



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Third Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 21 May 2002

Mardi 21 mai 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 May 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 mai 2002

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House a serious incident that occurred at a high school in my riding of Hamilton East, and also to ask this government to act on potential solutions that could avoid these incidents in the future.

On Thursday, two female students, aged 17 and 19, were sexually assaulted inside Delta high school in Hamilton. The alleged intruder was a 20-year-old male who walked into the school undetected.

Delta is an old school. It's 77 years old and has 27 entrances and exits. It's a school for which Dalton McGuinty's plan for dealing with safety in schools and video surveillance cameras would work perfectly. Had cameras been available in this and other schools, this type of incident could be avoided.

Chris Murray, the chair of the school parent council, and Dave Hutton, the principal of Delta high school, have both come out and called upon this government and the board to install video surveillance cameras in that school.

We have seen incidents in Toronto, we have seen incidents across Ontario, we have seen this very serious incident in Hamilton. The need is clear: our schools need help. School boards can't afford it. Many schools only have part-time secretaries or part-time principals, which makes it even harder for them to detect intruders.

The plan that Dalton McGuinty has outlined, which would involve video surveillance cameras in schools where the schools need and request them, would go a long way toward detecting some of these intruders and protecting the safety and the well-being of our students. I think we all agree with that goal. I would urge this government to move immediately to implement that plan and give the school boards the funding to install video surveillance cameras where needed.

BOWMANVILLE MAPLE FESTIVAL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege to share with the House a very successful event on May 4, the Maple Festival in Bowmanville.

The Bowmanville Business Improvement Area Association's Maple Festival has become a spring tradition. It

attracts not only local families, but also visitors from across Durham region and beyond. It's not just about flapjacks and sausages served outdoors, smothered in maple syrup with all the trimmings, although I can assure you that is reason enough to attend the Maplefest. But there's a lot more. Bowmanville's main street was closed for the day so that you could enjoy a jazz festival and children's performances, plus an extensive display of hobbies and crafts, as well as booths from community organizations.

I'd like to congratulate Ron Hooper, chair of the Bowmanville Business Improvement Area Association. I'd also like to congratulate BIA directors Edgar Lucas, Lori Allin, Brian Purdy, Jamie Kennedy, Justin Barry, Michael Sullivan and, of course, municipal council representative Jim Schell. I would be remiss if I did not mention the BIA manager, a tradition, Garth Gilpin, and his capable stand-in, Harvey Webster.

Also, I'd like to recognize volunteers like Rick and Barb Patterson. These are just a few of the local folks who have made it a great place to live and enjoy a weekend with your family.

One thing that hasn't changed in Bowmanville is its pride in the history of the town. After over 150 years, it's still the heart of the community of Clarington, and that's due to the commitments of the downtown business people and those who support events such as Maplefest. The same could be said for each of our downtowns in Durham riding generally. It's my privilege to represent this area and to keep the House informed of these many special events in my riding on a regular basis.

HYDRO CORRIDOR LANDS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): Last Thursday in this House the Conservative government was handed the opportunity to save and protect the hydro corridor lands that criss-cross our city, the GTA and our province. The Tory members voted in favour of my private member's bill, the hydro transmission corridor lands Bill 13. Then the government immediately killed the bill. This mean-spirited government can't have it both ways. On the one hand, they claim they are acting in the interests of the public, but given the chance, they put this most valuable public resource at risk.

In failing to make a definite commitment on both Hydro One and the hydro corridor lands, the Premier is sending a clear message that both are to be privatized and destined to fall into private hands. What a grave mistake.

The corridor lands are of paramount importance for Ontario's present and future transportation needs, rapid transit, recreation use and open green spaces.

I want to remind the Premier today to hold on to this precious public resource, for once it has gone into private hands, the public will never get it back. It is my call to the Premier not to privatize Hydro One and definitely not to sell or privatize the hydro corridor lands.

PONTIAN COMMUNITY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is my honour to stand today and to speak of a group in my community, the Pontian community, some of whom are here in the gallery today. For those who may not be aware, the Pontian community is a group that traces its ancestry to an ancestral land called the Pontus, which is in modern-day Turkey.

Between the years 1914 and 1923, there were many disturbances there, and many of the Pontians were forced to flee for their lives, settling first in Greece and most recently in Canada. They have flourished in this community. They have done wonderful work.

I rise today to talk about their continuing campaign to inform the world of the atrocities and what was committed in that homeland between 1914 and 1923. On Sunday, there was a solemn gathering in East York, where they met at the only monument they have in Canada. They were there to remember the time of sacrifice and sorrow of their grandfathers, their grandmothers, their great-grandfathers and the fact that they continue today throughout the world to talk about this time and to get people to understand it.

We have heard many times over the years of other atrocities committed around the world which are much better documented and which people understand and accept. The Pontian community is here today to try to get the world to understand about what happened to them and hopefully one day to have the world understand their plight.

MEMBER FOR NIPISSING

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's with great pleasure today that I rise to welcome a special visitor to this House: the new member of provincial Parliament for Nipissing, Mr Allan McDonald, who is over in the members' gallery.

Al was elected on May 2, and I know he's looking forward to getting to work for his constituents. As a fellow northern businessman, I am very pleased to see him joining our government in working for economic prosperity across this great province and particularly in northern Ontario.

As the former deputy mayor of North Bay and a member of the city's economic development commission, Al is no stranger to the need for economic activity in the north and the special challenges faced by northern Ontario.

Al has been a proud and enthusiastic booster of North Bay, and together with his 20 years' business experience he will be a real asset to this government.

I'm looking forward to working with MPP Al McDonald in promoting the north as a prime location to do business, creating employment and prosperity in northern regions of this province. I can say it's been a real pleasure to have campaigned with him and to learn of all his great community experience and many organizations he's been involved with. I'd like to welcome Avalanche Al here to the House.

1340

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION DIPLOMAS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): After being treated as Tory experiments for educational reform and massive funding cuts for the last five years, Ontario's graduating high school students have now, once again, been given a severe blow: they will not receive their graduation diplomas on grad night.

After five years of no textbooks because of Tory ideology, after five years of limited extracurricular activities because this Tory government decided that they wanted to demean our teachers, after five years of overcrowded classrooms because of massive funding cuts and after five years of upheaval in the high school curriculum, should it be any surprise to any of us in the House or to Ontarians that these graduating high school students will not receive a diploma this year?

In fact, a directive from the Ministry of Education information management branch issued on May 19 states: "The ministry has been unable to print diplomas and certificates and distribute them to schools. Diplomas for June graduates signed by Minister Elizabeth Witmer will be distributed to schools the end of