to see a further increase of 25% over the course of this term.

The member raised the issue of ratios. As he knows, we look to industry for the best advice on how to set ratios. At the same time, I agree with the honourable member and I think all members agree that we need to reform our apprenticeship system. I was very pleased several days ago to announce our government's intention to move forward with a college of skilled trades, a self-regulatory body similar in nature to the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Teachers, which is going to—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Even members of your own Liberal caucus, Premier, agree that the ratios need to be changed.

I have a letter here dated June 2, 2008, from the member from Northumberland—Quinte West sent to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities that says, and I quote, “Minister, during the annual meeting of the Ontario Electrical League, your colleague, then the Minister of Energy, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, in his address clearly indicated that a change must be made to these ratios. This is a matter that very seriously needs addressing.”

Premier, this issue isn't about safety—that is one of the excuses we often get from your government—because, as I said, in Alberta and BC they have one-to-one ratios. That is Premiers Campbell and Stelmach, and surely you are not accusing them of not caring about safety. Changing the ratios will cost the government nothing. All you have to do is change the regulations: no new spending, no new programs, no new bureaucracy. Premier, why won't you do it? Or perhaps the question should be, who in the heck are you protecting and why aren't you going to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I think all people who look at the apprenticeship system can identify many areas where we need to take a fresh look, which is why we are very, very excited at moving forward with the college of skilled trades, which is going to be an opportunity for all those involved in the industry to move forward.

In the interim, we continue to work with the industry on the issue of ratios, and a variety of issues. But since the member raises the issue of electrical apprentices, I would like to share some statistics with him. New registrations in that field—we're talking about the field of electricians—have increased by 32% since 2003. Completion has increased 151% since 2003. The numbers of active apprentices have increased 20% since 2003.

As I've told this House before, we continue to work with the industry in all areas on the issue of ratios. Since 2005, we've seen changes to five areas—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question. The member from Beaches—East York.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. A year ago, this government promised to make poverty reduction a priority. Last week, though, the Premier told Ontarians that they have to wait longer because times are tough and getting tougher. Ontarians are losing their jobs, some of them are being evicted from their homes, and many are being forced onto welfare. More than ever, now is the time for action. How much longer does the Premier expect Ontarians to have to wait to see serious action on poverty? A year? Two years? Or is it your intention to wait until after the next election?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to this yet again.

I'm proud to lead the first government that is going to put forward a comprehensive and effective plan to address poverty in the province of Ontario. The issue is not whether or not we are going to put out a plan this December to address poverty; it's the rate and the pace at which we can move on implementing that plan. I have said that several times. The economy is in a state of flux. I think we should do here what families do in their homes: If financial circumstances change, then you adjust and you focus on your priorities. You make sure you keep investing in those things which are absolutely essential that you are investing in at present, and you have to be careful about taking on new responsibilities. That's what I've said in the past.

We will put in place a plan this December. The only issue is—and I look forward to debating this with my colleagues—how quickly we move forward on that plan, the first of its kind put forward by any government in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: What I just heard was that we're going to have a plan, but no implementation. The Premier says this government can't move ahead with a poverty reduction plan because it is too costly, I assume, for Ontario's struggling economy. But many significant actions to reduce poverty would not have to cost the government a single penny. I'm going to give you four: This government could immediately increase the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour; this government could strengthen employment standards so that employers can't underpay and exploit workers; this government could cap payday loan rates at 35%, so that people don't see their scant dollars siphoned off at extraordinary rates; and this government could allow and bring back card-based certification, so that workers across all sectors can do what they need to to get better jobs. Why won't this government move ahead with these anti-poverty actions that will—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the suggestions; I really do. My colleague joins 8,500 Ontarians who have

visited our “growing stronger” website. We have received over 600 thoughtful submissions. Almost 500 individual experts have engaged in our first-ever province-wide poverty consultations. As I say, we look forward to delivering on that plan in December, unlike the NDP when they were in government.

Let me tell you about some of the things we've been doing in the interim. We have in place a new Ontario child benefit, with monthly payments now flowing to families. It will support over one million Ontario children. We've raised the minimum wage several times over. We've raised social assistance rates several times over. We're investing in affordable housing, a new dental program, a student nutrition program and literacy centres for parents and families. So we're not resting. We look forward to delivering on that plan. We'll keep working in the interim as well.

SEWAGE SPILL

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Last spring, I stood in this House to raise my community's concern about a sewage spill that happened in the city of Ottawa in the summer of 2006, where 960,000 cubic metres of raw sewage and storm water were allowed to flow into the Ottawa River. This spill of almost one million cubic metres of sewage polluted the Ottawa River downstream and closed the beach at Petrie Island in Orléans for almost the entire summer of 2006. No one in our community knew about this spill until 2008.

I can tell you that my community is still concerned about this. Over the summer, it has been on the front pages of our local papers. When I've been meeting with residents at events over the summer, my constituents are asking me how this could have happened. At that time, you said your ministry was launching an investigation into this accident, and months have passed. What actions has your ministry taken?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me say, first of all, that all the members in the Ottawa area are very concerned about this and have been very proactive in this regard. The ministry has conducted its investigation, and charges were laid against the city of Ottawa. They're before the courts right now, so I can't make any further comments on that. We've also been working with the city of Ottawa to make sure, first of all, that immediate action is taken by them every time there is a combined sewer overflow; for example, by looking at the regulator gates after every rainstorm. I understand that additional monitoring equipment has been installed.

We are working with them on an ongoing basis to make sure that these kinds of situations will not happen. They've put in place much better reporting mechanisms to both the ministry and the way they look after it themselves to make sure that this kind of thing will not happen in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary, the member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: This started out as a concern about a specific incident: concern about the fact that a sewer gate jammed open, letting sewage pour into our river, which was undetected for two weeks; concern about the fact that when it was detected, the community wasn't informed in spite of repeated closures of Petrie Island beach. But more than that, it brought to light a greater problem. We learned that this is a long-standing problem, not an isolated incident. It has been happening since long before our government came to office.

The Ottawa River runs through the heart of the community, but that river is being contaminated with sewage. Westboro beach in my riding alone was closed for 21 days this summer. With these heavy rains, our combined sewer system can't take the capacity and raw sewage is released into our river. This is unacceptable. Minister, what actions are being taken to correct this situation?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The largest action we are taking is as a result of the announcement the Premier made at the AMO conference, where over \$1.1 billion of new infrastructure funding is going out across this province, including \$77 million to the city of Ottawa.

As the Premier stated at that point in time, they obviously want the money to be used for those priority infrastructure projects that the city itself has to determine. But I can tell you that, from everything we've heard about the situation, this should be one of their prime priorities and I'm sure that \$77 million that the city of Ottawa receives in order to upgrade the infrastructure will be used for projects like this.

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ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the new Minister of Economic Development. You have inherited a critical portfolio at a time when the economy in Ontario is in serious trouble. Minister, I hope that you are up to the job and to the challenge, to the benefit of the citizens of Ontario.

At the recent PC caucus economic round table, all the experts said the same thing: Lower taxes and reduce regulation. These were non-partisan voices from business, from labour, from academia, from people who are worried about the direction that the Ontario economy is headed in.

Minister, will you heed the advice of these experts? Will you commit today to lowering taxes and reducing regulations for new business investments in Ontario so that Ontario can cease becoming the caboose of the Canadian economy and once again become the economic engine of this country?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Thank you, I say to the member, for your non-partisan good wishes—or not so good, as the case may be.

I also add my congratulations to the new minister of the new Ministry of International Trade and Investment, as Minister Papatello goes around the world to get the jobs and investments and bring them to Ontario, contrary to the approach of the leader of the third party.

We obviously welcome all advice, and the short answer to the member's question is yes, and we have, and will continue to do so. The commitment to help and not hinder is one that the Premier has made in terms of addressing the regulatory burden. In terms of the tax relief, as has already been said, billions of dollars of very strategic tax relief has already been put into place—more on that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, the fact is that these are very small, late-in-the-day changes to taxes. They have been made some time ago. The situation has changed drastically in the last six months, so those very small tax cuts that your government implemented were put in place in our economy. We need some long-term policies. We need some up-to-date policies. We need some competitive tax structures in this province. We need to streamline some regulations and minimize the government impact on businesses that move into this province. These are things that have to be changed now and the sooner they get changed, the sooner their impact will take effect on our economy, Mr. Minister.

I ask you again: Will you take some immediate action? Will you reduce taxes and regulations and move this province forward once again?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Again, as was recently said by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, "We must acknowledge the tax relief that has been delivered over the past few years by the Ontario government." But that's not the only approach taken by this government; that's the only approach taken by that party. We also intervene to make investments through, for example, the manufacturing investment strategy. That was brought to the member's own community in Halton. That's why the province was able to provide a \$10-million loan to the Roxul Inc., and that meant hundreds of jobs retained or created for the member's own community. That's this government's approach. Yes, tax relief; yes, addressing the regulatory burden; but also making those investments and interventions to provide more productivity, more innovation and more investment in infrastructure, and we'll keep on doing it.

JURY SELECTION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Attorney General. After it was revealed that of the 12,111 people on the jury list for the judicial district of Kenora only 44 were First Nations, the Attorney General claimed that he has made "determined efforts to include First Nations on the jury list." Given that First Nations people make up over 40% of the population in the judicial district of Kenora but less than 4% of the jury list, how could the Attorney General believe that his so-called determined efforts are working?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Unfortunately, the leader of the third party's numbers are wrong, but here is the approach. We have a strong justice system and a strong jury system. The ministry, for quite a number of years,

has made determined efforts on two fronts: first of all, to ensure that we know people who reside in more remote First Nations communities, so that we can get the questionnaires to them that are required so that you can get on the jury roll; and secondly, to have individuals fill out the questionnaires and have them returned. Determined efforts have included contacting the Nishnawbe Aski Nation leadership back in 2002 to enlist their assistance; contacting individual community leaders in dozens and dozens of communities to get their assistance and flying in to those communities to enlist further assistance and more. And we will continue to work very hard to continue to strengthen our jury system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Attorney General refers to letters. I wonder if the Attorney General would table those letters, since this is, I think we would all admit, a very serious problem.

But I also know, for example, that one of the issues we're dealing with here is privacy. But privacy legislation would allow the McGuinty government to in fact take lists that were gathered for other purposes and, through obtaining a waiver, use those lists. What's striking is that this issue has been going on now for eight years, and after five years of so-called determined effort under the McGuinty government, we see that, for example for Kashechewan First Nation, no one from that First Nation's names appears on a jury list. How can that be? And will you hold an inquiry to determine how such sorry results are obtained—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know the leader has said that he was aware of the issue when he was Attorney General and couldn't get anything done about it, which is unfortunate, because what he's really doing is suggesting that the good people of the ministry, the public service and the others who have worked very hard on this issue weren't getting the job done for him. In fact, they've been working very hard. Back in 2002, we asked the NAN leadership for their assistance. We've asked individual community leaders for their assistance. We've flown in to communities. We've sent the questionnaires out.

One of the challenges is that the questionnaires we sent to people in non-First Nations communities have been returned at the rate of one for every two sent out; in First Nations communities, one for every 10 or more sent out has been returned. So it would be great, and we're determined to work with First Nations leaders in further strategies to continue strengthening—

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

YOUNG DRIVERS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Over the summer, we saw some very serious accidents involving young drivers on Ontario's roads, some of which unfortunately resulted in

injury and even death. It appears that an increasing number of these accidents are as a result of distracted driving. Research from the Canadian Automobile Association, who were supportive of my private member's bill to ban cellphone use and the use of other portable electronic devices by novice drivers, shows that teenagers account for approximately one quarter of all driver fatalities and injuries. The research also shows that these novice drivers are much more vulnerable to distractions. Would the minister please share with the House what steps his ministry plans to take to protect young drivers and their passengers by addressing the growing problem of distracted driving?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to commend the member for putting forward and introducing his private member's bill in this regard; it indicates his strong concern about traffic safety and in particular the younger drivers in the province.

This is something we have to communicate indeed to all Ontarians, not simply to young people themselves, though they are the most vulnerable. That is why this government has put in place a public education program that targets distracted driving, including driver distraction information in all MTO driver handbooks and developing a new beginner driver education curriculum that speaks to improving safe driving skills, focusing on driver distraction.

1130

In May, the Premier asked me to look into any and all electronic devices that would distract all drivers, and since then, we've been in consultation with the CAA and other safety partners, looking at the latest research and studying the best practices in other jurisdictions, with a view—

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Again, I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. I look forward to those initiatives that are being introduced; they should help take care of the problem of distracted driving. Unfortunately, it's not the only issue that novice drivers face. Although the graduated licensing system has proven to be very successful in lowering the collision rate of novice drivers and at getting these drivers better equipped for Ontario's roads, teenagers are still causing one quarter of all fatalities and injuries on our roads, and it seems that much more needs to be done. I ask the minister to share with this House how he plans to improve the novice driving system and try to help curb the stubbornly high rates of collisions amongst young drivers in our province?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you—a very good question. I think when all of us, as members of the Legislature, speak to young people, particularly in secondary schools, we point out that their insurance rates are higher and that one of the reasons is that their driving habits have proven not to be as good as others'. That is why we're examining the entire graduated licensing system in Ontario, from start to begin. It was a very good initiative.

It has been improved from time to time over the years. People have identified certain problems, including the member for Oakville, with the system, and so we are consulting again with all of our partners in safety—with the police and others—to try to determine which measures can best be effected to improve the safety record even more. Ontario, year in and year out, has the best safety record in all of North America, but we always want to strive to improve and the member's suggestions will help us to do so.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Premier: Premier, while you've been missing in action this summer, the economy continues to deteriorate. Ontario is hanging by its fingernails, and now you are adding insult to injury on the backs of the hard-working people of this province. Premier, why are you condoning the \$56,000-wedding planner your Ministry of Education has thrown into the overblown accommodation expenses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I welcome the opportunity to engage, once again, with the members of the opposition to talk about our achievements and our challenges, and to respond to their provocative questions. But because it's the beginning of school, I do have to say that all of my answers in this House are in the context of our government's belief in the strength and excellence of the people who work in our schools and the fact that our students are the best students anywhere, with the most potential.

I have to say that I actually don't know what the member opposite is talking about in terms of a wedding planner. I know that what we have provided to school boards are guidelines for pupil accommodation reviews that allow them to bring in the community to talk about how to provide the best programming for kids in our schools. Given the fact that our students are—we have declining—

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Students across this province are not better off today, Madam Minister. The increase in the hotel spending from \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million—\$56,000 of which went to Eventfully Yours, a company that promotes itself as a premier wedding planner. How can you condone such bloated, lavish spending when schools are being closed, reading clinics are stopping and school pools are being closed? Children are suffering.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear about what the member opposite is talking about. The member opposite is talking about professional development for more than 8,500 people in our school system. The member opposite is talking about 112 symposia and conferences that allow people from across the province to come together to improve their practice. The member opposite is talking about a 0.083 increase in spending

that allows the Ministry of Education to work with people across this province, in their communities, so that they can improve their practice.

On this side of the House, we believe in publicly funded education and we believe in providing opportunities for professionals in our system to improve their practice for the benefit of the students in our schools.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: The faculty strike in Windsor is one of a number of faculty strikes to hit Ontario campuses this year. But faculty negotiators today have to deal with a government-made problem at the bargaining table. That problem is your government's failure to provide universities with stable, ongoing annual funding in a reliable and timely way.

Universities are complaining that since they don't know how much funding they will have in any given year, they cannot negotiate with faculty. When will this government act in a responsible way and provide universities with reliable and predictable funding, so that Ontario students and faculty will not have to suffer the consequences of this government's indifference?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased to stand and talk about this government's commitment to higher education. I was very proud, in 2005, when we brought forward the Reaching Higher plan, which does exactly what the honourable member speaks about: It delivers five years of predictable funding—\$6.2 billion—the largest investment in post-secondary education in over 40 years.

Let me just share with the Legislature some statistics as a result of the Reaching Higher plan: There are about 100,000 more students studying at colleges and universities, an increase of almost 25%, 120,000 more students are qualifying for grants, and we recently announced the textbook and technology grant. On the operating side, we've seen significant increases in per student funding in our colleges and universities. Over the summer months, we announced almost \$200 million for our colleges for strategic—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Your Reaching Higher plan puts Ontario in 10th position on a per capita basis. We are last. How can you be proud of that? As a result, quality indicators such as class size and student-faculty ratio are deteriorating in a most troubling way. In fact, our student-faculty ratio is the worst in the country. How can you be proud of that? During this period of global economic challenge, your government is failing our universities just when we need them most, just when we have to compete in a global economy, just when we need skilled and knowledge workers so we can prevail in that competition, just when our manufacturing sector, long the mainstay of Ontario's prosperity, is disappearing. When will the minister lift us from last place by pro-

viding stable, reliable and ongoing funding to serve our students and end this strike?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to say that in 2008-09, the government is projected to allocate \$2.997 billion—\$3 billion—in operating grants to the university sector, an increase of \$1.1 billion, or 57%, over the \$1.9 billion in base funding provided to universities when we took office. University funding per student is projected to increase from \$6,718 in 2002-03 to \$8,109 in 2008-09. I am proud of the investments this government has made in post-secondary education, and I don't think we should be taking any lessons from an NDP party which, when it was in government, cut funding to post-secondary education and cut supports for students.

The Speaker: New question: the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Applause.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Bill Murdoch: You guys don't want to clap.

A question to the Minister of Transportation: In the summertime, I had a chance to drive home from Guelph up Highway 6, and I want to commend the ministry for all the work they're doing on Highway 6—the member from Wellington has brought up many times in the House that it needed reconstruction. The problem is that Highway 6 doesn't quit at Wellington; it continues to Tobermory. My question to the minister is, when will we see some work north of Mar—that's a little place north of Warton? From there to Tobermory, the highway is in rough shape and needs reconstruction. I would like the minister to tell us when that could be constructed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to thank the member for yet another excellent question to me in the House. I want to say to him that I've travelled Highway 6 as well and I understand the many challenges that are there all the way along Highway 6. I can tell him that I particularly remember, when I was Minister of Tourism, the section of Highway 6 he's talking about. It's very important because there are a number of people who want to go to Tobermory. Some of them want to make the trip across to Manitoulin Island and so on. It would be a good showcase for Ontario to have an even more improved highway than we have at the present time.

1140

I'm confident that we're going to continue to make progress as we go up Highway 6 to ensure, for the local people who use it, that it is safe and convenient, but also, for those who are visitors, we'd like to showcase your part of the province of Ontario. We can do that best if we're prepared to invest funding in pavement improvements and other improvements that we can make.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I appreciate that the minister is going to continue the work. We certainly would like a date put to this, and I'm sure that you can make a minister's statement in the House at some time to let us know, and we'll be looking forward to that.

But as you do the work on Highway 6, as you know, in some places the shoulders are paved, but it only seems to be where there are guide rails. We were wondering if you could take some of the pavement that you chew up and put it along the sides of the highway and top it. They do this in Texas and it makes a place for bicycle paths along our highways much safer. I was wondering if the minister would certainly consider that as an option when you're reconstructing these highways. We do have the Chi-Cheemaun that comes off from Manitoulin Island, and lots of people like to come over on their bicycles. If you would look at doing that, we certainly would appreciate it. I'd like to hear the minister's comments on that.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the member's independent stand on that particular issue. He is quite right in saying that not only is the highway itself important but people who want to use it, for instance, in some cases and on some roads, bicycling is important, and there is the safety of pulling over—I like his suggestion and the research he has done on his own to indicate what they're doing in Texas. I'd like to investigate that. I'm sure our ministry has looked at that as well. That's a good suggestion, and I would like to look at other places in the province, not only on Highway 6, where we can implement it. I know on major highways which have huge amounts of traffic there is a paved shoulder there, and on other highways a partially paved shoulder, and sometimes a stone shoulder, which is considered safe, but not as nice as what he is suggesting. I like his suggestion and will pursue it with my ministry staff.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have consulted with the Clerk, and looking at precedents in the past on the questioning of independent members, this follows the order that was set in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question, the member from Ottawa Centre.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As you well know, Ottawa city council has spoken to me on numerous occasions about the struggles they face since provincial programs were downloaded onto their back. Like many municipalities across the province, they struggle to deal with the burden of an aging infrastructure while maintaining and creating new affordable housing units. As I'm sure you can appreciate, it is difficult to balance competing priorities, as both are important to the success of any municipality. A recent study released by the institute for research and public policy from the University of Waterloo pointed out that across the country our competitiveness depends on a modern, efficient and well-maintained public infrastructure network.

Minister, I have been told that the replacement value of the total social housing stock in Ottawa is estimated at

over \$2.8 billion. The current deficit and the upkeep of social housing units across Ontario is running from \$600 to \$700 per unit. Can the minister please tell this House how we are planning to help the city of Ottawa manage these competing interests?

Hon. Jim Watson: I was very, very proud and pleased to be at the AMO conference when Premier McGuinty announced a \$1.1-billion investment for our municipal communities. The share for the city of Ottawa, which I know our caucus colleagues from Ottawa fought for, was \$77 million. This is money that's going to help improve the infrastructure, roads, bridges and sewer capacity to help clean up the Ottawa River. It was very well received by municipalities across the province. It was through the Investing in Ontario Act, and it proved, once again, that the McGuinty government is serious about partnering in a true, open and honest fashion with our municipal sector—\$1.1 billion was the result of the Investing in Ontario Act, and it's going to go a long way to reducing the infrastructure deficit in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Minister, thank you for the information. I'm sure municipalities across Ontario are pleased that we are taking serious steps to come to the table with funding that they need to address the competing priorities. It demonstrates the McGuinty government's commitment to a collaborative and productive relationship with our municipal partners.

I know that in the past, cities such as Ottawa have used provincial money to shore up operating budgets instead of allocating it to priorities such as social housing and infrastructure. The city of Ottawa has a number of high-priority infrastructure projects, everything from widening Hazeldean Road in Kanata, extending Hunt Club Road and rebuilding Bank Street in the heart of Ottawa. In addition, council is faced with challenging social housing circumstances and a federal government that won't come to the table to support their efforts. These competing needs make it difficult for all municipalities.

Minister, can you tell us if this funding can be used for social housing projects?

Hon. Jim Watson: The short answer is yes. Under the Investing in Ontario Act, social housing is one of the permitted uses. I'm also very pleased to remind all members, including the member from Ottawa Centre, who's a great advocate for affordable housing in his community and downtown Ottawa, that the Premier announced \$100 million, the largest single investment in repair and rehabilitation funds for social housing in the history of the province of Ontario. The city of Ottawa has also benefited, to the tune of \$14.6 million for roads and bridges and \$20 million from the MIII program.

Let me just quote, in conclusion, Mayor Larry O'Brien. He said in Nepean This Week, on April 4, 2008: "The province of Ontario has never in its history been as good to eastern Ontario and Ottawa as it has been over the last two years while I've been mayor. Our relationship is warm, it's co-operative and it's moving to the

future. All I can say is I'm very, very happy the city of Ottawa is working in this manner with the McGuinty government because they are coming through for the city of Ottawa." I couldn't agree—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

"Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

"Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios put small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

"Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward notices of motion requesting the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one."

I'm pleased to sign this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Kenora to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government through LHINs is forcing the Lake of the Woods District Hospital to cut services due to inadequate funding; and

"Whereas the Lake of the Woods District Hospital has been forced to look at closing its intensive care unit; and

"Whereas these cuts will increase risk of death among critical care patients and will increase waiting times in the emergency room; and

"Whereas eliminating intensive care in Kenora will not save the Ontario taxpayer any money as any savings will be eaten up by paying for critical care patient transfers to other centres;

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

"The Minister of Health stop the process of health care cuts in local community hospitals like the Lake of the

Woods District Hospital in Kenora and realize that his LHINs model is another one-size-fits-all model that doesn't work in rural Ontario."

This petition has been signed by over 300 people from Kenora, and I will be sending it down with page Timothy.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: This will be the final petition in reference to this item.

"Whereas the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

"Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact on the quality care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

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

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit."

I shall pass this to Matthew.

1150

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Bruce-Grey have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

“Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province.”

I have signed this.

ANGUS EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the way in which we care for children during their first six years sets the stage for a child’s lifelong learning, behaviour and health; and

“Whereas the Angus Early Years Centre offers vital services to help parents and caregivers in all aspects of early childhood development, including early learning and literacy programs and important links to early years programs in the community; and

“Whereas E3 Community Services is currently reviewing the feasibility of continuing to operate the Angus Early Years Centre;

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

“That the Minister of Children and Youth Services take every step necessary to ensure that the Early Years Centre at 211 Mill Street in Angus remains open so that it can continue to be a place where parents and caregivers can get answers to questions from early years professionals and so that they can continue to participate in the excellent programs that are currently being offered in Angus.”

I agree with this petition and I sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and supported by the people of Midland.

“Whereas understaffing in Ontario’s nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff; and

“Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum; and

“Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

“Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

“Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes....”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to “immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and sent it with page Marissa.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop unlawful firearms in vehicles.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

“Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms;

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles;

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: A petition for fair journeyman tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

“Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

“Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratio puts small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

“Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward a notice of motion requesting that the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one.”

We hope the minister on Thursday votes for this motion.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Defoe and supported by the people of Trenton.

“Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario health and safety act and regulations for mines and mining plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

“Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins.”

The mining regulation “states that, ‘A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded....’ The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle’s body was recovered from behind the scoop tram.

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

“Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

“All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

“All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

“The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it with page Scarlett.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, Bill 50.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

“Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

“Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

“Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

“Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial

Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends.”

I support this position and affix my name to it.

ANTI-TOBACCO LEGISLATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly signed by numerous people from my riding. It says:

“Whereas the Liberal government recently passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act; and

“Whereas the act prohibits sale and supply of tobacco to a person who is less than 19 years old; and

“Whereas the Tobacco Tax Act requires that a tobacco tax rate of 11.1 cents applies to every cigarette and on every gram or part gram of tobacco sold in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the two acts be enforced on all retailers in Ontario who sell, offer for sale or store tobacco.”

I have signed this.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and supported by the people from Guelph. It reads:

“Whereas understaffing in Ontario’s nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

“Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum;

“Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

“Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

“Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes;

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

They call on the government of Ontario to “immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it with page Marissa.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from Amber Fletcher, and she went across the province to get

signatures in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

“Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

“Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

“Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

“Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends.”

I support this petition and I give it to the page.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It appears that petitions for the day have ended. This House will stand recessed until one o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Our party understands that one of the keys to a strong rural economy is a healthy agriculture industry, but across Ontario there are farmers close to losing their farms because of the McGuinty government. Farmers continually told the government that their support programs wouldn't work, and when the auditor reported on these serious problems, the minister wouldn't even interrupt her summer vacation to deal with them.

While the Premier was out relaxing by the pool, we were out talking to the farmers. Last week, John Tory and I met with the Veyhof family, one of the many young farmers who didn't receive the support that they should have through the Ontario cattle, hog and horticultural program.

I know the McGuinty government has been away on summer vacation for a while, so let me remind them of what's wrong with their program.

The biggest challenges for hog farmers like the Veyhofs occurred in 2007, but the program you designed uses data from 2005 and 2006 to qualify, and data as old as the year 2000 to calculate the payments. Retired and even deceased farmers received cheques, while young farmers who were just starting out and struggling to make it received next to nothing. There was no application process and no appeal.

While the Premier was at the cottage, my colleague Toby Barrett heard from another struggling farmer, an

award-winning hog farmer who started in 2005 and didn't receive a single cent under the program.

I sure would like to know what the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture did on their summer vacation, because it wasn't helping farmers, saving manufacturing jobs or taking steps to make Ontario's economy grow strong again.

CENTRE DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Je désire souhaiter un bon retour à tous les membres des trois partis représentés ici à la Chambre, qui ont eu une année pleine d'activités, soit par des rencontres de comités permanents et/ou de travail dans leur circonscription.

I wish to thank the McGuinty government on behalf of the Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie à Bourget, for without this government's assistance, this new satellite centre which offers medical services in both official languages would never have seen the light of day.

Ce centre offre des programmes régionaux tels que la petite enfance et l'éducation en diabète, tout en étant partenaire d'un très grand nombre d'initiatives locales, provinciales et nationales. Je tiens à féliciter un groupe de citoyens de Bourget, dont M. Guy Lepage et M^{me} Rachel Potvin. Ce groupe a travaillé avec constance afin d'arriver à obtenir un tel centre.

I wish to congratulate Minister Caplan on his new appointment. I am sure he will continue the good work of his predecessor, George Smitherman. On August 25, the Honourable David Caplan fulfilled the Honourable George Smitherman's promise and attended the official opening of the health centre. I was very proud to be there that day to demonstrate once again that the McGuinty government responds—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Now that the Legislature is finally back in session, Ontarians are asking, “Where has the Premier been all this time?” The answer? He's been missing in action. While the province under his leadership shuffles from prosperity to poverty, the best the Premier can do after a long summer of bad economic news is to shuffle his cabinet. Instead of fixing the tax structure to strengthen the Ontario economy, the Premier is strengthening the future leadership ambitions of his new Minister of Economic Development. The Premier's action, or lack thereof, has done nothing to restore confidence in the Ontario economy. It has done nothing to bring hope to struggling manufacturers.

The Ontario PC caucus, in contrast, has been very busy. Last week at John Tory's economic summit, experts told us what must be done: We must fix Ontario's personal and business tax regime.

Quoted today in the *Globe and Mail* is Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management at U of T, who says that Ontario has “one of the dumbest tax structures on the face of the planet.”

While the Premier pretends he’s powerless, as he did today in question period, we are exposing the truth that despite our external challenges, the Premier is failing to do his part. It’s time for him to stop denying the problem, stop deflecting the blame, and start doing his job.

BEACH DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about the good citizens of the Beach, that idyllic place in Toronto where everyone wishes they lived but only the select few, or the lucky few, have that opportunity.

The residents at the Beach are troubled these days, though. There is an application to build a condominium right on the beach at the bottom of Neville Park. The good citizens are coming together as I’ve never seen them do before. They held a fundraiser on September 7 at Kew Gardens, attended by hundreds of people in spite of the rain, to try to save their beloved Beach. I want to give special commendation to Harold Tabone and the Beach Lakefront Neighbourhood Association for the work they did, bringing together musicians and artists.

They had to do all this because they require approximately \$100,000 to hire a lawyer and a planner if and when this case goes before the Ontario Municipal Board. The issue went before the community council, and the community council unanimously agreed that there should be no condo on the beach. It goes before city council this week, and I think the same thing is going to happen. But the developer has said he is going to the Ontario Municipal Board.

The people of the Beach question the value of that unelected body, they question the right to supersede the official plan of the city of Toronto and they question why developers with big pockets are forcing them into this position.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise today to speak of an organization known as Reena, a not-for-profit social service agency established five years ago that provides residential support for over 300 adults as well as outreach programs that enhance the lives of developmentally disabled individuals. In addition, Reena provides valuable internships to post-secondary students. Every year, Reena offers more than 3,000 training places to 50 external agencies. Reena has established an accredited program in partnership with George Brown College.

This summer, I had the privilege of attending the graduation ceremony of Reena’s developmental disabilities counsellor program at this college. I also had the opportunity of visiting Reena’s facilities, including a family home centre in Richmond Hill, and saw first-hand the

dedication and contribution of the management, staff and volunteers.

I wish to thank all those who work in the field of developmental services. Due to their dedication and hard work, our society can move forward together and more people will be able to live with independence, dignity and self-reliance.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the contributions of Sandy Keshen, CEO;Carolynn Morrison, past chair; Tali Nizic, a vice-chair of Reena; and their colleagues in the members’ gallery.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Last Thursday, 78 employees of Huronia Precision Plastics in Midland found out that they no longer had their highly skilled jobs. The company can no longer compete in Dalton McGuinty’s Ontario. You may recall that when Mike Harris was Premier of this province, over one million jobs were created. Huronia Precision Plastics was part of that, and they thrived during the Harris years. But they’re no longer in business, and we now have 78 people looking for new work. Hopefully they can be retrained to find something.

One of the areas where we can help with retraining is in apprenticeship ratios. We know that—we’ve brought that up a number of times in the House—but the minister refuses to listen to this.

This Thursday, the House will have an opportunity to debate a motion by Ms. Scott that says: “In the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen and tradespeople to apprentices be one to one.”

This is a no-brainer. There’s no reason why this can’t be implemented. It’s implemented in every other province in this country. This is an opportunity to help retrain some of these people who have lost these manufacturing jobs that may not come back unless we elect a Conservative government that will bring the manufacturing agenda back to this province.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I was recently honoured to join Premier McGuinty in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South, where we celebrated the news that the Ontario government will be providing a \$5.13-million loan to 2Source Manufacturing Inc.; 2Source is an exciting aerospace supplier that specializes in landing gear bushings for commercial and military aircraft and has become a leading provider of high-precision bushings in the aircraft industry around the world. This investment in 2Source also will help support 138 project-related jobs, including the creation of 70 new jobs in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. We are facing some difficult economic challenges, but investments like this

will help to ensure Ontario's manufacturing sector remains competitive in the global economy.

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I would like to thank Robert Glegg and everyone at 2Source Manufacturing for helping to ensure that Mississauga remains a worldwide leader in innovation and technology. With cutting-edge companies like 2Source leading the way, the sky is the limit for our economy.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I rise to inform the Legislature of the great success that was this past week's International Plowing Match in the community of Teeswater, which happens to be located in the most beautiful riding in the province of Ontario, that being Huron-Bruce. Bruce county played host to the annual event at the family farm of Wayne and Wendy McKague of Teeswater, who were gracious in their hosting duties throughout the week.

From tractor square dancing to the world's longest picnic table, there were many new and exciting displays and events this year that helped set this match apart and draw in visitors from all over Ontario to support the local economy. A touch of inclement weather to start the week could not dampen the spirits of organizers and attendees from across the country. It's estimated a total of 84,000 people walked through the gates of the IPM over the five-day period, making the match an overwhelming success by any standard.

I also want to thank those members who attended the parade and opening ceremonies, including over 40 members from the McGuinty government, including Premier McGuinty himself. The community of Teeswater and the organizers of the 2008 IPM have set the bar for the rest of the province for future plowing matches with their first-class hospitality, their goodwill, and their organization.

To all those who have attended the International Plowing Match in the past and going forward in the future, we thank you.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I rise today to highlight two items of interest in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. Number one: It's that time of year again; Oktoberfest is here again in Kitchener-Waterloo region. I invite you all to attend beginning October 10, and we'll also have a taste of Oktoberfest here at Queen's Park on September 29.

The second item: We have two hospitals in Kitchener-Waterloo, St. Mary's and Grand River Hospital. I want to commend the hard work of our physicians. Last week, the McGuinty government reached a tentative agreement with the Ontario Medical Association that will enable us to continue delivering better health care for all Ontarians, improving access to family care and reducing wait times.

Unfortunately, some are choosing to play politics and refusing to recognize this positive development. Specifically, the member from Nickel Belt dismissed the agreement as simply a "massive infusion of funds" and further "suggested that investments in physicians do not improve access" to care "or reduce wait times." These statements are disrespectful of the hard work doctors in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga and across the province undertake everyday.

This agreement will provide funding to for up to 500 nurses and work to get family physicians for 500,000 people in Ontario who need family health care. The Liberal government is committed to reducing wait times and investing in doctors, both in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga and across the province.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to correct my own record from question period today. In response to a question about apprenticeship ratios, I referenced a 25% increase. I wish to clarify that this increase was in reference to apprenticeship registrations.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following reports were tabled: On June 23, 2008, the 2007 annual report of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner; on July 17, 2008, order in council number 1175/2008, dated June 25, 2008, appointing Greg Essensa as Chief Electoral Officer and order-in-council number 1176/2008, dated June 25, 2008, appointing Irwin Elman as the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth;

On August 12, 2008, a request by the member for Guelph, Mrs. Sandals, to Lynn Morrison, Acting Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion pursuant to section 30(1) of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the member for Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention;

On August 29, 2008, pursuant to section 28 of the Auditor General Act, the audited financial statements of the Office of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 2008.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that on June 18, the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in com-

mercial motor vehicles / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement à l'utilisation de systèmes limiteurs de vitesse dans les véhicules utilitaires.

Bill 48, An Act to regulate payday loans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 48, Loi visant à réglementer les prêts sur salaire et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

Bill 55, An Act to enact the Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority Act, 2008 and make complementary amendments to the Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act / Projet de loi 55, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur l'Office des télécommunications éducatives de langue française de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à la Loi sur l'Office de la télécommunication éducative de l'Ontario.

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act to prohibit the use and sale of pesticides that may be used for cosmetic purposes / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pesticides en vue d'interdire l'usage et la vente de pesticides pouvant être utilisés à des fins esthétiques.

Bill 69, An Act to protect children from second-hand tobacco smoke in motor vehicles by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée pour protéger les enfants contre le tabagisme passif dans les véhicules automobiles.

Bill 80, An Act to establish Algoma University and to dissolve Algoma University College / Projet de loi 80, Loi portant création de l'Université Algoma et dissolution de l'Algoma University College.

Bill Pr2, An Act to revive Grand Avenue Holdings Ltd.

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting St. Andrew's Congregation of the United Church of Canada at Toronto.

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive 872440 Ontario Inc.

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Madresa Ashraful Uloom.

Bill Pr6, An Act to revive 716056 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr7, An Act to revive 827291 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr8, An Act to revive 719226 Ontario Ltd.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk received the reports on intended appointments dated August 19, August 20 and September 18, 2008, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 107(f)9, the reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

Reports deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 17, 2008, I beg leave to present a report on the Centre of Forensic Sciences from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yes, I will carry out the debate with regard to this. This was a review of the Centre of Forensic Sciences for Ontario. There are two offices, one here in Toronto and one in Sault Ste. Marie, to cover some of the northern area. The centre does nearly 13,000 analytical reports each year and it employs 238 people to do that. Their budget is about \$25.5 million. The Auditor General, in his report of December 2007, pointed to the fact that some of the turnaround times with regard to the reports were about twice as long as some other jurisdictions, and therefore of some concern in that delay can hinder our justice system.

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It's important to recognize too, as the committee did, that accuracy is paramount in terms of their work, because an inaccurate result could lead to a wrongful conviction in our justice system.

The members of the committee felt that the centre was doing a very credible job. They did question, however, whether they could improve the turnaround times, given that in last year's budget the government decreased their resources by \$400,000, from \$25.5 million to about \$25 million. The committee asked for additional information in the coming year with regard to their success in improving turnaround times and asked specific questions as to how much time scientists were spending in the courtrooms of Ontario rather than doing the analytical work in their labs.

The committee found the people who represented the centre extremely honest and straightforward in their reply, and we will look forward to their response to our recommendations, as we believe that this is a very, very important service that is provided to the people of Ontario.

Lastly, the centre operates on a central budget from the government of Ontario, and police forces using their services do not pay a fee. There was some concern within the committee as to whether or not the centre could strike the right priorities with regard to doing the work, and there was some question because other jurisdictions have a pay-for-service charge paid by police forces as well.

However, we do believe that overall they are doing excellent work. These are dedicated public servants, and we look forward to their response to our recommendations.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.
Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr9, An Act to revive 2029652 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr11, An Act to revive Eugerry Investments Limited

Bill Pr13, An Act to revive 2076467 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Pursuant to standing order 61(a.) the following estimates (2008-09) are reported back to the House as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be passed by the committee:

Office of the Assembly

201 Office of the Assembly \$134,516,700

202 Commission(er)s \$20,027,800

Office of the Auditor General

2501 Office of the Auditor General \$15,885,300

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

501 Office of the Chief Electoral Officer
\$15,447,500—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Dispense.

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

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the offices named therein not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: Speaker, pursuant to the order of the House of Tuesday 17 June 2008, I beg leave to present a report on the review of the Ontario health premium from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 50,

Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAKE SIMCOE PROTECTION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION DU LAC SIMCOE

Mr. Gerretsen moved second 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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate? Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my very capable parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville.

Today, I am very pleased to rise in this House and to start the debate on second reading of Bill 99, our government's proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act. You may recall that this was introduced during the last session, in the second-last week of June. It delivers on the commitment that Premier McGuinty made and takes an important step forward on behalf of the environment of all of Ontario. If passed, it would allow us to set the framework for a long-term protection plan for Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

I thought it would be helpful to just review, especially for those people who aren't familiar with the area, what Lake Simcoe really is all about and where it's located. It's named after John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Canada in 1793, as well as his father.

As many of in this chamber know, it's located within an hour's drive of more than half the population of the province—just an hour's drive north of Toronto. It's the largest inland lake, other than the Great Lakes, in southern Ontario, and its surface area is about 750 square kilometres, being about 30 kilometres in length and 25 kilometres in width. The average depth is about 15 metres, but it does go to a maximum depth of some 41 metres, and 35 different rivers and streams flow into Lake Simcoe, including the Holland River, the Black River, the Beaver River, the Pefferlaw River and the Uxbridge Brook, and almost 4,000 kilometres of streams flow into the lake as well.

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There are a few islands in the lake; they include Georgina Island, Thorah Island, Strawberry Island, Snake Island, Fox Island and Grape Island. As well, there are two major urban settlements located right on the lake, Barrie and Orillia. It's bordered by Simcoe county and York and Durham regions and encompasses some 23 municipalities that border onto Lake Simcoe. Over 350,000 people live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, and during the summer that goes up to well over 400,000 at various times. Also, you may be interested in knowing that about 50% of the watershed's area is currently agricultural; urban and rural development and roads make up an estimated 15%. I think that gives you a little bit of an idea as to what the lake is all about and how important it is to the province of Ontario.

At the time of the first contact by European settlers in the 17th century, this lake was called "Beautiful Water" by the Huron people living in the area. It is still a beautiful water, there's no doubt about that, but sadly it has not always been treated with the respect that it deserves.

As I stated before, it's the largest body of water in southern Ontario outside of the Great Lakes, and it has a complex ecosystem that is home to many different fish species, aquatic plants and animals. Its watershed holds ecologically important wetlands, woodlands and wildlife as well as a prime agricultural area and specialty crops in areas such as the Holland Marsh. It also provides drinking water for eight different municipalities and supports a thriving tourism industry and diverse recreational activities.

Lake Simcoe is a vital resource, important to the strength of our people and of our province, yet it is not in good health. The lake is under stress and under increasing pressure from urban as well as rural development, population growth, pollutants and invasive species, as well as climate change. These pressures have affected the shoreline, the water quality of the lake and the general ecological health of the surrounding area as well.

Our government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, is absolutely committed to protecting Lake Simcoe and restoring the natural balance of its ecosystem. We are joined in this goal by local municipalities, residents, conservation authorities, farmers, environmental groups, developers, First Nation communities as well as the tourism industry, all of which have been involved in the comprehensive process leading up to the legislation we are considering here today.

Our government is a fierce defender of the environment and of the right of all Ontarians to enjoy clean and healthy air, water and land. If passed, Bill 99 will build upon the other laws and measures we have put into place to protect Ontario's environment. This bill, for example, would complement the work that is currently being done under the Clean Water Act. It would protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed, which in turn will safeguard the lake as a source of safe drinking water for the many communities that depend on

it. It would also allow us as a government to create the Lake Simcoe protection plan. The act is an enabling document that allows us, in effect, to build a plan for the lake and the surrounding watershed. This plan would complement existing provincial plans, working to balance a sustainable environment with a growing population and economy—plans such as the growth plan, the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the greenbelt plan. It would also build on the steps already taken on behalf of Lake Simcoe over the last 10 to 15 years. Together with our partners, we've upgraded sewage treatment plants and stormwater facilities, improved aquatic habitat and improved agricultural practices. For example, earlier this year we invested \$850,000 to help reduce the amount of phosphorus entering into the lake, as an interim measure. The amount of phosphorus in the lake is of prime and key concern. When a lake is healthy, cold-water fish such as lake trout and lake whitefish are abundant and active. This is not the case with respect to Lake Simcoe today. Over the years, it has seen a dramatic decline in its cold-water-fish community. The fish population cannot reproduce and sustain itself naturally. Their continued existence in the lake is almost entirely due to the currently existing stocking programs. These problems stem from an excessive amount of nutrients, specifically phosphorus, entering Lake Simcoe as a result of human activities within the watershed. Phosphorus loading causes excessive plant growth, and when these plants decay, they use up oxygen young fish need to survive.

With hard work and commitment by many, phosphorus levels have been reduced from more than 100 tonnes per year a number of years ago to 67 tonnes today, and the water quality has seen some level of improvement. But quite frankly, we need to do better than that and there's still much work to be done.

While our government has placed interim limits on phosphorus discharges from sewage plants just recently, earlier this year, and while we're promoting actions people can take in their homes and workplaces to reduce their phosphorus footprint, we also recognize that a long-term, comprehensive watershed approach to phosphorus management is imperative to the future health of Lake Simcoe and its ecosystem.

Bill 99, if passed, would allow us to develop this approach. The proposed plan would address excessive phosphorus and other pollutants as a principal goal, but it would go much further than that. The plan would directly affect key decisions involving activities that may cause harm to the ecological health of the watershed. It would allow us to adapt our efforts to respond to new challenges like climate change and invasive species. And it would ensure the promotion of environmentally sustainable land use and development practices.

I want to emphasize that just as careful monitoring and research has been instrumental in identifying the issues with Lake Simcoe and the solutions to date, the proposed plan will be based upon the best available science and information. It will be a science-based plan. It would set

out priorities and targets for addressing the key threats to the lake. A mix of regulatory and non-regulatory measures will achieve that goal and the targets. Regular monitoring will take place.

We are assisted in these goals by the Lake Simcoe advisory committee appointed by our government earlier this year. This team of respected scientists and researchers has already created a list of primary threats it considers most responsible for impairing the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed. I can tell you that this group of renowned scientists has had numerous meetings over the last six months. The committee has provided us with a bedrock of good science, their best advice on key indicators of environmental health, achievable targets we can work towards, and possible actions to address threats to the health of the Lake Simcoe ecosystem. We thank them for their ongoing advice and contribution. Their work is extremely important.

Our government will also be investing, on behalf of the people of Ontario, \$20 million over four years for stewardship, science and monitoring actions, and for implementing the long-term plan to protect Lake Simcoe. A large part of this \$20-million funding commitment will help farmers with the cost of putting in place measures to reduce agricultural impacts on the lake. I should say that local farmers have already made significant progress in implementing improved agricultural practices and technologies. We will continue to work with the farming community to be sure the funds are used in the most beneficial way. Obviously, we will be heavily relying on the work of our own Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In fact, the consultation process has been intrinsic throughout the process of developing this legislation.

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Earlier this year, our government released a discussion paper that invited public input on the full range of measures proposed. Among other places, this paper was posted on the Environmental Registry, and we received many, many thoughtful comments. We also used the discussion paper as the basis for workshops with community groups and associations and for information forums with members of the public. We wanted to be sure that anyone interested in the future of Lake Simcoe had an opportunity to bring forward ideas, provide suggestions and become more deeply involved in developing the strategy.

I and members of my staff personally attended sessions in both Barrie and Newmarket, and I can tell you we were very pleased with the large turnout and the level of informed participation. I would dare say that at each location we probably had at least 150 people or so who shared their views on the importance of the lake and what should be done collectively to protect it.

The desire to protect the lake was extremely strong. Let me just give you a couple of examples of some of the statements that were made at that time. One resident said, "This lake is a gem and we need to stand up and ask how we can preserve this gem for the entire province into the future"—a very simple statement but very true. A fifth-

generation cottager said, "If we want our lake to survive, we simply need to put Lake Simcoe first." The contribution of those who live, work and play in the Lake Simcoe area has been tremendous.

To help reach out even more into the community, our government appointed a 22-member stakeholder advisory committee. This group represents a wide range of interests around the lake from developers to farmers, environmentalists, municipal leaders, people who are just simply interested in the lake, tourist operators. This 22-member stakeholder advisory committee has been working extremely hard and we appreciate the advice they've given. I've had an opportunity to meet with both them and the science advisory committee on a couple of occasions.

Both of these groups represent a wide range of interests around Lake Simcoe and provide valuable advice on the best long-term approach to protect the health of the lake. The stakeholder advisory committee has worked hard to help us ensure the policies being developed are reflecting the broadest possible range of perspectives, both social and environmental, and economic, while remaining at the same time practical and realistic.

We've also engaged the First Nations communities, particularly those with cultural, economic and heritage links to Lake Simcoe—Georgina Island is one example—to learn from their knowledge of the lake and to seek their ideas how to protect it for future generations. In particular, I want to thank the Chippewas of Georgina Island for their valuable advice and very wise counsel.

Starting this past spring and in co-operation with the science and stakeholder advisory committees and the First Nations communities, my ministry has been preparing a draft of what a proposed Lake Simcoe protection plan may look like and the principles that should be contained therein. We brought together many different groups and perspectives to find solutions.

Our proposed legislation provides for a plan to improve the state of the lake, including reducing, as I mentioned before, the high phosphorus loadings. What we will be proposing at the end is a balanced plan, one that allows us to see and understand what ails the lake and what we need to do collaboratively to bring it back to a state of good health.

We will, later on this fall, be taking the next step by releasing our proposed plan for public comment. It will be posted on the EBR.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, a clean, healthy environment dovetails with a strong economy; they go hand in hand. Our proposal to protect Lake Simcoe would help secure jobs and prosperity.

Tourism and recreation are among the important industries in this particular area of Lake Simcoe, and they are extremely dependent upon a healthy lake. You may be interested in knowing that more than \$200 million is generated annually through recreational activities such as fishing, boating and camping, with over \$110 million from fishing alone. Tourism brings in millions more and supports a substantial number of local businesses and the

jobs they create. Protecting Lake Simcoe will ensure that it remains one of Ontario's most popular tourism and recreation destinations.

Farming activities in the watershed are just as crucial to the local economy. They generate about \$300 million annually. If passed, this bill would support measures such as the stewardship programs I talked about earlier to ensure sustainable agricultural operations for the future.

In fact, we are looking to the future in many ways with this bill. Speaker, as you know from many of the other programs that have been talked about in this House over the last three or four years, the population of the greater Golden Horseshoe area is expected to grow by about 3.7 million over the next 25 years, and the growth plan has identified the city of Barrie and the town of Newmarket as urban growth centres. This means that thousands more people will be joining the already 350,000 permanent residents already settled in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Protecting the ecological health of the lake is very much at the heart of the proposed legislation, and we simply have to do it right if we want to accommodate that kind of growth.

I want to make it absolutely clear that it's not about a trade-off between economic development and the environment; it's about how to protect the environment while the economy grows at the same time. We are putting the health of the ecosystem—in this case, Lake Simcoe—first, because a clean lake is the bedrock of a great economy.

Without a healthy lake, tourism, cottaging and fishing will all decline, along with their many economic spinoffs. By taking control now, by setting out a strategy and by ensuring that everyone who benefits from Lake Simcoe does their part to make it better and keep it that way, we can help make sure that the lake and its surrounding watershed remain healthy as the population and economy continue to grow and prosper in years to come.

We can take the lessons learned as we develop and implement the proposed plan to protect other watersheds across Ontario as well. We can, in effect, be establishing a gold standard of sustainability here that we can use in the years to come in other watersheds and lakes as well.

The protection and restoration of Lake Simcoe is a long-term undertaking, but it must be done. It's our responsibility to ensure that Ontarians can continue to enjoy and benefit from this beautiful water for generations to come.

In closing, Speaker, I just want to read you some comments that were made by some of the people who have been very interested in this lake for many, many years. Annabel Slaight, for example, one of the co-founders of the Ladies of the Lake, said, when the bill was introduced, "The introduction of this act demonstrates the province hears Lake Simcoe's cries for help. Now, we need to come together to help this wonderful lake, the lands that flow into it and the people who live here to ensure all become in sync environmentally."

Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, said the following when this bill was intro-

duced: "A new day is dawning for Lake Simcoe. This act is very positive, and we look forward to working with the government over the next nine months to make the forthcoming protection plan as strong as possible."

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Robert Eisenberg, the founding chair of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, said the following when the bill was first introduced in June: "The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition was created specifically to bring people and government together to work on solutions for our ailing lake. We have done it, and today I couldn't be more proud of both the province and the citizens of Lake Simcoe."

Don Pearson, general manager for Conservation Ontario, had this to say: "We are pleased that the Ontario government has recognized the importance of integrated watershed planning to ensure sustainable development within the Lake Simcoe watershed. This approach takes into consideration all the activities taking place on the land that may impact the lake itself.

"The provision for watershed protection plans within the proposed Lake Simcoe act is an important step forward in Ontario and is welcomed by the conservation authorities as they and their municipal partners grapple with the challenges of growth and environmental protection."

Finally, just one further comment by Roger Anderson, regional chair for the regional municipality of Durham—what did he have to say? He said that, that "Durham region has already invested in improving the health of Lake Simcoe by reducing the phosphorous discharge from our water pollution control plants. We look forward to development of a plan that will address the many other challenges in protecting the lake."

That is precisely what we intend to do with the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. We need this act passed in this House as expeditiously as possible, with support, hopefully, from all the members of this House, and then get on with the plan that will benefit not only the people in the Lake Simcoe area but all of the people of Ontario for many generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure today to join the Minister of the Environment in the debate for second reading of Bill 99. As PA to the minister, obviously, I'm proud to speak in support of this proposed legislation that protects both Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

I had the opportunity over the summer to do a two-day tour of the area. It certainly is an area that I have travelled through numerous times in the past, but this provided an opportunity to get into some of the smaller areas, into the areas that typically people would not visit unless they lived there. We went through the Holland Marsh. We went through the town of Bradford. We took a look at the canal system down there. We paid a visit to the Lake Simcoe conservation area, we met with the Ladies of the Lake, and we met with some of the senior management at the city of Barrie. All were excited about

this proposal. All were very, very complimentary about this piece of proposed legislation and really want to see this move ahead.

Over 200 years now of human activity around the lake has had a devastating effect on both the lake and the watershed that surrounds it. The natural landscape of the area, I think anybody can see, has been changed in a very dramatic way and new land uses are in place. For example, you see evolving agricultural uses, more intense urbanization. We all know that farmers feed our cities. We know that any area that's got the beauty that this area has will attract people who want to live there, so we certainly should anticipate that the Lake Simcoe area will become home to more people in the future simply because it's a beautiful place to live. But there's no question that some of the human activities are causing excessive amounts of phosphorus to enter the lake and we're seeing a degradation of the water quality as a result of that. Such areas as the cold water fishery are starting to be impacted, we're seeing algae blooms—the water clarity issue obviously is something that needs to be addressed—and you're seeing changes in the levels of dissolved oxygen in the lake.

The experts, based on all those findings, are telling us that we need to act immediately to protect Lake Simcoe, the land, the rivers, the streams, the tributaries and the wetlands that surround the lake and that connect the two. They say that if we don't act, the impact of current activities, the impact of future growth and the emerging threats such as new invasive species and climate change, could take Lake Simcoe past the tipping point, past the point of no return. I don't think there's anybody in this House, I don't think there's anybody out in the public, and I don't think there's anybody in the scientific community who wants to see that happen.

If passed, the piece of proposed legislation we have before us, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, would make the difference, in my opinion, that's really needed in this regard. It allows the province to create the Lake Simcoe protection plan, and that becomes the road map for action to make the improvements that we've talked about.

If passed, it would allow the province to regulate activities on land that's near shorelines, on tributaries, and, as I talked about before, the wetlands. All that will be done in an effort to improve and protect water quality. It would also allow the province to evaluate a water quality trading and offsetting program for phosphorus and other pollutants. It's an innovative approach to phosphorus reduction and it's being used in some other jurisdictions. What we're doing right now is investigating water quality trading as a possibility, and we'll be providing the authority for it, but the authority would only be used if it proves to be the right approach under the circumstance.

Essentially, a water quality trading and offsetting program would set a limit on pollutants. Each individual source—for example, each individual or municipal sewage treatment plant—would be able to discharge only a certain amount of phosphorus within that limit, and no

more. To help reduce output to the allotted level, the program could offer each source the option of buying or trading credits from other regulated sources of phosphorus. For instance, a company could buy credits from other regulated sources while it takes the time it needs to plan and upgrade its own sewage treatment infrastructure. Or, since upgrading infrastructure can certainly cost a lot of money for sometimes relatively small improvements in phosphorus reduction, the company could then choose instead to purchase offsets by paying for activities that reduce phosphorus from unregulated sources in the same watershed. As I said before, this is being used in other jurisdictions. Two states come to mind: the state of Pennsylvania and the state of Connecticut. And in Ontario, we actually have a pilot program ourselves, a phosphorous offsetting program that's currently being tested in the South Nation River watershed.

Over the past few months, our government has been studying water quality trading and offsetting as a potential tool to reduce the level of phosphorus in Lake Simcoe. If the act is passed, and, as I said before, if we're satisfied that it's the right tool in the circumstance, we could develop a regulation that sets out the rules that would apply. We would also consult on how best to implement the program.

Over the past 20 years, many parties have been involved in efforts to preserve and protect Lake Simcoe. The Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy, as many of the members who are here today know, has been a voluntary partnership that comprises all three levels of government, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, many agricultural organizations, and First Nations. Together, we have led many successful projects to improve water quality within the watershed, within the ecosystem. They include ecosystem planning, agricultural studies, urban studies, monitoring studies, scientific studies, as well as a large degree of public education and outreach.

Bill 99, as it's proposed, respects the history of this partnership and also proposes a very similar partnership approach to implementing the protection plan. If passed, the proposed act would establish a governance structure that includes two advisory committees, a coordinating committee of watershed representatives, and a separate science committee. These committees could work together, share information, oversee the plan's implementation, and report periodically to the Minister of the Environment on the progress they are making. The structure is based on a recommendation that has come out of the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy working group, but partnerships could also continue in a number of other ways.

About 47% of the Lake Simcoe watershed is used currently for agricultural purposes. The estimate is that there are currently about 2,000 farms in the watershed. The farming community itself has already implemented well over 300 environmental improvement projects to help protect the lake. They include projects to restrict

livestock access to waterways, eliminate contaminated runoff from manure, and control erosion. As you also know, Speaker, farmers apply phosphorus to the lands to promote and sustain crop growth and to improve quality where the soil does not have enough of that nutrient. They're working hard to reduce the amount of phosphorus that moves off their farms into Lake Simcoe and its tributaries, and to date they're achieving very good results.

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Part of our government's \$20-million funding commitment to protect Lake Simcoe will go directly towards helping farmers with the cost of agricultural improvements and best practices. These include measures to further reduce the movement of phosphorus from the farm property into the watershed and into the tributaries. Local municipalities have also taken major steps to help protect the Lake Simcoe watershed, which in fact crosses 23 separate municipal boundaries. Projects to date include replacing and retrofitting septic systems, controlling stream bank erosion, regular inspections of sewage treatment plants and the improvement of stormwater management.

If passed, Bill 99, as proposed, would take this a step further. It would call for municipalities in the watershed to take a greener, more sustainable approach throughout their own communities. We want to avoid adding to the problems that already face Lake Simcoe. Therefore, the proposed plan would ask that new developments be as green as possible and that municipalities find ways to fund and to green existing developments. For example, if a plan calls for vegetative buffers around shorelines and wetlands, municipalities in the watershed would be required to implement that policy when approving new developments in their own jurisdictions.

I do want to recognize that many developers are already leaders in Ontario in building green, LEED-certified home developments in the Lake Simcoe area, and right across the province. When we talk about Lake Simcoe these days, we talk a lot about phosphorus and we talk about trying to reduce those phosphorus levels because it's such an important indicator of the health of the lake.

However, if Bill 99 is passed, the long-range strategy would also address other concerns. We've seen invasive species enter the lake. We've seen the zebra mussel come in, or the round goby, and they're considered by scientists to be a very grave threat to Lake Simcoe. If they're left unchecked, these invaders will compete with native species and wildlife and unbalance the natural ecosystem that exists.

Climate change is another concern. In 2001, for the first time in over 50 years, Lake Simcoe did not freeze over. The impact on the ice fishing industry was awful. The ice fishing industry in fact suffered its worst year in history. Local businesses were also affected.

Our government's developed a comprehensive plan to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, but the effects are already here with us here

today. We need a plan for how to adapt and to respond to this challenge. The proposed plan would address the impacts of recreation and tourism business. Tourism and recreation pump millions of dollars into the Lake Simcoe economy, and this plan would encourage sustainable tourism. Boating, for example, can stress the natural environment through either refuelling leaks, bilge water discharge in the lake, and our plan would look at ways to reduce these types of impacts.

There is a strong agreement on the need to develop a comprehensive, long-term, science-based plan to protect and restore Lake Simcoe and its watershed. If Bill 99 is passed as proposed, it would allow us to develop this plan and take the necessary steps forward. The proposed act is important to the environmental health of Lake Simcoe, its watershed and its people, as well as to our province as a whole, our people and our future. I sincerely hope that all members of the House will offer their support for this piece of legislation. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity. Lake Simcoe is a very important area. It's very important to many people in the province of Ontario with a strong passion about it.

There is a couple things on there that the minister mentioned about activities that take place on the lake and how to curb some of those things. We have to think outside of the box and some of things are two-stroke motors, and the utilization of two-stroke motors. For example, the average two-stroke motor, the older one, will contribute as much as 25% of its fuel consumption back into the lake. It wasn't a problem once upon a time, and the reason was because the fuel would sit on the top and then evaporate into the air—which is another problem, but it didn't affect the water. The difficulty now is the oxidizing agents found inside the fuel will actually separate—it's heavier than the water—and go to the bottom. They're carcinogenic. So your deep-water cisco in Lake Simcoe—or for those who don't know the deep-water cisco, the herring—are being directly affected because of the oxidizing agents found in fuels. If you look at some of the opportunities, maybe we should only have ethanol as one of the areas that could be utilized as an oxidizing agent for any of the fuel service places that sell the boats in that area; that would help out.

Some of the other areas the PA mentioned were farming areas and things like that. What takes place when the farmers realize that the waterfront becomes far more—how will I say it—financially advantageous for them to sell off those lots?

If you look at lot size and the development of lot size, if you limit the lot size—now, a lot of them go to 100-foot frontage—the difficulty is, everybody wants their pristine beach and everything else, but what you do with those smaller lot sizes is you reduce the habitat and the area where the bulrushes come in and cleanse the water and things like that. If you minimize the lot size to about 200 feet per lot on a frontage, what you'll do is decrease

the number of individuals utilizing or contributing back into that area through grey water or through any other septic systems and things like that, and reduce the impact on it. You never know what the breaking point or the stress point is going to be on a lake, but we have to start somewhere and it's a good spot to lead by example with Lake Simcoe.

Mr. Mike Colle: I really appreciate the comments made by the member from Oshawa—I think they're very good suggestions—and also the PA and the minister. This is a lake that's dear and near to a lot of us.

I can remember as a young boy going up to De La Salle Camp next door there at the bottom of Jackson's Point. In fact, at one time, there was even an electric streetcar that ran up to the metro road, to Lake Simcoe from north Toronto, so working families could go there. So it has always been a lake where ordinary people could go and spend a weekend, and it was always very close.

But because it's also very close, the problem is that there has been a by-product of urban sprawl that has gone into the Lake Simcoe watershed area. Subsequently, a lot of the feeder streams and springs that go into Lake Simcoe have been paved over, have basically been made redundant, and a lot of people haven't taken the long-term care. I was there this summer again, down at the bottom. I was able to go on Snake Island, which is owned by the Chippewas of Georgina. The interesting thing is they don't allow any cars on Snake Island; it's all pedestrian. I think those types of things help, because it's almost too successful a lake. Everybody can get there; subsequently, the success means overpopulation.

The other danger to the whole area is just these mega cottages. You see people building these cottages that are about 5,000 square feet, with every appliance. If you come to a lake, you don't have to replicate what you have in the city. If we all took that attitude, we also could help. Again, I support this, and I hope it passes.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on Bill 99, An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act. I'd like to, in commenting on the minister's and parliamentary assistant's speech, bring up a related topic to do with some water system in the Parry Sound–Muskoka area, and that is Sturgeon Bay, which is located just north of Pointe au Baril on Georgian Bay. I recently received a letter from the president of the Sturgeon Bay Pointe au Baril Ratepayers Association in which he attached an e-mail that he had sent to Minister Gerretsen with regard to a request for assistance with regard to the current resolution to remediate the situation on Sturgeon Bay. The situation on Sturgeon Bay is that they've had problems with blue-green algae blooms that are caused by phosphorus, so sort of similar to some of the challenges on Lake Simcoe. Mr. Stephen Saddler, the president, notes he has heard no response from Mr. Gerretsen.

He goes on in his letter to Minister Gerretsen to do with the blue-green algae. He notes that the association has been working with the Sturgeon Bay Water Quality

Action Committee and with the municipality of Archipelago, that they came up with what may be the solution, which is a product called Phoslock, and notes that it was funded on Lake Simcoe to the tune of, according to his letter, \$250,000. So the question is—“We are asking for the same government resolve to assist our situation on Sturgeon Bay. Members of the water quality action committee have long called our bay ‘the canary in the coal mine,’ a perfect location to test the efficacy of the Phoslock product.”

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So basically he’s asking for the same treatment for Sturgeon Bay in Parry Sound–Muskoka that is happening on Lake Simcoe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Madam Speaker, I think it’s useful that we have this bill before us. I want to congratulate the residents around Lake Simcoe and the environmental groups that have been working on these issues for many years for having applied pressure and brought this issue to the fore and—what can I say?—carried this current government to the point where they’re willing to put this act before us.

I’m concerned—and I’ll have a chance to enlarge on that when my turn comes to debate—that although this act is a useful tool, there is a larger context still not being adequately addressed by this government. There are residents and environmental groups that have been caught up in lawsuits because they tried to protect this lake from resort development that was oversized, that was going to have a negative impact on water quality. Those people have been hung out there to dry. They are scrambling to find the money to defend themselves. In fact, given what has been said here by the minister and his parliamentary assistant, they should be getting support from this government because they took the initiative to protect that lake. They took the risks and now they’re getting the heat. They shouldn’t be getting the heat. The government should have stepped in earlier to protect the lake and brought this act in to extend the work they were going to do, not simply put in the act after folks have been put in jeopardy by taking the initiative that they took.

The other concern I have, obviously, is that in this act the ability of municipalities to impose a higher or stricter standard to protect the lake is cut out, the same problem we had with the pesticides bylaw. A ceiling has been put on municipal action, not a floor. Frankly, that means that in the future, the ability for innovative things to be done is going to be restricted. That’s a problem.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It’s a pleasure to hear some of the sentiments that are being expressed on both sides of the House. It’s a start, I hope, of a co-operative effort. I think if we work on this together, we can do something very significant.

The exciting part of this, to me, is that sometimes you look at some of the environmental impact that humans

have had around the planet, you look at the scale of that impact and you look at what we’ve done to the Great Lakes, or you take a look at what we’ve done to the atmosphere or you take a look at what we’ve done to certain species, and you wonder if you can ever turn that around. You look at the problems and you think, “Those problems are so big; I wonder if I’m going to see those changes in my lifetime,” even if we start working on it now.

But it’s different: Lake Simcoe has a scale to it that you can look at Lake Simcoe, and I can imagine Lake Simcoe being restored to the condition it should be in in my lifetime, if we get on that. That is much different than many of the other more monumental tasks that we’re facing. Climate change, I think, is probably going to be solved over a number of generations into the future. But when you look at the size of Lake Simcoe, and you look at the co-operative effort—when I did the tour up there with my executive assistant, Tania Barile, the people that we met—it didn’t matter what side of the issue they were on, whether they were very strong pro-environmental, whether they were very strong pro-business or from municipalities, there was a willingness to work together, a willingness to move forward on this issue. I think it speaks volumes about the way that we’re starting to treat environmental issues as a society. If you take the partisan nature out of the argument, out of the debate, I think as a society we’re starting to come to grips with the impact that some of the environmental damage has had to our lifestyle and could potentially have to our children’s lifestyle. I really appreciated what I heard from the other side of the House today and I’m looking forward to this bill passing and to moving ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity to debate Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. I’ll be sharing my time with Garfield Dunlop, MPP for Simcoe North. Garfield is the MPP who introduced the idea in the House of having this legislation in the first place. That proposed legislation was a private member’s resolution, and it passed unanimously in this House in November 2006.

Garfield has maybe 60 miles of shoreline along Lake Simcoe. I do know that Julia Munro, our member for York–Simcoe, has about 60 miles of shoreline in her riding as well. I understand that it partly encompasses the Holland Marsh and Bradford Marsh area. A number of other MPPs on the opposition side have done some work on this and have part of their jurisdictions within the Lake Simcoe watershed.

It’s important, when we talk about this, to extend our discussion beyond the lake itself. We do have to talk about the watershed. To their credit, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority is based on a watershed jurisdiction, as are all the conservation authorities across the province of Ontario; they’re probably among the few organizations anywhere that are based on watersheds. Perhaps the Tennessee Valley Authority would be another example of a watershed-based jurisdiction.

Other members who worked on this over the years: Jim Wilson, Simcoe–Grey; and Frank Klees, Newmarket–Aurora; Kawartha Highlands—part of that area is in the northeast portion of the watershed for the lake, an area covered by Laurie Scott, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock; and of course, a former member of this Legislature, Joe Tascona, first talked to me about the concerns he had with Lake Simcoe and then presented a number of ideas of what could be done to rectify some of those problems. Right off the bat, I do want to recognize the good work and research that was done by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and more specifically, an organization created by them, referred to as LSEMS, the Lake Simcoe environment management strategy.

I do get the impression that the present Ontario government has basically lifted a lot of the good work done by LSEMS, and there's nothing wrong with that. They've tweaked it a bit, and they've now brought it forward as their own legislation. I do see as well where this government has borrowed heavily, to their credit, from the work of Garfield Dunlop and, as I mentioned, Joe Tascona, and policy put forward by John Tory. Imitation is a form of flattery, and that's fine, because what we're talking about today and will be, probably over the rest of this year and perhaps longer, unless this bill gets rammed through, is all about cleaning up the lake and improving that broader geographic area, that watershed.

I do recommend to all concerned to read these reports that have come out of not only the conservation authority but from the LSEMS organization. They apply not only to the lake but to Barrie and Orillia; they apply to the broader watershed area, the various streams, rivers and creeks that empty into the lake. They encompass that broader area. We've made mention of Holland Marsh, part of the Durham region, part of the Kawartha Lakes.

Obviously, the whole watershed is under the jurisdiction of the Lake Simcoe conservation authority. That area—I find this really hard to believe—is now home to 350,000 people, and they predict that in the next 25 years, another quarter of a million people will be coming to the Lake Simcoe area. I think that many of us should be concerned. We could pass this legislation, we can bring in regulations and implement certain measures and spend a bit of money, but I really have concerns about how that watershed and the lake itself and its various streams and rivers can accommodate another quarter of a million people.

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Whether we're from the area or not, visit the area or have cottages there, many, many of us have an interest in Lake Simcoe. There's quite a history, certainly, since the arrival of European settlers and obviously several thousand years of human habitation before that. My mother-in-law, Joan, was a Cameron from Orillia. On my wife's side we have family living in Barrie. My great grandmother Fanny Bemister lived in Beaverton. The Bemisters had a pottery business there. They arrived in 1839, I think it was from Christchurch, England, and set

up a pottery. Beaverton is known for its local clay, which also supported a tile establishment and a brickyard.

I feel that as we debate this—and much of the data available are biological or scientific data—we can learn from the past with respect to this particular part of North America, not in just the Beaverton and Orillia area but the broader area and some of the significant role it has played in North America, essentially. I do suggest reading those LSEMS reports, but don't stop there. Keep in mind that there is quite a varied and colourful history in the area. I think of the fur trade and the lumber trade. I think of the 200-plus years of farming, which continues to flourish today, certainly in the Halton marsh area, and of the advent of the railroad. I think Stephen Leacock made mention that they were proud of that railroad that came to Orillia. Of course, he referred to it as Mariposa. I don't think it stopped there, but they were very proud of the railroad and the fact that there was a railroad in the neighbourhood. There's Yonge Street—transportation corridors that superseded the original canoe routes and the trails in the area. There was the shipping of ice from Lake Simcoe to Toronto and the shipping of tourists and cottagers from Toronto back up to Lake Simcoe. Again, there's quite a history there, and the history of vacationing and tourism and cottagers goes back at least 100 years.

For those in the House, and given our line of work, I'd recommend reading a book called *All for a Beaver Hat*. It's a history of early Simcoe county, written by the Honourable Ernest C. Drury about his native county. E.C. Drury's father was minister for agriculture in one of the Mowat administrations, and following World War I, E.C. Drury served Ontario as Prime Minister. The foreword to the book was written by Leslie Frost, also a native of Simcoe county and former Premier of Ontario.

As for books, I'd be remiss if I did not mention Lake Simcoe area resident Mazo de la Roche and her 16 novels that make up the famous *Jalna* series, translated into dozens of languages. Much of this work was used for film, television production and screenplays. Her stories—I think I've read maybe one of them—are based on a fictional matriarchal family. In fact, Mazo de la Roche led a life of fiction herself, not only through her books but her life itself, as I understand. I'm told she actually modelled part of her work on a visit to my mom's family farm south of the town of Simcoe in my riding, not to be confused with Lake Simcoe, and as well as used other families who had cottages up in the area of the lake. She also used as a model—I was told this today—Jane Gordon, a great-aunt of Ted Chudleigh, our member for Halton.

Of course, there's Stephen Butler Leacock, of *Mariposa Belle* fame. In the early 1900s, more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than had heard of Canada. They say that between 1915 and 1925, Leacock was the most popular humorist in the English-speaking world. During the summer months, Leacock lived at Old Brewery Bay in Orillia, on the lake. He was also raised in that area. That cottage is now a museum and a national historic site.

It was the local barber, Jefferson Short, who provided a lot of the material for Leacock for his stories. One that comes to mind is *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, which was written in 1912, and as many of us know, he called that little town Mariposa—thinly disguised; that was Orillia. I'd like to quote from this particular book. The reason I say this is because it gives us an insight—we're going back 100 years through the eyes of a writer—of what the lake looked like then:

"In point of geography the lake is called Lake Wissanotti and the river running out of it the Ossawippi, just as the main street of Mariposa is called Missinaba Street and the county Missinaba County. But these names do not really matter. Nobody uses them. People simply speak of the 'lake' and the 'river' and the 'main street.'"

There's another section in this book—again, the area 100 years ago:

"After the winter, the snow melts and the ice goes out of the lake, the sun shines high and the shanty-men come down from the lumber woods and lie round drunk on the sidewalk outside of Smith's Hotel"—again, a fictional name for probably a well-known hotel of its day—"and that's spring time. Mariposa is then a fierce, dangerous lumber town, calculated to terrorize the soul of a newcomer who does not understand that this also is only an appearance and that presently the rough-looking shanty-men will change their clothes and turn back again into farmers.

"Then the sun shines warmer and the maple trees come out and Lawyer Macartney puts on his tennis trousers, and that's summer time. The little town changes to a sort of summer resort. There are visitors up from the city. Every one of the seven cottages along the lake is full."

Seven cottages—many of us here know the Simcoe area; today, how many cottages do we have along Lake Simcoe? Obviously, more than seven. The cottages are on septic systems and holding tanks and municipal waste disposal systems, all of relevance for the phosphorus loading that we have been hearing a discussion of today and which we will be discussing over the coming months as we debate Bill 99.

So, as we conduct this provincial debate, these deliberations on the proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act, we might well be advised to perhaps take a Leacockian approach, to perhaps work in the world of fiction on occasion, and I have seen this from legislation coming across the way. I know Big Bay Point was mentioned by the third party. Oftentimes this government and people involved may not want to name names or places; they may wish to make up a fictional world, as was done by Mazo de la Roche and as was done by Stephen Butler Leacock. I find politicians sometimes can be good at working in a fictional world.

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Take Big Bay Point, for example. You can read about the lawsuits and the bitter feud between the cottagers and the developers. This was just mentioned earlier in one of the two-minute hits, and anyone who is interested in

getting one journalist's take on that particular story after the last several years should take a look at last month's issue of *Toronto Life* magazine. There's an article by Paul Wilson, and it's titled "The Battle Over Lake Simcoe." Or go back a number of years in time and pick up a book titled *Secrets of the Lakes*, written by Monica Frim. In Frim's book, we are told that a settler, Francis Hewson, came from Ireland to settle on 500 acres at Big Bay Point. This was in 1918; he settled at the entrance of Kempenfelt Bay. At that time, that was the main route across the lake past that point, and during his clearing of the land and farming in that area, he sheltered many travellers, both native and non-native. Interestingly, he also put up for the night Sir John Franklin—this was in 1825—who was on his way to the Arctic.

Big Bay Point, along that bay—farming was very tough in that area. The population remained very, very sparse up until the late 1800s. In 1887, a person by the name of Isaac Robinson opened the two-storey Robinson House Hotel. He added a dock and he had his own steamer called *The Conqueror*. Shortly afterwards, competition came along. Another, much larger establishment was built, the Big Bay Point Hotel, built on Big Bay Point. The whole area at that time blossomed as a vacation destination.

Fast-forward 120 years to the Big Bay Point of today. We're told in that article in *Toronto Life* that the battle over Lake Simcoe, with \$255 million in lawsuits, has now become, or did become, the mother of all development wars, a war described as one of the messiest and one of the most acrimonious in recent history. Apart from that—and I know that has been, regrettably, a compelling issue for many, especially people living in that area, people either trying to protect what they have or people trying to move forward with development. It is unfortunate when we get down to that kind of approach using lawsuits. But I would like to pull back and take a look at the larger picture.

A year ago July, our leader, John Tory, announced that an Ontario PC government would move quickly to clean up Lake Simcoe. During that announcement, he was joined by Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North; Jim Wilson from Simcoe-Grey; Julia Munro from York North; and also MPP Joe Tascona, who at that time represented the riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. As Mr. Tory stated last year, and I'll just quote:

"Dalton McGuinty has turned his back on the deteriorating health of this invaluable natural and recreational resource for" the past "four years. In contrast, a John Tory government will move quickly to ensure the province plays a greater role in restoring the lake's ecological health."

And as we know, increased levels of phosphorus in the lake from both urban and rural sources have resulted in a significant disruption of the lake's ecosystem and truly are threatening its sustainability. Of course, those living nearby are affected by this issue. They care deeply about the health of the lake. They've banded together. They have launched a number of education programs, infor-

mation programs, advocacy. They've conducted fund-raising. Groups I've mentioned today—the Ladies of the Lake, of calendar fame, and The Wave—have done a tremendous amount of work raising awareness beyond the Simcoe area with respect to not only the problems—the deterioration of that ecosystem not only within the lake but within the watershed—but also coming up with some solutions.

For many, as I said earlier, Lake Simcoe is seen as an invaluable natural and recreational resource. I'd just to go back in time a little further, if I may—again, who has accurate data? We understand that with the retreat of the glaciers, the glacial melt created both Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe 5,000 or 10,000 years ago. As the ice retreated, the area would have been dominated, in my view—we talk about very large animals like the pre-glacial mastodon, the mammoth; we read of giant beaver, grizzly bear. Then, 10,000 to 11,000 years ago, human beings arrived—obviously, they didn't come up from Toronto at that time; I don't know what the migration routes would have been. And 2,000 years ago, we have more clear-cut evidence of two groups who lived in the Lake Simcoe area, the Algonquin and the Iroquois. Actually, from what we read, the hostilities between those two groups—the kind of warfare they were involved in—would probably make the goings-on and the lawsuits at Big Bay Point over the past several years look like a Teddy bears' picnic, in my opinion.

We all know that the lake is part of the Trent-Severn waterway, which links Lake Ontario through Lake Simcoe up to Georgian Bay. Lake Simcoe is the largest lake in southern Ontario, apart from the Great Lakes. Really, the significance as far as fishing and boating and travel—I travelled the Trent-Severn waterway in 1959 with my father, and of course we had to cross Lake Simcoe. A very, very heavy fog set in. At that time, as I recall, our compass went the wrong way on us, and we had a bit of a feeling that night for just how large that lake is, because we had no direction to get across.

Beyond boating, fishing and recreational sports, the lake provides safe drinking water for five communities, but also receives waste water from 14 sewage treatment facilities, which obviously includes phosphorus, as mentioned. What else? There's birth control medication. What else would be flowing into that lake and through the watershed—as mentioned, a watershed that's home to 350,000 people, and there's another 250,000 on the way. That's an awful lot of people living on land that all eventually drains into Lake Simcoe.

I would like to digress a bit, in talking about the sewage, albeit so-called treated sewage, that eventually does find itself in Lake Simcoe. I was talking to a fellow just the other day—I visited Phoenix, Arizona. All waste water from Phoenix—first of all, they use it as cooling water in a nearby nuclear plant. But after that, they use that water for irrigation. Again, if you are living in the Arizona desert you have no choice: You take water very, very seriously. I suggest to this House that we in Ontario, other than a few droughts in the last several years, have

essentially, in many ways, had more water than we could use, say, over the 40 years after the war. We do have to take a look at some other options beyond using the lake to receive waste water from 350,000 people plus another 250,000.

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I'm concerned about population growth. There are some dramatic figures here, based on municipal boundaries. Oftentimes, material we read is not based on the watershed boundaries; it's based on municipal boundaries. Even the newly created greenbelt boundaries don't follow the watershed boundaries. That really flies in the face of even using the term "greenbelt." There are several greenbelt boundaries that intersect this particular watershed.

I only have data based on municipal boundaries. Durham region is expected to grow from 530,000 people now to 960,000; York region, 760,000 people today, going toward 1.5 million; even Simcoe county—Barrie, Orillia—is growing from 392,000 to 667,000. Again, as population rises, so do the phosphorus levels, and as phosphorus rises, it would eliminate any progress that may have been made over the past few years. Much of the decisions around population growth are really dependent on future municipal decisions and also, obviously, federal government decisions based on immigration, for that matter.

Regrettably, we see the ill health of Lake Simcoe, a lake that is failing in part because of population growth, a particular mix of land use activities and urbanization, which contribute large amounts of nutrients and sediment. But there is an opportunity. I think that with this legislation, we now have before us an opportunity for not only a case study but perhaps a pilot project to just see what we can do in this small part of North America with respect to overpopulation, overuse, overconsumption and pollution. It remains to be seen whether this government, and this legislation in particular, will actually accomplish anything.

There are other pressures in addition to growth in population. Invasive species—exotic species like the zebra mussel—are in Lake Simcoe, and there are others. I know that Lake Nipigon has the spiny water flea; I'm assuming it's in Lake Simcoe. We're looking at a lake that is one of the most intensively fished lakes in Ontario. We know that phosphorus is a problem, but we have to think beyond just the water and the lake. We have to think about the whole watershed, the land and the air as well.

It is home to a number of provincially significant wetlands, a fair bit of forest cover, woodlots and, of course, specialty crop areas—I think of the onions and lettuce grown in the Holland Marsh. There is identification of 50 different species of mammals, 141 species of birds, 36 amphibian-reptile species and, of course, as in most of Ontario, a number of species that are at risk.

Back to phosphorus: High levels of phosphorus feed the excess growth of algae-type plants in the lake and, obviously, overgrowth of weeds. Algae and microscopic

animals feed and eventually die and sink to the deep waters of the lake, decompose and consume oxygen all the while. Again, there's pressure on the fishery. Whitefish, lake trout and herring were mentioned. There's pressure on perch and other species for which Lake Simcoe is famous for ice fishing, and even pressure on carp.

I understand that this summer, there was a very significant die-off of carp in the Lake Simcoe area.

Some of the data: Phosphorous levels in the 1800s sat at around 32 tonnes a year. In the 1990s, they increased dramatically to 100 tonnes a year. The levels have decreased somewhat to about 67 tonnes a year. That was between 1998 and 2004, and again, due to work by many people, the collaborative efforts of the province, the federal government, the community, industry and local individuals. But we do know that the present Minister of the Environment has put in place measures that will allow these phosphorous levels to continue to increase. Despite being lower than historically documented, the levels today still need to be addressed, particularly in areas like Cook's Bay and Kempenfelt Bay, the bay adjacent to Big Bay Point. Again, I understand that Kempenfelt Bay has some good potential for a lake trout fishery.

There are other issues. There are yet more issues facing the lake: increased levels of chloride; contaminants in sport fish; the degraded aquatic habitats not only in Lake Simcoe but also in its tributaries, the rivers and the streams; increased water temperature; hardening of the shoreline; stream channel alterations; in-stream obstructions; changes in stream hydrology; removal of stream bank vegetation—invariably, this happens when somebody builds a cottage. We see it as we travel the rivers and the lakes. They cut down the brush, they cut the weeds, they cut down the trees and they set up a lawn. Sometimes they even remove rocks, and they will mow grass right down to the water's edge. That has a dramatic impact on the health of the lake.

I will say that over the past 17 years, efforts have been there to protect the lake and to bring it along in a better way. I mention again LSEMS, the Lake Simcoe environmental management group. They were formed in 1990. They were created by the Lake Simcoe conservation authority. I want to mention again that there are some excellent reports coming out of these organizations. I ask people who are working on the file to take a look at those reports.

Improving Lake Simcoe is a long-term venture. It took us many years to get where we are today, but there are some short-term objectives that we can all work on: obviously, reducing phosphorous load; reducing pollutants—chloride, as I've mentioned, and bacteria; maintaining water quality. We have to protect, we have to rehabilitate areas—the water recharge areas; forested or other buffer areas along shorelines are in order and have to be brought back for fish habitat and for wildlife habitat.

But don't focus just on the lake. Think of the marshes, the bogs, the fens and the wetlands upstream from the

lake itself. Short-term goals identified by the LSEMS group: reducing beach closures, and as this legislation indicates, a restoration of that cold-water fishery.

LSEMS also proposed a governance model for the lake, a collaborative process to pull together the various interests that we know of: the cottagers, the developers, industry, agriculture, individual citizens and, of course, government. I agree. I feel that we need something to pull all this together, to pull together the intent of the various pieces of even just the provincial legislation that can be applied to this particular area. LSEMS indicates that there is a need for better coordination, better coordination of the science itself and the research, better coordination of remediation—there has to be an action plan, and it has to be resourced appropriately—better coordination of communications, better coordination of education concerning not only the lake but also its watershed. They've laid out a number of principles. If there was a future governance model to be developed, they favour a combined approach, expanded to include the public along with industry and government. It has to focus on the needs of the lake. It requires consultation; it requires information-sharing.

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Now, I have not been to a government-sponsored Lake Simcoe meeting. I hope there are some planned this fall and this winter. As far as governance, we have to avoid duplication and overlap. It will require sustainable and reliable funding. Lake Simcoe was not mentioned in this year's budget. I do wish to point that out. Governance has to be based on strong science and monitoring. We do have to build on the success of the past. We have some frameworks, and obviously this bill, if it does receive assent, will provide a framework, but we can work, obviously, with the Nutrient Management Act of 2002, the provincial policy statement in 2005, the Clean Water Act and the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act in 2007.

I'll just wrap up briefly. I do wish to turn the remaining time over to Mr. Dunlop. I did mention John Tory's announcement a year ago last July. He presented an eight-point plan for Lake Simcoe: invest \$12 million over the next two years, match the support of the federal government and support a Lake Simcoe action fund to clean up the lake; develop a new governance structure working with the stakeholders that I just mentioned; create a Lake Simcoe charter; increase and streamline funding for water and waste water infrastructure for projects impacting Lake Simcoe; end the dumping of primary sewage into our water; hire more conservation officers to protect the lake and rebuild the Ministry of Natural Resources so it can better maintain the health of the lake; conserve more green space with a land conservation challenge fund—again, it would work well in areas like Lake Simcoe; and invest in better GO train service to the Lake Simcoe area to reduce pollution, smog and the impacts of climate change, which all threaten the health of the lake.

I see in the government's plan that they are building on the work that has been done by Garfield Dunlop. I see

a plan here that builds on the proposals put forward by John Tory last year. My hope is that the members opposite and this government take the work of LSEMS and the conservation authority seriously and continue to work from the data, not only the scientific data but also the historical data. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleague Mr. Barrett, our environmental critic, for allowing me to use a bit of the time in the leadoff. I'm happy to speak to Bill 99, proud to speak to 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. This bill follows on a lot of legislation that has been passed in this House in the past, legislation like the Niagara Escarpment act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, the greenbelt legislation. All this legislation was provincially driven and dealt with large areas that were under threat.

I have a little over 100 kilometres of shoreline on Lake Simcoe in the riding of Simcoe North. Basically it goes from the Talbot River over in the Gamebridge area right around to the city limits of Barrie. I can tell you that I spend many days throughout the course of the summer months in particular listening to cottage associations, ratepayer associations, from all different parts of the community—whether it's in Ramara township, Oro-Medonte, around the city of Orillia—all people who have been very, very concerned for a number of years about water quality, and water quality in Lake Simcoe.

I really want to thank some people, because I think there are some key people who have driven this above and beyond government, and above and beyond the conservation authority. I know today in the House, in the west gallery, we have Linda Wells from Campaign Lake Simcoe, and Claire Malcolmson from Environmental Defence.

For a long time, Campaign Lake Simcoe were out there by themselves. They kept driving the story and the issue of water quality in Lake Simcoe. There is even head-butting between the conservation authorities and government and municipalities about costs etc. So I give them so much credit for being the driving force behind it. Behind that are the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, Environmental Defence with Dr. Rick Smith, and Ontario Nature with Wendy Francis.

I had met with a number of these people. Claire Malcolmson from Environmental Defence has been the lead here at Queen's Park for about the last three years on the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and making sure we actually move this ahead. I know she's lobbied all of the different governments and all of the different parties. I give them all a lot of credit.

The Ladies of the Lake was briefly mentioned a few times today under the leadership of Annabel Slaight. They started out with the sale of the 2006 calendar which they were promoting—these ladies dressed in costume in different scenic photos around the lake. And I believe—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Are you a part of it?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, I'm not. I'm not one of the Ladies of the Lake, but I can tell you that I bought their calendar. Did you? I actually just bought 100 calendars, and I can sell one to anybody this House. They're 15 bucks, and all the money goes back to the Ladies of the Lake.

In the first year, the 2006 calendar, the Ladies of the Lake made a profit of about \$240,000. That went into studies to bring to us so that we would start to listen to the problems that were happening with Lake Simcoe. And now you can buy this year's calendar, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, the 2009 calendar, and I think they plan on doing just as well as that again with this year's calendar.

We have still got a few silos in the whole area around Lake Simcoe. We've got the conservation authority as sort of the lead on this—and municipalities and the provincial government, and some federal money goes towards the conservation authority. They're doing their studies under the leadership of Gayle Wood. I give Gayle a lot of credit. She has been very loyal in moving this forward as well. But you know what? She does need a lot of money—the Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority. If any conservation authority needs a little bit of extra assistance now, it's probably that one.

On top of that, we've got the federal government. John Baird calls the five MPs around Lake Simcoe “the Lake Simcoe caucus.” He doesn't refer to them as the Ontario caucus, because Bruce Stanton and Patrick Brown, Bev Oda, Barry Devolin and—who else is there?

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I can't remember. Oh, Peter Van Loan. They are all people who are part of the Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority's area. They represent those parts of that area. I can tell you that they lobby the federal government. So far—and I give the federal government a lot of credit—they've got \$30 million on the table. Now, it's not tied in with the protection plan, it's completely separate money, but people can apply for this—municipalities and organizations can apply for this federal money to do specific cleanups. We've seen some good announcements already—some erosion control projects and that sort of thing. Although only a little bit of that money has been passed out so far, it's a great start from the federal side as well.

Gayle Wood from the conservation authority estimates through her studies that the actual cleanup cost of Lake Simcoe is somewhere around \$160 to \$190 million, so we do need everybody onside as we move forward with the protection plan and the passage of this bill.

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There are a couple of areas I wanted to just briefly mention. As soon as this bill was introduced, I had an opportunity to be briefed by some of the policy advisers in Minister Gerretsen's office, and I thank them for it. I was pleased to get that opportunity. But there are some areas with what exists there today that I think are going to be very important as we move forward.

We talked about all the rivers that feed Lake Simcoe, and we talked about the streams and tributaries, but there are also all the municipal drains. Now, a lot of the municipal drains are over 100 years old. They were built specifically to drain farmland. In a lot of cases, there's absolutely no stormwater management associated with that. There are no collecting ponds or retention ponds, that sort of thing, along them, so when we get these heavy rains or we get a spring runoff, everything that is on the farm fields, whether it's some fertilizer or just hay etc., can actually wash off right out into the water. I can tell you that there's absolutely no retention to that. I think if there was good money spent in any one specific area—and I mentioned this to the policy adviser for the minister—if there was a way to spend any money wisely, it would be to try to find a way so that some of that federal money and some of the money associated with the protection plan announcement could be put towards retention on those ponds. It would save a lot of surface runoff just gushing out into the water. We have to do it with plans of subdivision today. In a lot of cases, municipalities are actually treating their stormwater runoff. So I think this would be an excellent way to start really showing some good leadership and helping out the agricultural community at the same time.

The second thing is septic systems. There are some state-of-the-art septic systems being developed. I don't think there's a government in the world that has enough money right now to put a municipal sewer system right around Lake Simcoe. It would be in terms of billions and billions of dollars to put sewer and water services around it. However, we don't have to stick with the conventional septic systems. We can move to these class 6 systems or high-tech septic systems. If we could find federal help or assistance for some of the people in those areas, maybe people within a kilometre or two of the lake, I think it would make a remarkable change: As septic systems wear out, you have to replace them with one of these state-of-the-art systems. A regular system on the water is probably \$7,000 or \$8,000; one of these systems would probably run you \$15,000 to \$20,000. However, if you're talking about cleaning up the lake in the long term, and I think most people around the water's edge or within a kilometre of the shoreline would want to see the best treatment possible, then there may be some opportunities to help some of those people with that.

An area I didn't hear a lot mentioned about in today's debate: It will be interesting to hear the report back from the expert panel as they develop the protection plan. I'm very interested in atmospheric pollution, the phosphorus that comes right from the rain and from the air that we breathe that settles on the water's edge. I certainly have no expertise in that whatsoever, but people tell me, some of the experts from the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition tell me, that is an issue we have to deal with. As we move forward with this legislation, I'm hoping we can find ways of dealing with that atmospheric pollution as well.

I'm kind of bragging about the area that I represent, but we hear about how everybody has gone green today,

the Green Party and the green shift and all these sorts of things and announcements that are being made. But I can tell you, the people in my riding have been green forever. We have more conservation clubs, more interest in the conservation authority. We have a group called Kids for Turtles, which is helping young kids understand wildlife etc. I think, generally speaking, people want fresh air and clean water. I don't think that's something that anybody would turn their backs on in any way. I think the Lake Simcoe protection plan is really long overdue. I'm hoping that in the end we can get all-party support on the plan that is developed, and I hope it's something that will be good for all of our young people, all of our families and all of Ontario. Lake Simcoe is just too important. As we move forward—and I think our critic Toby Barrett mentioned it—the population of southern Ontario is growing and here, sitting right in the middle of southern central Ontario, is this huge lake—not that deep of a lake, but a lake that needs special attention.

We mentioned about the population of the city of Barrie and the county of Simcoe. The county of Simcoe under the Places to Grow legislation and the intergovernmental action plan, a plan that was put forward by the county of Simcoe, has planned growth of up to 60% in the next 25 years. Many of those people will settle in the Barrie area. So the city of Barrie itself and the city of Orillia will probably need special attention paid to their sewage treatment plants and their surface water management runoff systems.

The minister has more problems than—not this particular minister, but the city of Barrie needs more land. The reality is that if they're going to grow under the Places to Grow legislation by 60%, the land may not be available within the city boundaries, and of course they're looking at the municipalities around them. There's quite a battle going on as we speak right now on the county of Simcoe's new growth plan. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will have a huge issue to deal with and I think it has to be resolved at some point, because we've got this legislation out saying this is where the growth is going to occur, but I don't really think at this time that there will be enough land in 25 years to handle all of this growth. So he's got that tough decision to make as we try to get the townships surrounding the city of Barrie and the county of Simcoe to make some kind of boundary negotiations or agreements or whatever it may be. However, at the same time, money will be required as well to implement this plan.

When they had the intergovernmental action plan public open houses, the one disadvantage to the intergovernmental action plan was increased phosphorus loading on Lake Simcoe. So, right off the bat, the plan that the government pays a lot of money into to help develop in one of the key areas of growth already says there will be an increased amount of phosphorus because of the planned growth on the sewage treatment system. So it's sort of 50-50, kind of a Catch-22 situation here. The government wants to make sure that we have this clean, fresh body of water, yet at the same time the growth plan that

they adopted and are helping the city of Barrie along with pollutes the lake. That can't be. We have to find alternatives. We have to find a solution to make sure that that actually doesn't occur. It would be flying in the face of good planning if that was to occur under this growth plan.

I want to say also that I appreciated my colleague going back in time because when you have this full hour to debate, you get off track sometimes, but it was interesting to hear him speak on the history of this body of water, when people used to go by train to the bottom end of the lake and then take boats up to the Shanty Bay area or the area that I represent now, where they built these huge cottages along the shoreline. It actually has a lot of beautiful history to it. However, at that time they were not year-round homes. They were homes that were built just for summer usage, and a lot of them were like summer mansions for some very wealthy people in the southern end of the province.

As we move forward with this, I hope we don't get too partisan with this particular bill. I hope we can really listen to each other. We can make sure that what's passed is good for this whole province. Mr. Barrett went back—after we introduced the Lake Simcoe protection resolution in November 2006, it was interesting that the Progressive Conservative Party and the Liberal Party leading up to the election of 2007 both held major press conferences in Barrie. I know the Premier went to an event, I think sponsored by the Ladies of the Lake. He actually appeared there and made an announcement that he would put through, if re-elected, a Lake Simcoe protection act, and that's what we are debating here today.

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I know, as Mr. Barrett mentioned, that our leader, John Tory, had a press conference at the side of the water in Barrie just a couple of weeks later, after the Premier was there, and mentioned that our party would move forward with a strategy or plan around the lake as well. So it is good to see that we've got buy-in on some kind of strategy plan for this beautiful body of water. I know it will be appreciated by the citizens who live there today, but I think it will be appreciated by our kids, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren down the road.

When you think that a body of water has been let go by generation after generation, and here we are, 100 years later, trying to fix it, it's actually kind of a cruel thought that it ever got that far in the beginning. But do you know what? That's our job as legislators. Our job is to move forward and make sure we get this legislation and an affordable plan, and try to subsidize and help the municipalities that are involved and help the conservation authority that is involved to move forward so that we have something really, really strong and positive for the future.

I want to take a moment and talk about when I first introduced the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. In the summer of 2006, we did a consultation at a number of municipalities around the lake, and it was really interesting to see the people who came out to that consultation

to talk about their concerns around water quality and some of the invasive species coming in, and even mentioned, in a lot of cases, the two-stroke motor that my seatmate, Mr. Ouellette, referred to. That's a real concern. In some areas of the world, we don't have two-stroke motors anymore; they're not allowed on lakes. That's an area I was pleased to see addressed.

I knew immediately, after two consultations, that the bill could never be a private member's bill, because there's so much work required as far as bringing in experts and trying to set up enough meetings that you never have time to develop any kind of plan to go along with a private member's bill. That's why we switched it to a resolution. To this day, I thank all the members in this House who were here that day to pass that resolution. I think it was a very positive step as we moved forward. It was the first time in history that Lake Simcoe had been debated in this Legislature. If you think back, how long have we been here? Since 1867. We have the biggest lake in central Ontario sitting right in front of us, and all of a sudden—

Mr. Bill Mauro: Do you want to see a big lake? You've got to go to Thunder Bay.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's the biggest freshwater lake other than the Great Lakes. Lake Simcoe is special—I know Superior is special up your way as well. I can tell you that there are a lot of people in this province who drive by Lake Simcoe on the highway, fly over it, know about it, visit a cottage or resort there, or go for a boat ride. It's very, very important to the economy of our province, plus it provides a lot of people with great getaways as well, and it's right within an hour of the city of Toronto and the GTA, where six million, seven million or eight million people live today.

As we move forward with this, I look forward to the debate. I also look forward to constructive criticism on the bill. I can tell you that there will be things that people don't like about the bill, and we want to hear from those people and make sure we incorporate those concerns and have a bill that keeps most of our stakeholders happy.

I just have a few seconds left. I'm not really known as an environmentalist, but I have a lot of environmental issues that I deal with. I'm not going to be in the House tomorrow, because I have an open information centre on something called the Oro moraine. It's thousands of acres in Oro township, just north of the city of Barrie, and is a water filter for the aquifers below it. I can tell you that we've got a good turnout planned; we've got a lot of interesting speakers. I held one about six or seven years ago, and it was great. I hope we have a good turnout tomorrow and move that along the agenda as well, because that's another environmental feature that is very, very sensitive and very, very important to our future.

Thank you very much for allowing me to say a few words today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There is no question that human action can cause lakes to die, can lose them to human

access. Not locally, but in California, not that far away in this continent, Owens Lake was essentially drained by the city of Los Angeles for its water supply. And in that area, people have had to negotiate with the city of Los Angeles to put a gravel cover on top of the dust pan so that the locals are not simply driven out of their homes by sand storms.

Closer to home is Lake Champlain, which has had severe problems with too much phosphorus, too much nitrogen and thus huge blue-green algae blooms, making the water unswimable and undrinkable.

So when we discuss Lake Simcoe and the protection act and the plan or the framework for the development of a plan, we have to note that the stakes are very high. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on this lake, not just for employment, which is crucial, not just for their small businesses, which is crucial, but for the water that they are going to drink on a daily basis, which is essential to life. We know that we're dealing with very high stakes.

I think it's a good thing that we have this bill before us. And again, as I said earlier, I appreciate the work that was done by activists throughout the area around Lake Simcoe, and I think further afield, to move this issue forward, bring the government to the point that this plan, this act is before us.

But I have to say I am concerned about a number of elements in this bill that don't deal with the larger context within which Lake Simcoe finds itself, and I'm concerned that without dealing with that larger context, it may be that even a good plan will not be able to give us the results that everyone in Ontario is looking forward to having.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to get on the record: I thought the comments from the members from Haldimand—Norfolk and Simcoe North were very thoughtful on this very important piece of legislation, Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe act. And it certainly seems to me that the grass roots organization, Campaign Lake Simcoe, has really been ahead of the elected politicians at the municipal, the provincial and the federal levels to get this issue and the whole management of Lake Simcoe to the forefront of attention over the next little while. And I think this bill is essentially a non-partisan bill, because all three parties in this House, and even the independent member, have a stake in this fine water body which provides recreation, business opportunity and certainly the living environment for many millions of people who surround the Lake Simcoe basin.

From the Peterborough perspective, we'll be looking at this very carefully, because in the riding of Peterborough, of course, we have the Kawartha lakes, and the Kawartha lakes over the last number of decades are certainly seeing increased pressure. Many of what I call the traditional mom-and-pop cottages were built after the second world war, and now there's been a real thrust of people coming in, buying up the old mom-and-pop cottages and building the million-dollar homes on Chemong Lake, Buckhorn Lake, Pigeon Lake and

certainly into Stony Lake. And as we've witnessed this increased urbanization, it's certainly putting a lot of pressure on the Kawartha lakes, increased phosphorus content in those bodies of water which has had a direct impact on the sport and recreation fishery that many of us in this House have enjoyed over many, many years. So we'll be watching very, very closely how this bill goes through the House and its development and the impact it will have on our local area.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm very happy to lend my name to support my colleague Garfield Dunlop for all the work that he has done on this piece of legislation and before. I also want to thank our critic, Toby Barrett, for once again providing this Legislature with a very sound series of readings into this piece of legislation.

I'm very proud of Garfield Dunlop, because he is a great environmentalist, he's a great conservationist, and he has been a great protector of Lake Simcoe in this Legislature. One only has to look back to November 2006 when Mr. Dunlop from Simcoe North brought forward a resolution to this Legislature that spoke of the need of those who live in Barrie and Orillia, to offer a superior environment and quality of life for families to live, to work and to play in. He recognized early on the importance of Lake Simcoe and its part of the heritage and culture not only of the region which he represents but also of this entire province. I think we ought to be very thankful for the work that he has put into this issue.

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I think that we also must recognize the hard work of people like Bruce Stanton, Peter Van Loan, Patrick Brown, Bev Oda and Barry Devolin, who, together with the environment minister federally, John Baird, have contributed over \$30 million to the protection of this lake, a very important lake. They were visionary, and I know that they worked very hard with our local champion, our very own Garfield Dunlop.

I just want to conclude with the fact that it was the Conservative Party under the leadership of John Tory and Garfield Dunlop that first recognized the development pressures the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt legislation and the Places to Grow Act have placed on the Lake Simcoe watershed. For that, I'm very proud of my very good friend Garfield Dunlop.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Response?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do wish to respond and echo the comments with respect to the initiative from Garfield Dunlop and the good work done over the years by the Lake Simcoe conservation authority and their various bodies, including LSEMS.

My concern is that it's been a year since the McGuinty government announced this plan; we've now commenced second reading today. I'm not sure what else this government has accomplished in the past year. We monitored the budget this spring. There was no mention at all of any funding for Lake Simcoe. Perhaps there is something coming or something has been announced under the radar screen since then.

I do point out that we made a very clear commitment last fall for funding. As we have just heard, the federal government made a clear commitment for funding.

This government has been around now for five years. Mr. Dunlop has certainly been speaking about Lake Simcoe, not only its problems and its challenges but also offering a way forward and offering some solutions over the past five years. To date, we have seen very little other than the good work of other bodies, the conservation authority and other volunteer bodies. But we do have some questions.

At the end of this debate, ideally there will be some public consultation. What will we end up with? We'll end up with a piece of legislation, albeit enabling legislation, and probably lots of regulation. But we still wonder: Are we left with just nothing but a plan on top of another plan? What concrete is going to come out of this process?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There is no question that action to protect and improve the situation at Lake Simcoe is long overdue. Lake Simcoe, as people around this House have said today, is an essential part of Ontario's natural and ecological heritage. It supports tourism and recreational fishing, as well as being a source of drinking water for local communities.

The lake's watershed ecosystem has deteriorated seriously due to growth and land use changes that have dated back more than 200 years. It's been impacted by the release of nutrients, pollutants, invasive species, impacts of climate change and pressures from population growth. The Lake Simcoe area is home to around 65 endangered species, covering everything from butterflies to salamanders. The area is also home to 380,000 residents and 12,000 cottages. Thousands of people around Lake Simcoe depend on the lake for their drinking water. It receives treated discharge from 15 sewage treatment plants. So, as I said in an earlier comment, the stakes before us are very high. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on this lake for their livelihoods and for the essentials of life, water itself.

More and more people are going to be dependent on this lake, and in their dependence they will also contribute to the problems the lake faces. If all the new urban developments in south Simcoe were built, they'd add another 240,000 people. Right now, for example, there are plans for 140,000 more people—that's a population bigger than Barrie—on green space in Simcoe county alone. So we've got a huge growth management issue here and I think significant questions about the care and capacity of the lake.

If the current amount of phosphorus going into that lake, as Mr. Barrett referred to, is around 80 tonnes per year of phosphorus, up from 26, 30 in pre-industrial times, and you add a population more than double what you've got now, even with extraordinary measures you have to ask questions about how we will actually reduce the amount of phosphorus going into the water. So what

we have is a lake whose existence as a healthy body of water is crucial to supporting and sustaining hundreds of thousands while at the same time that lake is threatened by the settlement of hundreds of thousands around it.

Small cities are turning into medium-sized cities. Older smaller towns are turning into new small cities. Prime farmland and green space are vanishing. We have to change the way we grow. We need to reduce growth in areas that are greenfields; we need to be developing on brownfields. And in this area, we have to be very careful to plan properly in the green space around Lake Simcoe. That may well mean that Lake Simcoe cannot carry the population load that's projected, that developers would like to load there, because the water may not be there—the clean water, the drinkable, the accessible.

Four decades of studies have shown that impacts from human activities have impaired the health of the Lake Simcoe watershed ecosystem. The Lake Simcoe science advisory committee recommends that Ontario needs to act immediately to protect the lake. Already, parts of the Lake Simcoe area have some protection through the Greenbelt Act that covers parts of Ontario to the south and east of the lake, so those areas are covered, but Simcoe county is almost entirely excluded from these laws. Frankly, again, if you are going to protect the lake, the water quality and those who depend on that water quality, then you have to ask, why is the greenbelt not protecting more of the land around the lake itself? Unless there is substantial change in the way planning is done in the areas around the lake that have been excluded from the greenbelt, our problems with air pollution and water pollution in this lake, even with substantial measures, are going to continue to grow. And it's not just around the lake itself; it's also around the region's sub lakes and rivers that feed into the lake.

In the Lake Simcoe watershed as a whole and elsewhere, pollution, pesticide runoff and unsustainable development have been damaging the lake. Interestingly, natural fish stocks in Lake Simcoe have declined over time and the lake currently does not replenish its own fish population naturally. Think about that. If it was not for people running hatcheries, if it wasn't for direct human intervention, you would not have the populations of fish in that lake that people depend on and expect to have there. What does that say about the health of the lake, that it cannot naturally sustain its fish populations? It does not bode well for the future of that lake.

The biggest problem is phosphorus, which is found in detergents and fertilizers. That phosphorus increases weed and algae growth in Lake Simcoe. As was mentioned, Lake Simcoe's annual phosphorus inputs are two to three times the natural level. As weeds grow in the lake, they choke off the lake's oxygen. Over the last decade, phosphorus runoff into Lake Simcoe has grown substantially. Each summer in Lake Simcoe, there is a rash of beach closures, largely due to E. coli contamination of the lake. Yet around the lake there is no systematic approach to dealing with sewage runoff into the lake. There's a hodgepodge of services and facilities, in

terms of sewage treatment. You don't have a systematic approach unless you have an ongoing and deepening problem.

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At the same time as this is happening, Lake Simcoe's skiing and ice fishing industries are under increased pressure from climate change that poorly planned development is making worse. It was referred to earlier by Mr. Barrett that in fact last year the ice fishing season didn't exist. A whole lot of people who depended on that for a living were out of luck. Those people are victims of climate change, which will be accelerated by further unsustainable growth around this lake. Around the lake there's a rich abundance of walking trails; it's a bike-friendly countryside. Local parks need to flourish, but they need green space protection to remain healthy.

Unplanned sprawl hurts prosperity as it expands over the landscape. Smart growth in southern and central Ontario would reduce climate change emissions and reduce impacts on this lake. But we're not getting enough of that. This Lake Simcoe Protection Act could aid smart growth, depending on how it's written and what it contains. It needs to move development away from sensitive green spaces close to the lake.

Lake Simcoe's tourism industry is currently worth about \$200 million a year, but it depends to a large extent on a healthy Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga River. Protecting Lake Simcoe and improving its water quality are essential to continued prosperity and employment for the local tourist economy. The voices of environmental groups and citizens are united. They say that we need to act now to protect Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River from poorly planned development.

Bill 99 has the potential to stop and reverse damage to Lake Simcoe, depending on the plan that comes out of it. The legislation can be entirely beautiful; it can have the most wonderful wording ever seen by humankind. But if the plan that comes out of it is not workable and does not actually respect the biological limits of the lake and the ecosystem around it, then it will not do what has to happen and this lake will continue to deteriorate.

We understand that the plan that is going to be put in force by this legislation is already under development. To be effective, Bill 99 has to be comprehensive, the actions that flow out of it have to be well funded and restrictions have to be well enforced. The pressures for development on the Lake Simcoe area are huge. Major developments are under way, and many more are about to start. Environmental groups have made it very clear that they welcome the plan. Although they have concerns that it won't go into effect soon enough and will not be strong enough, they want a plan to be put together that they can push forward and use as a framework for defending the lake.

When it comes to protecting the environment, the short-term vested interests of powerful groups are at stake. We have heard that the McGuinty government is being lobbied very intensively to water down its pesticide bill. I have no doubt that they will be, and have been,

lobbied by developers to water down this bill and the plan that hopefully will come out of it. We recently saw the power of developers in Innisfil, when last week the town council considered partnering with Kimvar developers to seek millions of dollars in damages from local environmental groups and ratepayers. It is not a good sign when citizens and environmental groups stand up to protect the lake and the water quality, and get hit hard by a developer. The idea that a town council would even for a moment consider supporting the developer is disturbing—profoundly disturbing. So the bill needs to move ahead quickly, as does the plan that will implement the changes and the protection. It needs to move quickly and it needs to be effective. Environment and citizens' groups have come together with a unified voice to support strong and effective legislation. Forty-one groups signed on to support this response to the discussion paper, which is a good reflection of the community support for Campaign Lake Simcoe and its suggestions for the direction the province should take on the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

As well, hundreds of people representing charities, students, municipalities, farmers, cottagers, the conservation authority and the development industry attended two public meetings and three stakeholder consultations. The dominant theme at these meetings is that the province's strategy needs to go further than protecting water quality and quantity. It's impossible to save a lake without protecting the woodlands, wetlands and agricultural areas that surround it. It doesn't exist, like an island, somewhere out in space; it's intimately connected to the wetlands and woodlands around it. If they aren't protected, then you can't save the lake.

Again, there's an anomaly in that the southern and eastern sides of the lake are protected by the greenbelt, which is a good thing, whereas the western side, most threatened by development, is not. There's great concern that Bill 99 does not present a comprehensive plan to protect the land that feeds into the lake, and we know that the heart of the problem with the lake is, in fact, the runoff that comes from that land. If you don't protect the land, you don't protect the lake. The proposed legislation needs to make sure that woodlands, wetlands and others have land use designations that are similar to those in the greenbelt. Through the legislation, land use policies must be developed to identify and protect natural and agricultural areas in the Lake Simcoe watershed and surrounding area, if there's hope and if there's any desire to in fact see that the lake is properly protected. It's vital that the act be tough enough to improve the health of this ailing lake. The priorities, goals and targets in the Lake Simcoe protection plan must be based on the scientific advice of the Lake Simcoe scientific advisory committee. It's clear that human activities are the main cause of Lake Simcoe's problems; therefore, the solutions need to directly answer the question: What is acceptable development in the area affected by the act? If that question is not determined, then all the rest will be for naught.

A number of things need to be done to strengthen the act. Unless these concerns are addressed, we don't

believe that the lake and the surrounding areas will be truly and adequately safeguarded against development and urban sprawl.

First, the plan must put in place designated policies to protect, improve and restore the watershed's key natural features and functions, and ensure that natural forest and wetland cover enhance Lake Simcoe's water quality and the watershed's biodiversity. The act and plan need to ensure a stronger emphasis on improved land use planning.

Secondly, the plan should apply not only to the watershed but also to adjacent areas on the west side of the lake where development pressures are greatest and the watershed is narrowest. The outer boundaries of the Lake Simcoe watershed come within 500 metres of the lake at some points. It's not possible to restore the lake by restricting policies and actions to within the watershed. Therefore, the plan has to apply to the entire south Georgian Bay-Lake Simcoe source protection region. If you want to protect it, you have to look at it in a big-picture kind of way. You have to act on that big picture. You have to protect the lake from multiple sources of contamination.

Third, a seemingly narrow, but still important point: The act distinguishes between policies and so-called "designated policies." Typically, land use decisions need only conform with "designated policies." So any policies regarding the protection of natural features should be listed as "designated policies" under the Lake Simcoe protection plan.

Fourth, the bill includes a provision, subsection 5(2), that allows policies under the plan to override municipal standards—for instance, official plans, zoning bylaws—even if those standards are more restrictive than the ones in the plan.

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This is a very problematic section of this bill. My sense is that folks who are in the gallery today from the Lake Simcoe area who are concerned about protecting the lake, folks who are watching this now would say, "Okay, I can live with that because the rest of the bill will be helpful." But I want to say why this is a significant mistake on the part of the government: because if you look at the history of this province, if you look at what has been done to really pioneer, really make a difference in terms of new legislation, in terms of moving things to a whole other level, then you have to look at the municipal level. Typically, the province has been behind. It has been a laggard; it has been a follower. It has depended on the municipal level to develop environmental protection, public health protection. Cities have come forward, developed new approaches, shown that it's politically feasible, and then provincial governments of all stripes have followed what the cities have pioneered. And so when I see a section like this in the act that says to me, "Do you know what? We're going to cap activity. The outer level of what we're willing to do is the ceiling," then I know a mistake is being made because the innovative and creative process that goes on in cities is going to be choked off. That is a political mistake on

the part of the government in this bill. In consideration in committee, I urge the parliamentary assistant and the minister to look at this and think about how they could rework it so that municipalities retain their powers to go beyond the letter of the law, to expand the protection, because it's the municipalities, very directly, that will have to deal with foul drinking water, with blue-green algae, with their constituents coming to them after they've gone to a beach that has been covered in slime and saying, "You have to do something about this." Municipalities will be in that impossible position of saying, "Well, in fact, we can't do anything about this. The provincial legislation prevents us from taking the next step forward." I'm not saying that municipalities are the be-all and end-all, but in the history of this province, recognize that in fact municipalities have pioneered and set the ground and the space for provincial governments to act, and restricting them from using this legislation as a foundation for going forward is a political mistake.

The fifth point I want to raise: Because human activities are the main cause of Lake Simcoe's environmental problems, the act and plan have to avoid loopholes that can be exploited by developers. It is not that complex. You have land within driving distance of a major metropolitan centre. Developers buy that land, they buy it cheaply, they develop inexpensively and they sell it to people who are willing to commute for an hour and a half or two hours a day to get to a job in the northern part of the GTA.

The pressure to develop both subdivisions and resort spaces is extraordinary. Any developer who looks at this act and who looks at the plan that comes out of this act will be using crowbars to get at sections that will allow them to get around the act, to put in place the development that will allow them to make a good buck. So when this is written, when this is finalized, it should have those loopholes closed so that the protection that everybody in this House wants is, in fact, real, solid and, to the extent that it can be, crowbar proof.

The act should apply to all resort developments lacking final approval under the Planning Act, the Environmental Assessment Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Environmental Protection Act and so on. There will be people who will be trying to get stuff through, and there's some stuff that's already in process. The lake needs to be protected from bad development, and the government should be recognizing that and acting to protect against bad development.

Sixth, section 26 of the act must be strengthened to indicate that regulations will—not may—be made and that regulations will be in place at the coming into force of the plan. Furthermore, it must be made explicit that the Lake Simcoe protection plan's shoreline development restrictions apply to residential redevelopments, resort development, servicing, and include a shoreline restoration plan.

The plan should prohibit grandfathering of development projects that do not have final approvals and permits. The Lake Simcoe protection plan should be made

effective as of December 6, 2007, the date of the announcement of the interim phosphorus regulation, and all developments or projects caught by this regulation should be subject to the act and/or plan. Too much was allowed to go through. Citizens tried to stop it; they weren't successful. This government can act and it can protect the lake. Every day that you let things slip means we're in a much deeper hole that we have to dig our way out of. We are much closer to this lake being overloaded biologically. We are much closer to a point where it will be very difficult to salvage the lake, to set a new course to protect it.

Seventh, the plan should prohibit significant shoreline alterations. In fact, there needs to be better clarification of what constitutes a shoreline alteration.

Eighth, a number of information gaps and clarifications are needed before the plan is launched, including information about forest cover, better definitions of "settlement" as opposed to "resort," and lake-carrying capacity for boats. It is interesting, I was in Barrie earlier this year talking to some people on council there. This is a problem they're trying to work through, because you have large numbers of pleasure craft on the lake—and not just a little outboard, not just a little rowboat; you've got people who have boats out there with sleeping cabins. And you get more and more and more boats that have toilets on board, and you get more and more impact directly into lake water. If you're going to protect this lake, you have to think about—and it should be addressed in this plan—how are you going to deal with that whole question of direct sewage from boats into the lake.

Finally, the act and the plan must explicitly recognize that human activities are problems and the cause of the lake's problems—not just phosphorus levels. Phosphorus levels are a symptom of the larger problem. We know that the decline in water quality is primarily due to pollution from land-based rural and urban sources. It's interesting that while I was preparing to speak about this, I checked out the issues they're dealing with at Lake Champlain in Quebec and Vermont. They have a program there of dealing with runoff from settled areas and from agricultural areas. With farmers, they try to give them a lot of support. They work on best management practices for fertilizer and for manure, because they know that putting manure out on a field in winter, while the ground is frozen, can result in a rainstorm storm or simply runoff carrying everything straight into the lake with never any useful amendment to the soil itself. Even that being said, in the settled areas the amount of phosphorus coming off is three to three-and-a-half times more than that coming off from the agricultural areas because people use so much fertilizer for their lawns. So it isn't just a question of a problem with agricultural runoff, there is a huge problem with urban runoff.

The full range of activities that are causing problems for the lake has to be addressed. Thus this act has to protect the lake from a full range of pollutants. The legislation has been a long time coming. It's enabling

legislation. Much of whether it's going to be effective or not is something we'll find out in the details, in the plan that's going to be developed over the next nine months. We need to get this act through very quickly. Notwithstanding its failings, it should be put through. The regulations should be put together. The plan should be put together and it should be moved forward. We need to get it right, not just quick but right. Not just for Lake Simcoe and its residents, but for future legislation to protect other watersheds in Ontario and beyond. My colleague from Peterborough spoke to the fact that they are going to watch this very closely, because they're dealing with local lakes, they're dealing with damage to those lakes, and what's done here people in other jurisdictions will be able to point to, for good or ill. So to the parliamentary assistant of the minister I say, recognize that you're not just doing an act for Lake Simcoe; you're doing an act that will be used around the province.

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One lesson we need to draw from this whole process is that it is not just a question of addressing the local environmental impacts or even the local land use planning from this level; there are also political dimensions. In large parts of Ontario, developers have too much influence over municipal politics and elections. We need to go beyond this kind of legislation and look at how we insulate those councils from developer influence. We have to make sure that candidates can run who don't have to depend on developer dollars, so that they can act independently and so that land use decisions reflect more accurately the needs and the will of the people in an area, rather than the dollars and influence of development corporations. There are good developers; I've met them. But there are also developers who are very happy to throw their weight around, and politicians at the local level need to be insulated from them. That would change the landscape, quite literally, in Ontario.

So I'm going to wrap up and say that all of us in this House should give thanks to those folks in the Lake Simcoe area who spent hours and years pressing for action to protect Lake Simcoe and pressing to make sure that the action that was taken would have the necessary impact. We can't have simply half measures. We know that if we don't act in a substantive way on this lake, hundreds of thousands of people will be put in an impossible position with regard to their way of life and their source of water.

I think that with the support of those who fought for years, who pushed hard for change, there is the opportunity to have a very sane and practical plan for this area, and I hope that all three parties in this House take advantage of that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to say that I listened attentively to the member from Toronto—Danforth, and he certainly was very correct in saying that if you're going to save the lake, you can't just concentrate on the lake itself; you have to concentrate as much on the abutting

lands around the lake and the water sources. So land use planning and what people do around Lake Simcoe in the communities is critically important, and I think that's something that he emphasized.

The one point that I take umbrage with is that he made a point of saying that municipalities are always ahead of provincial governments when it comes to environmental protection and innovation. Well, I would say that's sometimes true, but many times it is not true, and I've seen it firsthand. It was the provincial government that instituted the Niagara Escarpment legislation. It would never have been done by the municipalities of the Niagara Escarpment, which still oppose it to this day.

If you take a look at the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, this province's Oak Ridges moraine was being carved up by all the municipalities across the Oak Ridges moraine. They were granting development rights to any developer who came before them, for the last 50 years. It was the province that brought in the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act.

Most recently, another example where a provincial government has taken leadership is the greenbelt legislation. There are many municipal leaders who still oppose the greenbelt legislation. So it's not always municipal governments that take the lead. Sure, there are cases where municipalities are innovative, but not always. That's why you need legislation like this, that is comprehensive, that gives everybody comprehensive guidelines. You can't do it one municipality at a time, because some municipalities are very progressive and some are very regressive.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Whitby—Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Sorry, Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise for a few moments and give a few comments to this bill, which is meant to restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed. This is a really important piece of legislation, of course, because it speaks to the issues that are near and dear to all of us: clean water for both recreational use and for drinking water as well. Given the fact that Lake Simcoe is the largest inland lake in Ontario excluding the great lakes, it's a great place to start these efforts. Certainly it's not something that should stop with that but is something that, I think, will establish a plan for the future in terms of the restoration of lakes in Ontario and also a blueprint of action for the future. So there are a number of things that we hope are going to come from this legislation and a plan that is going to be usable with respect to other lakes here in Ontario, and that's something that I hope we'll all have an opportunity to have some input into.

But there are some issues. Particularly, I heard the member opposite mentioning the greenbelt legislation. Of course, I understand the purpose of the greenbelt legislation, I understand what it was meant to do, but I think

the fact remains that there are many individual property rights that were not protected as a result of that. Nobody questions the need for the greenbelt, nobody is opposed to the idea of green space, but I think there has to be the science behind it, and there has to be the rationalization of those areas that are chosen for the greenbelt.

When we look at Lake Simcoe, we do need to look at the adjoining land and the uses to which the land is being put. There's no question that that has an impact, and it is nice that we're finally recognizing the significance of protecting our lands for future generations. As a parent of three children, I don't want to be in the position some day of having to say to my children, "Well, good luck with it. We did what we could to destroy it." We need to be part of the solution.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments? Member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Toronto Danforth for the arguments that were presented, wherein he talked about some positive aspects of the bill and also pointed out, like so many other environmental groups, how it can be improved. I know the Liberals always say, "Yes, we could do better." These are examples of bills where we can do better and where we can make them stronger. There's no reason why we cannot take the time, as we will when we debate the bill, to listen to other groups and see how best we could do that. Often we tend to be happy with the product that we produce rather than finding ways to make it stronger. I'm not sure why we do that. I'm not sure why we wait for another day to introduce yet another bill to deal with issues that have been raised by groups rather than dealing with them now. We do this all the time. It's particular of many political parties, specifically Liberals who like to go slow on many, many things and call them radical changes to boot.

My colleague mentions that there are ways that this bill can be improved and that it would be strengthened and could be strengthened. We would be more supportive if the government were to consider adequately covering land-based policies—policies in and beyond the watershed. He spoke on that at length.

Allowing municipalities to implement stronger standards: We saw that with the pesticides bill, where rather than saying, "We have a standard, but we permit municipalities to do better than the standard"—rather than allowing municipalities to do that, in this bill, we're saying, "No, they can't. We like to harmonize it at a lower level rather than a higher level."

We want to make sure this bill applies to all resort developments. My colleague made mention of that.

The bill can be made stronger, and we would support it if that were to be the case.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: You either get climate change, or you don't. If you don't get it, you can come up with any

number of euphemisms and other programs that essentially amount to nothing. If you do, as the government of which I'm pleased to serve does, you introduce such groundbreaking pieces of legislation as the Places to Grow Act for denser urban communities; the Clean Water Act; the source water protection act; and one that we are all proud of, that everyone in this assembly has contributed to: the Ontario greenbelt, which protects more land than the size of the province of Prince Edward Island.

This protection for Lake Simcoe is a piece of legislation that has never been more comprehensive. This is something that, taken together with the other environmental legislation put forth by our government, allows us to say to the generation that follows us and to the generations after that, "We understood the need. We addressed it from many different facets. We protected our water, we protected our air, and we protected our bodies of water."

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What we leave to the generations that come after us is an environment that's clean and, as I believe the member for Oakville said a little bit earlier, a lake so that he can look forward to saying, "In my lifetime it was as clean at the end as it was when we started"; in our lifetime, where the world for many of us will have gone from being populated by some two billion people to—around the time that many of us will approach the end of our lives—nine billion people, to say to the generations that follow us, with quadruple the population, "We have managed to clean up our air, clean up our water and to look after a body of water such as Lake Simcoe, which is a source of commerce, a source of pleasure, a source of recreation to so many of us here in the GTA."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to thank the members for Mississauga—Streetsville, Trinity—Spadina, Whitby—Oshawa and Eglinton—Lawrence for their comments. I want to go back in particular to the comments from the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. He's right; there are times when the province has taken action on things that fractured power at the municipal level has not been able to address. There are two things that I wanted to bring out here. One is that in fact it makes sense to have provincial legislation, in terms of environmental protection, be a floor. What has happened in this act is that it has become a ceiling again. I still believe that my arguments are correct, that you should set a floor and let municipalities have a higher level of protection. What you were talking about before with the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine—you set a baseline. My hope is that municipalities that felt that that baseline was not strong enough would be able to go beyond that.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think, member, that you would recognize that it's good to have those opportunities.

The other thing that comes out of what you said reinforces my point about the need to reform municipal

election finances. Too many councils and too many councillors are dependent on local developers for the funds to get elected. In this, one need not allege any corruption and just simply say that people look at where the money is coming from and they're careful, they're too careful. So you get councils that will approve any development application that comes before them.

I had an opportunity to talk to the mayor of Caledon, who is going through a difficult time with development in her area. She, I think, is a very brave person taking a tough stand, but not everyone is willing to take that on, particularly if they have to depend on developers for their election finances.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It indeed is a pleasure to spend a few moments this afternoon to give some thoughts on Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

I would be remiss if I didn't express condolences at the recent passing in Montreal of the father of the federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, and the father-in-law of the member for Whitby—Ajax—and certainly to their family.

Indeed, if you look over the last 30-plus years in the province of Ontario, a number of significant acts have come into being. I think of 1971, when Mr. Davis assumed the premiership of the province of Ontario, and his significant leadership in developing the Niagara Escarpment Commission bill. I know at that particular time, if you read some of the history, that the long-serving member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, commented over many years that if it hadn't been for the implementation of the Niagara Escarpment act, every centimetre of green space in the Niagara Peninsula would have been paved over—many advocating those municipal politicians who wanted to develop every area of land to the nth degree to increase assessment in that area. So it was a very forward-looking piece of legislation, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, that certainly governs a lot of the land use in that very important part of Ontario.

The Harris-Eves government brought in the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act. Certainly the Oak Ridges moraine does touch the southwestern boundary of the riding of Peterborough, and I know that the springs that are contained in the Oak Ridges moraine are a very important water recharge area for source water for many of the municipalities that border the Oak Ridges moraine. Again, it was a very important and significant piece of legislation to contain development in that very important area, to protect it for future generations and protect important source water for that area. That part of the eastern end of the GTA has gone through a very extensive population expansion over the last 20 to 30 years.

We built upon those two acts by bringing in the Greenbelt Act, preserving an area in Ontario the size of Prince Edward Island, again so that future generations have an area that they can enjoy and we curtail the urban sprawl which we have witnessed so often and extensively in the area of southern Ontario.

I certainly see Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, as an important extension of those other two important pieces of legislation that I just outlined. For people who are viewing our proceedings this afternoon, it's interesting, some of the statistics about the Lake Simcoe area. It's the largest inland lake other than the Great Lakes in southern Ontario. It has a surface of 744 square kilometres, basically 30 kilometres long and 25 kilometres wide. The average depth is 15 metres. Thirty-five rivers flow into Lake Simcoe, including Holland River, Black River, Beaver River, Pefferlaw River and the Uxbridge Brook—almost 4,000 kilometres of streams. The islands of Lake Simcoe are Georgina Island, Thorah Island, Strawberry Island—which is important; Pope John XXIII made a visit to Strawberry Island on his visit to Canada—Snake Island, Fox Island and Grape Island. Major settlements in the area are Orillia and Barrie. It's bordered by Simcoe county, York and Durham regions, encompassing 23 municipalities. Over 350,000 people live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, with a seasonal summer population of up to 400,000. Forty-seven per cent of the watershed's land area, approximately 2,800 square kilometres, is currently agricultural. Urban and rural development and roads make up an estimated 14% of the area. Lake Simcoe provides drinking water for eight communities and receives treated discharge from 15 sewage treatment plants.

It's an area where agriculture plays a very important role. It includes provincially significant prime agricultural areas, especially crop areas, such as the world-renowned Holland Marsh. Dominant crops in the area include lettuce, carrots, onions, celery, corn and alfalfa. Livestock production includes beef cattle, poultry and horses. Specialty farms include orchards, vineyards, wildflower, tree nurseries and turf grass operations. The annual farm production value of this area in 2006, from Statistics Canada, indicates that it generates \$300 million worth of agricultural activity in that area.

We know that it's an important tourist destination year round, with fishing, boating, cottaging and swimming, and it's an important link to the Trent-Severn waterway. I will note that there was a federal report that was just completed and released in the spring called *It's All About Water*, which looked at the future of the Trent-Severn system. Of course, the Trent-Severn system empties into Lake Simcoe and it's a very important part of that network. The recreational activities alone generate more than \$200 million a year for the local economy.

Approximately 35% of the Lake Simcoe watershed is under natural cover, woodlands and wetlands. It supports a wide range of aquatic animals, cold water fish such as lake trout, whitefish and other species.

As I said, we know that over the last number of decades, Lake Simcoe, through increased urbanization, is under a tremendous amount of pressure. Key threats to the environment, to Lake Simcoe's health, include excessive phosphorus and other pollutants. Examples are chloride, organic carbon, iron, toxic metals, organic chemicals, inorganic pesticides and pharmaceuticals.

We have noted invasive species such as the rusty crayfish, round goby and zebra mussels, which are certainly prevalent in the Kawartha Lakes system.

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We've noted that climate change has had a dramatic impact. In 2001, the Canadian Ice Fishing Championship was cancelled due to the lack of ice on Lake Simcoe for the first time in 50 years. I'll get on the record: I think the only person who doesn't believe in climate change is the Republican vice-presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, the Governor of Alaska, who candidly admitted during one interview that in Alaska climate change doesn't exist. So much for her perhaps moving into the White House after November 4. God help us all.

We've seen the loss and fragmentation of natural areas that bound the area of the habitat around Lake Simcoe. So it's important that we move forward with this very important piece of legislation, and it's one of these, I think, rare pieces of legislation where there is a real opportunity for all three parties in this House, including the independent member, to come together in unity to provide a piece of legislation and a bill that we can all be proud of and that will certainly last and have significance for generations to come.

We're certainly pleased that in June of this year the government of Ontario indicated that we would be making a \$20-million investment in the Lake Simcoe area, bringing in protection measures, assisting with scientific research and farm and other stewardship activities and working with the Lake Simcoe science advisory committee. It's certainly something that we feel is very important, that this will be an evidence-based, science-based approach that we will bring to this very important piece of legislation, something that everybody is certainly counting on as we move forward.

The campaign to save Lake Simcoe certainly has been a grassroots initiative. Two of the members of the Ladies of the Lake were in our west gallery today. As is often the case with a lot of these important measures, not only in this province but throughout our nation, there is a spark that starts through grassroots activity and grabs the attention of the elected officials at the municipal, provincial and federal levels in order to put pressure on to enact a piece of legislation, which Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, is all about.

So, as I said previously, not only is it important that we come up with a permanent, long-term strategy to protect Lake Simcoe and build on the science and work that has already been done by the province, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, municipalities, farmers and community groups, through such initiatives as the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy, but also the member who spoke previously, Mr. Tabuns, I think has hit upon a very important issue here: that as we implement Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe act, there will be many other areas of the province that will be looking at this very closely to see how successful Bill 99 will be, because it certainly can be replicated in other parts of Ontario.

As I said previously in our two minutes, in the Kawartha Lakes, which make up a large part of the great riding of Peterborough, we have some similar issues, not to the scale that they're experiencing in Lake Simcoe today, but you can certainly see down the road, through the Places to Grow legislation, that Peterborough has been acknowledged as a growth area. As people move out of the GTA and into the Peterborough, Port Hope, Cobourg and Northumberland areas, we will certainly see the need to perhaps bring in our own piece of legislation, perhaps the Kawartha Lakes protection act, down the road, to meet some of the increased pressures that we have seen.

I know that on Stony Lake, one of the most beautiful of the Kawartha Lakes, we've witnessed in the last 10 years the traditional cottages being bought up, and they've been replaced by rather large homes. When that kind of pressure occurs, people expect to have the full, urban services that they've experienced in other parts of Ontario where they've previously lived. They make the move on the lake, build a large permanent home, and increasingly, on Stony, Clear, Catchacoma, Buckhorn, Pigeon and Chemong, we've seen the cottage setting looking more and more like a traditional urban setting that we have within the city of Peterborough. With that, it puts tremendous pressure on those bodies of water.

I know from my part of Ontario, we'll be looking very carefully over the next number of years as Bill 99 gets approved in this House. The regulations associated with Bill 99 will come into effect and see the impact that it will have in arresting some of the pressures that urban sprawl has put upon Lake Simcoe. Truly, this has the opportunity to be a great partnership with the municipalities that make up Simcoe county, Barrie and Orillia. I know the minister from Orillia has been a real champion and knows full well how important this particular piece of legislation will be in her particular area.

We're looking at a number of things to create stronger protections for threatened lakes like Lake Simcoe and we're taking strong action to protect the health of Lake Simcoe. We're certainly going to raise the bar for sewage treatment standards and set strict limits on pollutants such as phosphorus. Not only do we know that phosphorus does occur naturally within ecosystems, but also the use of detergents has added additional phosphorus into our water bodies. We want to enhance protection of the watershed by building on the findings of the scientific and community planning studies that have been undertaken in recent years and create the appropriate governance structure as recommended by experts who have studied what to do—the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy working group—and to promote recreational opportunities on Lake Simcoe and protect the future of that.

We know that the values of threats associated with Lake Simcoe in many ways are unique. Lake Simcoe is the largest inland lake in southern Ontario. It has tremendous recreational value to millions of people who live within driving distance, including the province's

largest all-season fishery. It's a source of drinking water for many communities and receives waste water from many municipal treatment plants.

It's certainly important, as you look through Bill 99—some of the sections of this bill, if passed by the Legislature, would set the framework for protecting the lake by allowing the province to create the Lake Simcoe protection plan, setting out clear objectives, which are very important to the plan; setting the scope of the plan and other mechanisms for carrying it out; creating two advisory committees to oversee plan implementation; allowing the province to regulate shoreline protection in critical areas to protect water quality; allowing the province to create a water quality training and offsetting program to achieve the greatest pollution reduction for the least cost; and allowing the province to require municipalities to pass bylaws to control site alteration, topsoil removal, tree cutting, use of lawn fertilizers and pet waste. I take it, together, these are the important parts of the bill, which will allow for comprehensive protection for Lake Simcoe.

The plan will also set the priorities and targets for addressing key threats to the health of the Lake Simcoe ecosystem. Threats include excessive phosphorus and other pollutants, invasive species, climate change, loss of fragmentation of natural areas of habitat, changes to the hydraulic cycle, and human use of fish and other resources that are also potential threats. The Lake Simcoe protection plan would use a mix of mandatory and voluntary measures to achieve these targets. It would integrate with Ontario's existing frameworks for environmental protection and land use planning. This will provide protection for the lake where it needs it most, without duplicating existing protections.

Over the summer, my colleague the Minister of the Environment and his ministry had an opportunity to consult with stakeholder groups and aboriginal communities. Consultation with our aboriginal communities is very important because they have a very important stake in the health of the Lake Simcoe area. Part of our government's initiative over the last number of years, certainly since the report of Sid Linden's commission on the issues surrounding Ipperwash—one of the things that came out of that was the need to have comprehensive consultations with our aboriginal communities when any new government initiative comes forward. Certainly, on Bill 99, we'll continue to have extensive consultations with the aboriginal communities which are part of that plan.

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Other jurisdictions, of course, are using cap-and-trade systems successfully to reduce the amount of nutrients going into our water bodies. Ontario is using cap and trade to help reduce air emissions. Designed properly, water quality trading and offsetting could help reduce phosphorus loadings to this lake and other bodies in the province of Ontario, to achieve those reductions in a practical and economically feasible manner. Water quality trading would also enable the trading of pollutants other than phosphorus if necessary in the future.

Water quality trading and offsetting is a market-based approach. It sets limits on pollutants. It then allows those who have to pay more to reduce pollutants the option to pay for activities that reduce pollutants in other areas of the watershed at a lower cost until the upgrade, if necessary. The same amount of pollution is reduced, at a total cost.

The proposed legislation would allow Ontario to develop a regulation governing water quality trading and offsetting. However, regulation can't be made establishing a water quality trading and offsetting program for an area unless a report has been prepared and consulted which examines the feasibility of the program and its potential for improve water quality.

We're going to study its effectiveness as a tool in reducing phosphorous loading in Lake Simcoe. We won't develop a regulation unless we are satisfied water quality trading and offsetting is the right tool to use in this particular case. We'll have continuous consultation as we move forward with a whole variety of measures to improve the health of Lake Simcoe.

Another part of this bill that I feel is important is to regulate shoreline protection. The shoreline is indeed critical in contributing to the health of the lake and its tributaries. Through this bill, we're proposing a new regulation-making authority under the proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act to manage activities on lands near lake shorelines and tributaries near wetlands. For example, the regulation could provide additional protection for vegetative buffers around the shoreline and tributaries, something we know is extremely important. Initially, it would apply to shoreline landowners and landowners with property adjacent to tributary watercourses, including cottages, urban and rural, but not our farm community.

In July 2007, Premier McGuinty of course endorsed the working group report and committed to creating a governance structure as recommended by the working group.

I only have 10 minutes, but this is such an important piece of legislation—I know members could go on and on and on, but we feel that this is a real opportunity to protect this area for future generations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask for unanimous consent to give Mr. Leal another five minutes, as he obviously wasn't finished his remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has asked for unanimous consent to give five more minutes to the member for Peterborough. Does everyone agree? All right. The member from Peterborough, you are allowed five more minutes. Could you put five minutes on the clock, please, Clerks?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate my good friend the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for giving me the opportunity to talk on.

One of the things I think is so important and I'd like to get back to again is why this particular piece of legislation, Bill 99, will be a bill, if it's implemented correctly and through all-party support, that will become the benchmark and standard for other areas of the province to look at. I certainly commented on the Kawartha Lakes, and a lot of people in my community have contacted me and said they'll be looking very carefully at how this bill develops over the next little while to see if we can replicate some of the key components of this bill in looking at how we start to manage the Kawartha Lakes in the future. Think of the many other parts of Ontario that will really profit from the work surrounding this bill. If it goes to committee, there will be an opportunity for expert witnesses to come forward, not only people who are interested in this particular bill, but I think we'll see a rather large group of people from other parts of Ontario come forward to provide their testimony and make their presentations. Like other bills I alluded to, in terms of the evolution of protecting areas of the province—the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Oak Ridges moraine act, the Greenbelt Act—I think that from a historical perspective, when many of us have the opportunity to look back, or future generations look back, they will see this as an important watershed—pardon the pun—in Ontario's development.

One of the areas we will need to look at, of course, will be the various discharges. I'm very pleased that the government of the Ontario provided \$200,000 to the University of Guelph and to Trent University, in my hometown of Peterborough, to develop models to improve loading estimates and more accurately identify local sources of atmospheric phosphorus, quantify how much local sources contribute to total atmospheric disposition and identify opportunities to develop effective strategies to manage and control local sources of atmospheric phosphorus.

It's interesting that Professor Chris Metcalfe, who heads up the Trent University water quality branch, has been recognized internationally for his work looking at modelling and providing models to other communities, not only in Ontario and Canada but throughout the world, in terms of water management, along with the DNA cluster at Trent University in Peterborough that's certainly significantly funded by our own Ministry of Research and Innovation under the great leadership of John Wilkinson. About a year ago, the former Minister of the Environment, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, had an opportunity to visit Trent University to make a significant funding announcement for the water resources unit there to allow them to do the groundbreaking research they have been doing in the area of modelling pressures on our system.

I have about 52 seconds to sum up.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know they want to hear me go on, and I appreciate the opportunity, but I must say that I think the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, along with the greenbelt plan, the growth plan and the Oak Ridges

moraine plan, certainly has brought Ontario to the forefront of environmental protection. Look at this as a non-partisan issue, because many of these bills have been brought in by governments of other stripes, noting that we all have an important stake in protecting our environment. So as each government goes through their time, they'll keep bringing in important pieces of legislation. We see Bill 99 as an important part of that.

My friend from Trinity–Spadina is cheering me on this afternoon; that's wonderful to hear.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased rise to respond to the member from Peterborough. He raised a number of issues about how development pressures brought about by the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt legislation and the Places to Grow Act have initiated and probably moved forward the need for Bill 99. I think that's an important point to consider here, because when you passed the greenbelt legislation, when we were moving forward on some of those protections, were you thinking in terms of what was going to happen with the leapfrogging of development?

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I would question whether in fact you did think some of that through, which is why we're talking about this now. I do want to talk about the timing, however, because if you look back at our member from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, he was bringing forward a PC resolution almost two years ago, November 2006, and while I was not in the Legislature, it is my understanding that that resolution did pass. I'll just read you one of the points that he talks about: "Recognize that the protection and improvement of water quality in Lake Simcoe must be a government priority." I reiterate, this resolution passed two years ago.

So we move forward a year and the McGuinty Liberals bring forward that they would do a Lake Simcoe plan. So now we're a year away from that and we're debating Bill 99, but we still haven't seen the plan. So what I'd like to do and encourage the government to do is, let's expedite this a little bit and actually bring forward the plan so that the individuals who have been advocating so well and the grassroots organizations who have been working so hard to protect Lake Simcoe actually get to review the plan and move forward. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Peterborough made reference to experts and that he welcomes the experts who will be coming, presumably, in the second reading debate. I don't know whether you personally were inviting them or the government is going to invite experts, but I think it's a great idea, because I think that the experts will come and speak to this bill and will make recommendations about how the bill could be improved. I'm assuming that's why we're inviting the experts, not just to simply confirm what you have already

done but to help you to make the bill better. So I'm pleased that the member from Peterborough, at least one member on the other side, is receptive to that kind of possibility, that experts could enlighten him and other Liberal members of the committee and that through that experience we might find a way to make the bill better. If that is the case, I support him fully, and I'm looking forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate again and to comment on the remarks from my colleague from Peterborough. It was interesting also, as I listened to his remarks, how he picked up on some of the remarks from the member from Toronto–Danforth. It's interesting that when a piece of legislation such as this goes through and everybody seems to be—all the comments today for the most part, even through the lens of the opposition, whose job it is to find areas where the bill may be improved—even if you look through that lens, there's a very positive attitude about this whole bill, I think, from all parties, that everybody thinks we should move forward on it. And it was interesting to watch one member build upon the ideas of another member. The member from Toronto–Danforth was talking about some of the learnings that we may be able to incorporate province-wide from what we learn about Lake Simcoe and what sort of stuff comes out of that and what works and what doesn't, and what the plan eventually looks like, should be able to be applied to the province at large. If you look at some of the major things that we've been able to do as a government—and previous governments before us—things like the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine wouldn't have been protected in past because society had a much different attitude about the environment. I think politicians have caught up to the people, to the public sentiment on that. Certainly in my own town of Oakville we went through a really bad time with algae. We formed a little citizens' group. There was a lot of technical expertise on that group. They were called the Lake Ontario Shoreline Algae Action Advisory Committee, and I learned more about algae than I really ever wanted to know. It's interesting how you just sort of get immersed in things like zebra mussels, clarity, filtering the water, sunlight getting to places it had never gotten to before. I'm hoping that what comes out of Lake Simcoe we can apply in communities like my own of Oakville and we can apply it in other areas around the province and make the whole province a better place to live.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: During his presentation, the member from Peterborough yet again, as have others, made reference to pressures of population growth—the member from Toronto–Danforth talked about that as well and the impact that will have on phosphorus-loading in the tributaries and Lake Simcoe itself. We do recognize that there are many, many other impacts of population

growth. I don't know whether this legislation or the attendant regulation will be up to the job to control population growth.

I think it's a given: The people are coming anyway. We're looking at something like 600,000 people living in this area in 2021—more traffic congestion, more air pollution, more noise. There is not a regional transit system. People no longer go to that lodge on Lake Simcoe by train or by steamer, as they did in the days of Stephen Leacock—and obviously a demand for, a request for additional recreational resources.

But in the context of this legislation, it is a given that with that many people joining the 350,000 other people in that watershed, it's going to have a very negative impact on the water quality, the quality of surface water, and the streams, the tributaries, the lake itself, a negative impact—this is a given—on groundwater, not only the quality of groundwater but also the quantity of groundwater. The woodlands—trees will be cut down. I think of that old saw: What's the difference between an environmentalist and a developer? A developer wants to build a house in the woods. An environmentalist already lives in a house in the woods. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response? The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I will take the moment just to correct Hansard. When I was expressing condolences, it was the mother of federal Finance Minister Flaherty who passed away and the mother-in-law of our member from Oshawa–Whitby.

I want to thank the members from Dufferin–Caledon, Trinity–Spadina, Oakville and Haldimand–Norfolk for their comments. There's an interesting number of supportive quotes with regard to the introduction of Bill 99. I've got a moment so I'll just put a couple on the record.

“The introduction to this act demonstrates the province hears Lake Simcoe's cries for help. Now we need to come together to help this wonderful lake, the lands that flow into it, and the people who live here, to ensure all become in sync environmentally.” That was from Annabel Slight, the cofounder of Ladies of the Lake, in a Campaign Lake Simcoe press release dated June 17, 2008.

“A new day is dawning for Lake Simcoe. This act is very positive and we look forward to working with the government over the next nine months to make the forthcoming protection plan as strong as possible.” That quote is from Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence, in a release he made on June 17, 2008.

“The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition was created specifically to bring people and government together to work on solutions for an ailing lake. We have done it, and today I couldn't be more proud of the province and the citizens of Lake Simcoe.” This quote is from Robert Eisenberg, who is the founding chair of the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition.

Another quote: “We are pleased that the Ontario government has recognized the importance of integrated

watershed planning to ensure sustainable development within the Lake Simcoe watershed. This approach takes into consideration all the activities taking place on the land which may impact the lake itself.” That was from Don Pearson, the general manager of Conservation Ontario. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate. The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have not as much personal experience with Lake Simcoe as obviously my colleague Mr. Dunlop has, and some of the other members of this Legislature whose constituencies represent part of this lake. But I do know that Lake Simcoe is a very, very vulnerable lake, primarily because it is relatively shallow, and therefore the body of water reacts perhaps quicker to foreign substances, toxic substances, phosphorus, as had been mentioned before, than perhaps a larger body of water would.

I'm interested in this bill and the approach of the government on this particular bill, which I would put forward as a bill which sets out a consistent plan for a large area of our province—which crosses municipal boundaries—in a much better fashion than I think it did for, for instance, the greenbelt legislation. That is because it has defined what it's trying to do with regard to the protection of this, and has set up a more consistent structure, rather than coming down with a plan without, in some cases, justification for what they've done in that plan. Therefore, I think that this plan overall will sell better to the public when it hits the ground.

1640

Now, I believe very strongly in this kind of legislation, and I supported the Oak Ridges moraine legislation very much under the former Mike Harris government. As a minister, going way back to 1983, when I was in Bill Davis's cabinet, I was given responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment act and plan, which had not been implemented at that time, but I was very instrumental in bringing the final plan to fruition in the spring of 1985. In fact, in the transfer of power from the Miller government to the Peterson government, I was able to have the incoming government agree to implement that plan in June, just before they took power on June 26, because of the fact that at that time we, the previous government, had worked so hard, so long, that even the incoming government, the Peterson government, to their credit saw that it was not necessary; it would probably stall the implementation of the plan if it didn't go ahead under the former government.

But I do want to say the member for Eglinton–Lawrence made a good response with regard to the comment about giving municipalities more power in this particular piece of legislation, because my experience with the Niagara Escarpment plan was that we needed consistent regulation of the planning area, all the way from Tobermory down to Queenston in Niagara, along

the—I forget whether it's 200 or 400 kilometres of escarpment. But essentially, the need for that, and the need for consistent planning and rules all the way around Lake Simcoe and all of those tributaries to it, is indeed, drawn by fairness. It seems to me we could all agree that it would be unfair to all the rest by allowing one municipality indiscriminate development, indiscriminate use of the shore land and that kind of thing in order to gain, perhaps, property tax revenue for their small municipality. As we went through the process with the Niagara Escarpment, we found the same thing. The government said, way back in the early 1970s, "We will have a Niagara Escarpment Protection Act," which defined what the government was trying to protect on the Niagara Escarpment. When you were trying to implement this, draw lines as to the restrictions on the use of land within that Niagara Escarpment area, you at least had a piece of legislation to rely on and answer back to the property owner, answer back to the municipality that might want to attract development which wouldn't be for the good of the whole escarpment: "No, you have to live with the fact that you have the escarpment in your area, and you've got to follow the same rules all the way up and down the escarpment," all of the municipalities—I think there were five counties or regions involved in Niagara Escarpment area. Now, I don't know all of the municipalities or all of the counties involved here, but I would imagine there are probably three or four counties and a whole number of municipalities. So I support very strongly the concept of what is being done here.

Under the Niagara Escarpment process as we went through it, there were a series of stages where people could appeal what was happening to them in terms of the restriction of the use of their land. Perhaps we don't need it as much in this piece of legislation as we would have in that piece of legislation, in that this kind of effort on the part of the government now is probably into its fourth or fifth phase, you know, having gone through the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt, the Niagara Escarpment. But part of the problem that the public faced, the property owner who has a piece of property in this area, is, how does he or she question the designated use of their piece of property that has come down from the experts? I would hope that the Lake Simcoe coordinating committee would have some say in that. This is included in section 18 of the bill, and I note in section 18—or sections 18 and 19, I believe. But under section 19, they outline what the committee shall do. Some of its duties are to:

"i. coordinate implementation of the Lake Simcoe protection plan, and

"ii. identify and resolve issues that arise in relation to the implementation of the Lake Simcoe protection plan."

I don't know what that power means or how they give effect to that power to resolve those disputes. Is there going to be a hearing? There could be conflicts with regard to individual property owners. There could be conflicts with regard to what a municipality wanted to do

with that particular piece of property or part of that property.

I did find, when reviewing the designation of lands in the Niagara Escarpment, and I was minister at the time, that there were situations where boundaries had been drawn too narrowly; in other words, where the Niagara Escarpment plan should increase its area in scope for better protection. And I did find areas where there were lines painted on a map which couldn't really be justified in terms of protecting that land and preventing a municipality from having that land developed and thereby attracting additional development to their area. So I don't know whether or not the coordinating committee has that like power or if there is any thought to drawing up some kind of process where either citizens or municipalities can go to them and be involved.

I also don't know whether this protection committee is going to have an administration or whether or not they are purely going to have meetings every so often and talk about the plan after it's implemented.

So there are some unanswered questions in this bill, and I look forward to the minister, either in the committee or in this Legislature, informing us about that.

Another section of the bill which draws some questions for the municipalities involved is section 7, which requires municipalities to conform to the plan. We know from previous orders, from legislation and regulations from the province under the planning acts which supersede or go over local planning, that if the province comes in and does that and asks the municipality to conform to the provincial plan, if you want to put it that way, or the Simcoe plan, then there should be some financial help to the municipalities that are affected to conform in terms of their official plan, which is the large plan for the municipality in terms of development, and also to help them re-draw their zoning bylaws to conform to this plan as well.

I don't believe that the province should have the right to go in, under this bill or any other bill, and say to municipalities, "We're coming in with a new regime, a new planning process for you, and we're going to tell you that you must restrict the use of your land in this particular area one way, but we're expecting you and the property taxpayers of your municipality to pick up the tab for that planning process that must follow."

1650

As any of us in this Legislature know who represent municipalities, and we all do, that can be a very lengthy and expensive process. Planners don't come inexpensively and, of course, there is a great deal of public consultation which usually ensues and results from that kind of endeavour.

I also noticed that in the plan there is a statement under section 6 that says that if there is conflict between the policy set out in the Lake Simcoe watershed plan and a whole number of other acts, a policy statement issued under section 3 of the Planning Act, the Greenbelt Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Act, the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, a plan or policy made under

the provision of an act that is prescribed by regulations, a plan or a policy prescribed by regulations—it's sort of written backwards and forwards, but it says basically that the provision that provides the greatest protection to the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed would prevail.

I understand the intent of that, and I perhaps agree with the intent of that. My question is, who's going to make the decision as to what provision prevails under all of these different kinds of conflicts that could arise? Is a minister going to give an order and say, "In this case, the Greenbelt Act prevails?" or he might say the Lake Simcoe watershed act prevails. How quickly will that response come once the question is asked? If you have two different sections saying you can use land in two different ways, then what would prevail?

I guess the other part, and the beauty of the Niagara protection act, in my view—not in the view of some of my colleagues—is that under the Niagara Escarpment Protection Act, a commission was set up that was given the power to issue building permits in the Niagara Escarpment protected area. That allowed a person who had, for instance, a residence to be able to make minor changes to that residence without having to go through a great deal of difficulty to get a building permit to go ahead and do that.

Part of the problem when you set up these greater planning agencies and these greater structures that are going to be here on this committee is, what happens in the case when someone needs a very minor change to the use of their land, and how do they go about getting that? Under the present structure they would just go to the municipality and the municipality would have them go through the committee of adjustments and get a small, minor change so that they could extend their garage another two feet or whatever the minor thing is.

The problem with not having any kind of structure to deal with those particular matters is, it leads to a general hostility in the public if that story comes to light. The Niagara Escarpment Commission in its initial stages was refusing even very minor requests—if someone wanted to put a new chimney on their house and one of the commission people objected that it might harm the landscape of the Niagara Escarpment or something like this. But if you don't have some way of dealing with those very minor issues with regard to an overall plan and being able to resolve them in a fairly practical way, you will lead to stories in the local press about how onerous and burdensome this plan is to all of the people who live around Lake Simcoe. Therefore it attacks the general thrust of it, which, of course, is necessary and good in my opinion. So I put those remarks forward in terms of the experience that I lived every day with regard to the Niagara Escarpment plan and was responsible for.

I will say this, and I think the member for Eglinton—Lawrence is right: This plan is necessary, and consistency in the plan is necessary as well. I don't think that you want, all the way around Lake Simcoe, different requirements of landowners if they live in one township

or the next. There's got to be consistency up and around all of that lakeshore and on the islands that are on Lake Simcoe as well. Overall, we're concerned about the general health of Lake Simcoe, and everybody has to be part of this. It can't be unfair to one landowner versus another landowner. Notwithstanding that some municipalities might want more regulation or less regulation for political purposes, you still have to be concerned with the rights of the individual landowner as well. They do have rights, and we have to be consistent with them with regard to what they can do with their land wherever that's located on this particular beautiful lake that we have in our province.

I think this is a good first look at this. I hope the minister will respond in some way to some of the issues that I have raised either privately or to this Legislature so that we can go into the committee hearings and talk about this legislation in a greater fashion.

I would also say at the very end of these remarks that while some members of this Legislature would like even more restriction or huge restrictions on this, the way to make this legislation successful, in my humble opinion, is to have it be somewhat practical with the communities that are already in existence. We have to buy them in. We have to buy Barrie in. We have to buy in the other municipalities that are involved, close to the lake. We have to say to them, "This legislation is clear. It's going to help improve your lake." But we have to be practical as well as to how we implement this law and allow them to have their say before we put the final dots on the i's and crosses on the t's to make certain we can buy them in and the other people who live around the lake as well. I'm sure they will all be supportive of this in the final analysis.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes making some comments about Bill 99. We've heard over and over again from speakers from all sides of the House that we as a government need to show some initiative. I couldn't help but think that when we were dealing with the greenbelt legislation two or three years ago, the sky was going to fall in. Well, lo and behold, the legislation was passed; it's implemented. In some cases, it mirrors the Oak Ridges moraine legislation that the previous government introduced and passed to protect some of those natural resources that we have. What's happening now is that municipalities are coming forward saying, "We want to participate in the greenbelt." The minister put out a process so that municipalities could move those yardsticks forward. I just use that as a comparison, that we in this House in a non-partisan way all care about the environment we live in, and we need to protect it. In Ontario and indeed in Canada, we still have that awesome opportunity to do something about it, so I look forward to that.

I just want to spend a couple of minutes, or the rest of my time here, talking about some of these issues that I think across the province—same as with the greenbelt—

people are going to be looking at. How can we make it better?

1700

I refer to my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West and my own municipality of Brighton. We have beautiful Presqu'île park. It's a real jewel, but on the east shore, with about 150 residents, there were at one time cottages, maybe used a couple weeks of the year, and now half of them are beautiful estate homes where, I hate to say, their septic tank might still be a 45-gallon drum, because they were never changed. That's probably not uncommon. So I think that, as this evolves, we'll be able to put regulations in place, which, I think, municipalities, frankly, are going to welcome, because it's going to give them some power to help them protect the environment—not just here, but right across the province. I think this a really good step forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to comment on our colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills because he did make reference to the fact that he implemented the Niagara Escarpment plan. I'm pleased that he talked about that because, in Dufferin–Caledon, it is very much a part of what Dufferin–Caledon is, and with very few exceptions, it is considered a jewel in my riding. As many of the members know, UNESCO designated it a world biosphere reserve in 1990, I believe it was. As I say, it defines what has become the county of Dufferin, the town of Caledon. So I like the comparison.

I want to reiterate that the reason we are talking about Bill 99 is because the greenbelt has led to some of this leapfrogging and it has caused the development problems and the pressures to come sooner to areas like my riding in Dufferin–Caledon and, of course, around Lake Simcoe. I hope that the plan, once we have an opportunity to see it and review it, becomes part of the process that the public input can be part of, because as the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills rightly pointed out, there are good and positive ways to bring forward these plans that encompass large parts of the province. There are situations—I would venture to add that the greenbelt is one of them—where it was not as well thought out and could have been implemented in a more positive way for both the municipalities and the land-owners.

I also would like to comment and add my thought that there is assistance going to be necessary for the planning of implementing this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Response? The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I appreciate the comments of my colleague, who has experience—Ms. Jones from Dufferin–Caledon. I know that that area, the Niagara Escarpment, is less prominent than it is in some of the other areas of our province. I think her constituents' acceptance of the restrictions with regard to their land use in her area probably would have greater objection than

anywhere else. So I'm so happy to hear that they have accepted it because the escarpment is buried in that area, for a good part of it, in Mono township and other areas. But it does show that if people are convinced of the need to preserve a piece of our heritage into the future and there is a reasonable approach, they will accept it. Therefore, I believe that that adds great credence to the fact that governments can do this if they are careful, they are thoughtful and they listen to the people who are affected.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just wanted to take a minute to simply say that the member for Toronto–Danforth covered this theme more than adequately and more than competently. He put on the table things that we agree with and things that we disagree with. All I want to say is that that is enough for me, at least, and I wanted to indicate that. I'm looking forward to this bill going into committee, looking forward to having many experts come to speak to it and looking forward to positive improvements of the bill on the basis that maybe people are going to come and propose changes that I hope Liberals will support. So I'm looking forward to that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As always, our friend from Trinity–Spadina has contributed greatly to the debate in this chamber. I know that he will throughout the debate, and I'm sure at committee and in third reading, provide us with so many detailed suggestions to improve this piece of legislation. Usually, he talks to us about education in the province of Ontario, and I would like to know, based on his hard work on this piece of legislation, how he thinks we can best educate Ontario's students on conservation and the environment. I'm sure he has some ideas on how we can best do that here in Ontario, and he could provide some sound advice to the Minister of Education on this issue as it pertains, of course, to the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

I might add, as I do have the floor for another minute, that this piece of legislation was first brought about—the awareness, of course—by the member from Simcoe North, our good friend and colleague Garfield Dunlop. As I mentioned previously, he has been a tremendous champion, a steward and a protector of Lake Simcoe. He believes that it's important for the next generations that this is protected. I know that my good colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills—and I can hardly wait to touch on, when I have my full 20 minutes, the wonderful things he was able to do as environment minister of this great province, and of course, some of the great accomplishments of the previous Progressive Conservative administrations have been the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine.

Of course, we're all very proud too of our federal counterparts who are investing so much money into the sewage spill in Ottawa, and we're still waiting for the provincial government to step up to the plate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I thought at first when he got up and it was only a few moments that he was just doing a point of order or something like that. I can't believe that was actually your 20-minute rotation.

I listened carefully to your colleague's comments as well. No question, he looked at—and you said that you agree with most of what he had brought forward.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I did.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I think what's important is that he put up a few cautions, and we agree with that too. That's what we expect to hear when we get to committee. I don't think we can rush the bill too much even into committee because, more than anything, I know this expert panel is out there working. They've had a number of meetings. They're identifying issues. Of course, they've already been appointed.

I think one of the key things we have to be concerned about is that we don't get everything all approved, and then not know what's actually in the plan so we can't debate the plan as well. In the end, we want to have some control over what's in that plan. It's nice to have the expertise. It's nice to have lots of opinions from an assorted group of stakeholders across the province, but in the end we have to decide what's best for the citizens of the province of Ontario because we're the ones who were elected to do so right here. I don't want it to be just a carte blanche plan, but I think in the end we need to make sure that what is there for the general public is something that is accepted everywhere, and of course we want to make sure that it's environmentally sound for many generations and for our residents of Ontario for years ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I didn't want to miss the opportunity to say and have it on the record that I agree with Mr. Marchese. It isn't very often. It always seems that when he's speaking and when he's giving us his sage advice, I'm in the chair and I don't have that kind of opportunity. So to Mr. Marchese I wanted to give that.

1710

Also, I wanted to point out that it's interesting: It appears as though we all pretty much agree today with Bill 99, at least the objectives of Bill 99. I used to have a saying in my office, when I was back in business, that if we both agree, then one of us isn't necessary. I don't know that that holds true in this place, because it isn't often that we all agree. It's kind of refreshing when we do, particularly when it's on a subject such as this. I can remember when the Ladies of the Lake came to visit us, and how much work has been done by those residents and those people who are interested in Lake Simcoe and its health.

I look forward to the rest of the debate on this bill that there may be, and of course when it goes to committee that there will be some added value to the bill at that time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thanks very much, Speaker. I'm happy as well to have an opportunity to make comments on the comments of the member from Trinity–Spadina, but also, as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to speak to the importance of this bill and its impact and the opportunity that the agriculture committee will have, as this bill moves through the legislative process, to ensure that the issues of the agriculture industry are considered in this legislation.

Certainly, this government has a history of paying very close attention to the issues that are raised by that sector. The agriculture sector in the Lake Simcoe region is significant indeed. In fact, over \$300 million of revenues are generated from the agriculture sector. I think anyone who drives north of Toronto through that beautiful, dark, rich Holland Landing soil is impressed and realizes how blessed we are to have such a pocket of rich agricultural land so close to an urban setting. I know that the agriculture community in the Lake Simcoe region has played an integral role in protecting the environment in that region, and I know that they will be very eager to do all they can to also share their expertise in terms of sound environmental practices so that, going forward, this lake will continue to be the jewel that it is and it will, in my view, experience even better environmental health. We hear that it is improving, but we do need to do more. I believe that the agriculture community will play an integral role in improving the quality of Lake Simcoe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Response, member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm just so delighted that in one minute of debate I was able to generate eight minutes of responses. That is unique in my experience in this Legislature. I should do this more often.

I just want to thank the member from Simcoe North for responding, the member from Caledon—God bless—the Minister of Agriculture and the member from Essex. All I said was, “Let's refer to this committee and let's listen to the experts,” but that's okay.

To the member from Essex, I do want to say that I didn't completely agree with the bill. I did say that there were some issues that we want to put on the table in order to be able to improve the bill, and I'm eager to see the experts come to committee so that we could hear from them with a view to strengthening this bill. I'm hoping that will happen. I remind my colleague from Essex, for the record, that I did put some issues that we hope can be improved upon. These are that the bill eventually will adequately cover land-based policies in and beyond the watershed; that the bill, through the amendments, will allow municipalities to implement stronger standards where they wish to do so; that the bill applies to all resort development, and that includes no grandfathering of development projects that do not have final approvals and permits; and that we prohibit significant shoreline alterations or the grandfathering of such. So we make these suggestions, and we hope the member from

Essex takes them to heart and that perhaps we can strengthen this bill by looking at some of the suggestions that my colleague from Toronto–Danforth has made. We are not in complete agreement, we want to make the bill stronger, and so we hope that debate in committee will allow us to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I don't think my 20 minutes will engender as much response as the member from Trinity–Spadina. It's a hard act to follow. But I think there are some things worth saying. First of all, I would hope that the minister would make available to all members a map of Lake Simcoe. If we're dealing with an important body of water that many of us know little about, it would be very helpful in the future if, when we do get information from a ministry, all members of the House would be able to see a map of the lake so we can familiarize ourselves with this great part of Ontario. I'm certainly going to tell the minister personally, and also the parliamentary secretary. That would be very helpful.

Just in terms of Lake Simcoe, the interesting thing, if you look at the map that I just got from the library here from one of the pages, it's typical of much of Ontario, where no body of water is really unto itself; it's all interconnected through aquifers, through all kinds of feeder springs and so forth. If you look at Lake Simcoe, it's not that far away from the Kawartha Lakes. As the member from Peterborough was saying, if you are going to be concerned about Simcoe and the health of Simcoe, it's going to also impact, in a positive way, on the health of the adjoining bodies of water like Balsam Lake and Dalrymple Lake, and so you're almost into the Kawarthas. This is the critical point that I think has to be made: All these bodies of water—and Simcoe is no different—really connect and are connected to the health of the ecosystems in the basin and surrounding area.

That's why this plan is going to look at a comprehensive land use approach to ensure that all the abutting municipalities etc. are part of this plan, because whatever they do in terms of sewage treatment, whatever they do with runoff of phosphorus, how they deal with their land use approvals, all has to be now—hopefully, if this bill is passed—taken into account for the lake to be healthy. I think the approach that has been taken is one that has been proven successful in the past.

We've heard about the Niagara Escarpment approach. If you look at the Niagara Escarpment, one of the reasons why we have the Niagara region, one of the premier grape-growing regions of the world, is the fact that we have the escarpment, which is protected. If you didn't have the Niagara Escarpment protection, that incredibly valuable part of tender fruit- and grape-growing area of the Niagara region would probably not be there. Some of the best grapes in the world now are grown right here in Ontario, on the bench of the escarpment, because the escarpment was protected. It's critical to make that linkage, because if we protect land that's sensitive and protect water, we protect industry. So therefore, we've

got all these jobs, we've got all this notoriety now for our grapes in Ontario, because we protected that land, and that's why we have such a thriving wine industry. I think we have over 120 wineries now in the Niagara region. We have now about 15 in Prince Edward county. We've got them now going out towards the Adolphus Reach, towards Bath and Kingston, Pelee Island, Essex, the fine wines of Leamington and area. When you protect water sources, you protect land and you also protect future industries, especially in agriculture.

As you know, just to mention agriculture for one second, one of the things that I've always said we should do in Ontario is that we should do what they're doing in many European countries, where they designate certain regions of a province as agri-tourism areas. If you go to that area, the food that you eat, the wine that you drink, the apples that you eat, the cheeses, the bed-and-breakfasts, the hotels all get designated as a local agri-tourism area so that people learn about the incredible, valuable natural products grown in that area and the hospitality, the history of food, whether it's cheese-making, wine-making or growing of certain crops. You get this designation as an agri-tourism area.

1720

It would be wonderful to designate Niagara as an agri-tourism area. The Stratford area, Huron-Bruce and Prince Edward county could be designated as agri-tourism areas. It brings incredible amounts of international tourism because we do have international fame now for many of our beautiful, natural, eco-sensitive foods that we have here in Ontario.

In this act, the one thing to remember too is that these types of comprehensive land use restrictions or land use plans are sometimes painful. In other words, we all want to do the right thing environmentally and we all want to save our planet from global warming, but it's not done without pain and suffering. It's not easy all of a sudden to reduce your carbon footprint. All of us are going to have to reduce our carbon footprint. I think you can see there are signs of it with people eating more local food. We can't keep importing food from China, importing food from all over the world. We have to eat more local products. We all benefit. Sometimes we have to go out of our way to do that. We have to maybe start eating some local squash or local beets or cabbage, but that is the type of thing we have to do to reduce our carbon footprint.

We have to start driving our cars less. Today is International Car-Free Day. That is one of the reasons I took the subway today. If the mayor of Mississauga, at 87 years of age, can take a bike seven kilometres to work, why can't we? That's why I'm saying there is a bit of pain and suffering sometimes. We have to go out of our way to reduce our carbon footprint. I really applaud the mayor of Mississauga for doing that today, for leading by example. It's the type of thing that has to be done for us to really make a change.

So in terms of the way we do things in Lake Simcoe, there is going to have to be a change, and it can't be busi-

ness as usual. You can't keep thinking of a lake as a bottomless pit. A lake is a living organism. We can't keep building monster cottages and homes on every square inch of the shores of Lake Simcoe—we can't continue to do that. We've got to keep some of the natural shoreline. It's interesting to note that earlier this summer we had the death of many of the carp in a number of bodies of water in southern Ontario. But if you notice, it wasn't just Lake Simcoe that had this problem. There was a series of bodies of water that had these dead carp. That was Sparrow Lake, Lake Couchiching, Dalrymple Lake, Young Lake, Rice Lake, the Trent River. It just demonstrates that all these bodies of water are connected. So if there is some kind of ecological challenge in one lake, more than likely it will impact on adjoining bodies of water. It goes back to my original point about how all our lakes are interconnected. Maybe many of us who live in the city weren't aware of this, but that was quite a scary thing to see these giant—these carp were almost the size of a giant garbage bag. They were dying. They'd never been seen before that large, but they came up on shore. There were hundreds of them that died because of a virus, and they're still trying to figure out exactly what it was.

These are the kinds of things that could happen to any one of our bodies of water if we don't do our due diligence to ensure that the runoff of phosphorus and all these sewage spills that occur up in Ottawa—there's billions of litres of water spewed into the Ottawa River. Petrie Island was surrounded with this for the whole summer. It's because many of us do not take the time to do our due diligence to ensure that there is protection. But protection comes with a cost and a price, and we're going to have to change some of our ways. We're going to have to be a lot stricter in terms of what we do as human beings and what our carbon footprint is, and if we don't do that—we can pass all the legislation we want, but there has to be a change in approach. This legislation really sets up a framework for this change of approach.

I've said before—and the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills mentioned it too—how the Niagara Escarpment legislation was set up. Many people to this day opposed the fact that it's too stringent, but that's what you have to do in order to protect things for the long run. You have to have provincial intervention to give people benchmarks of protection.

A few people mentioned the Oak Ridges moraine act, another piece of legislation that's very significant. I remember when I first introduced the Oak Ridges moraine legislation in this House. Most people had never even heard of the Oak Ridges moraine. They said, "Where is that marina up there?" They didn't know what a moraine was. It took me about five years and I finally convinced the public—I had to walk the moraine twice to show people how important it was to protect this moraine. But we eventually encouraged the government of the day to pass a version of the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, which had to be done, or else we would

have had wall-to-wall sprawl, cookie-cutter homes, all the way from Pefferlaw to Snowball to the Kawartha Highlands and on and on. Anyway, that's the type of thing that can be done with good, intelligent, scientific legislation.

If you look again at the communities that surround Lake Simcoe, if you look at Barrie—when people look at the list of cities in Canada and Ontario, I think Barrie probably is about the 10th largest city in population in Canada. I remember not too long ago that Barrie used to be 30,000 people. Barrie is now one of Canada's great big cities. It is right on the shore of Lake Simcoe. So you wonder why Lake Simcoe is in a very tenuous state? Well, it could be because of this incredible growth that's taken place around Lake Simcoe, and Barrie is one example of an immensely fast-growing situation that's impacted on the life and viability of Lake Simcoe. And all around the south end—if you go through Keswick, Sutton, and Jackson's Point, at one time they were small; as the member from Peterborough said, there used to be mom-and-pop cottages down there by Roaches Point and Keswick. Now you have huge subdivisions and you've got, again, mammoth homes that are also impacting on the viability of that lake.

That kind of pressure on Lake Simcoe is enormous. One of the reasons why it's so enormous is because it's within an hour's drive from a population base of probably about four million people. People go in throngs to Lake Simcoe. Every weekend it is literally steaming with people. But somehow many parts of the lake are still extremely natural, extremely attractive, and there is great hope to protect it, because there have been a number of people who have gone out of their way—we all know about the Ladies of the Lake. We all know that there are many different proactive groups that have tried to say, "Do something to save this lake before it essentially loses all life." But now we have awareness, we have this framework legislation here that's really just the beginning. This legislation is not going to mean that the carbon footprint for Lake Simcoe is going to be reduced overnight. It really sets in motion a comprehensive plan where over the next decade there's going to be a systematic approach to ensure that sewage runoff, that the septic systems—you know, as they do their studies, it would be interesting to know how many septic systems are abutting onto Lake Simcoe and how many of them are up to standard. That's the kind of analysis that has to be done to ensure that if there are septic systems, they are—you know, we've all seen that before, where there should be a setback from water. They shouldn't be leaking. But you can just imagine: People have been living in the Lake Simcoe area for 200 years, and the condition of the septic systems, what state they are in would be very interesting. But these are the types of things.

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So the municipalities, the conservation authorities, the agricultural community, the naturalists, everybody will have a role to play in assessing the problem and finding out what the remedies are. The good news is that we are

very fortunate that most Ontarians are really beginning to be eco-conscious. In other words, they, like many of us here, know they have to do better, and they want to do better. They don't have to be forced to do it. They really just want to know what the proper way of proceeding is. So that's what the role of these frameworks will be: to demonstrate to people to, instead of taking the hazardous approach, take the environmentally friendly approach. You can do that. Instead of using soap that has phosphorus in it—you don't have to go up to your cottage and bring your laundry and bring your washing machines up to your cottage. Use less soap.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: But I'm just saying that most of us sometimes forget that we are using too many chemicals that eventually end up in the water table, in the aquifers and then end up in the lake. Whether it's fish or plant life, they can't survive if we continue to go about these very haphazard activities without thinking of the long-range consequences.

This lake is, as many people have said, a jewel in southern Ontario. I know somebody mentioned that there is Lake Superior. Lake Superior is an incredible body of water. I think someone told me that if you emptied Lake Superior you could cover all of North America one foot deep. That's how much water there is in Lake Superior. We as Ontarians are stewards of Lake Superior. We are stewards of Lake Simcoe, but Simcoe is a fairly shallow lake. I think its deepest point is 150 feet. It is not a deep lake. But it is a very unique lake because in essence it's almost in the urban envelope now. If we can save and if we can protect Lake Simcoe, it will be a real credit to the people of Ontario because it demonstrates that human habitation, agricultural activities and commercial activities can be copacetic if there is a good plan and if people are educated on what to do. Whether it's industry or commerce or whether it's the ice fishing that goes on—people come from all over North America to ice fish on Lake Simcoe ice. Many Americans have been coming there since World War II to ice fish on Lake Simcoe. You can imagine in 2001 when they had to cancel the international ice fishing championships because there was no ice. Can you believe that, Minister McMeekin? You go to Lake Simcoe and there was no ice. In fact, many of you, like the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, know that at one time the ice from Lake Simcoe would be put into barns under hay and would be kept all winter, all summer, and that's where we would get our ice. There was a big company here in Toronto called Lake Simcoe Ice. That was ice cut out of Lake Simcoe. But in 2001, there was no ice in Lake Simcoe. If that wasn't a wake-up call for all of us, it certainly, I think, alerted the local residents that something had to be done because climate change is here. We're going to be judged not on whether or not we can stop it but on whether we care enough to try to make sure the impacts are minimized as much as possible. I want to thank everybody for listening. This is a piece of legislation that, I think, is the

legacy of what Ontario has been doing for many decades. Let's protect it and protect our future legacy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the brief opportunity I have at this particular time to speak to this bill. As someone who has represented the area since 1995 and has lived there for 36 years, I've had the opportunity to see the many, many changes that have taken place in the area that this bill is designed to look at. I think that there are some key issues that people need to understand, and one of them is the very complex jurisdiction. You're looking at county governments, you're looking at regional governments, you're looking at many, many municipalities, as well as city governments. So it has always been a very complex issue and obviously people looked at the fact that they had jurisdiction over a very small part. I would say that, at one time, the conservation authority actually only had jurisdiction over half the lake. So it's part of a process, then, that has gone on for many years to be able to move to this point.

But today, what we are looking at is obviously the work of many, many volunteers and many organizations that have come together and put the pressure on government to look at how we might move forward. As I said, I have the opportunity to speak further. I only wanted to be on the record today to indicate to you how complex—and the fact that we've layered things like the greenbelt, the IGAP process, the Places to Grow, so you have all these layers, water-taking and water resources, nutrient management. There are about four or five pieces of legislation that have all been layered on top of this area, and that really is part of the challenge that we must face in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just to comment, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence did pick up on and continued a theme that I've been hearing this afternoon with respect to population growth and its impact on that particular area on that watershed. Of course, many presenters have talked about phosphorus loading and also the need to manage projected population growth going up to something like 600,000 people by the year 2021. I guess the elephant in the room that this legislation wouldn't deal with is how to slow down that growth or how to stop that growth. There seems to be an assumption that those large numbers of people are coming up to the watershed anyway and that will bring us the accompanying decline in air quality and water quality and noise and everything else that goes with it.

Secondly, as the human population increases, we will see a decline in the population of other species. Farmland will be bought up. There will continue to be a decline in farming and the number of farmers. We'll see more flooding, and as a result, more municipal overflows of sewage into the water that we're talking about protecting here. There are some estimates, and much of the growth will be Barrie and Orillia, the towns of Aurora, Bradford, Keswick, Innisfil, Newmarket and Queensville, and as I

indicated, 600,000 people. Is this legislation enough, will the attendant regulations be enough, to deal with a massive increase in population like that, or is there an alternative approach?

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Once again, I take the opportunity to comment on Bill 99. I think we've heard over and over again the benefits that this is going to have, not just to the issue at hand, Lake Simcoe, but the ramifications across the province. I think once we have something working in an area—I mean, this is something that we'll be able to use as a tool. I made reference to Presqu'île Provincial Park in my riding, which has a residential component—about 150 lots; some of them are permanent homes, probably half or better. That was back 50 or 60 years ago.

The other area that I want to talk about—and I share this area, the south side of Rice Lake, and on the north side is my good friend from Peterborough. Basically the same conditions apply there. It's a very restricted land mass, where there are some buildings. More so in Rice Lake, there is more of a resort and fishing camps, where those systems are taxed a little bit more and used a little bit more than the residential ones. I know that in the five years that I've had the opportunity to represent that area in my riding, there's the odd issue that comes up, like quality of water and some other issues. We're very fortunate in Rice Lake because it's a very, very clean lake. It has a good fishing industry. It's the livelihood of a lot of people and it attracts a lot of folks. But I dread the day that we can't do that anymore at Rice Lake. So the preventive maintenance we can implement today will keep the sustainability of not only the industry but the environment around that particular piece of Ontario. So I look forward to this legislation going through.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments. The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on the speech by the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to do with Bill 99. I previously had a chance to relate this back to the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. I know this bill is about Lake Simcoe and trying to help clean up Lake Simcoe, largely because of the build-up of development and too much phosphorus in the lake, and I point out that in Parry Sound–Muskoka we have a similar situation north of Parry Sound and Pointe au Baril, on Sturgeon Bay and Georgian Bay. There, they've had problems with blue-green algae blooms. The Sturgeon Bay Pointe au Baril Ratepayers Association and the township of the Archipelago have been involved in meeting with the Ministry of the Environment, and they've identified a technology to help improve the situation, which is called Phoslock. I will quote from the letter that I received from the president of the association, where he says:

“Phoslock has recently been used in Lake Simcoe to remediate the watershed and reduce the phosphorus loads

of this water body. According to the article in the King City newspaper a few weeks ago, your ministry assisted the Lake Simcoe in the use of Phoslock with a \$250,000 contribution towards the project. Your assistant Kevin Flynn was quoted as saying ‘the government support of this project is a sign of how important the protection of Lake Simcoe is.’”

The point that the president is making is that they're asking for the same treatment for Sturgeon Bay: “We are asking for the same government resolve to assist our situation on Sturgeon Bay. Members of the water quality action committee have long called our bay the ‘canary in the coal mine,’ a perfect location to test the efficacy of the Phoslock product.”

So this is what I'm looking for for the area of Sturgeon Bay on Georgian Bay. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response? The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the members for their comments. The thing I think for all of us to remember is that there is no quick fix here, but there is a plan to study and find out what the remedies are. The remedies are not always that simple, but this approach is the one that will be comprehensive and long-lasting, and if it's done right, it will protect this body of water and bring it back to where it should be. But it's going to take the co-operation of all the partners. It's going to take the co-operation of the landowners, their cultural community, the urban mayors, the councillors, the cottagers, the boaters—everybody has to play a role. Essentially, as I said, everybody is going to have to decide to reduce their carbon footprint. So if you're filling up your huge mega motorboat with \$2,000 worth of gas, you're going to maybe have to think about going down to a sailboat or going down to rowing your canoe. Not that everybody should do that, but I'm saying that those are the kinds of changes we're going to have to make when we use this lake, because that lake is very fragile. Whether we're building a home or building a business, whatever use we're making of the lands surrounding Lake Simcoe, we're all going to have to be a lot more sensitive that this is a fragile ecosystem. If we don't take care of it, we'll not only harm the fish and the aquatic life, but we'll have an effect on everything from air quality to just the appreciation and the quality of life for everybody who lives in southern Ontario, not only on the shores of Lake Simcoe. So we all have a lot at stake here. As I said, it's not the biggest lake in Ontario, it's not Lake Huron, but it's a heck of a beautiful little lake that deserves all our love and care. Let's protect it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I'm sorry. It being 5:45 of the clock, I now declare the House adjourned, to be reconstituted tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1747.

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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: Katch Koch

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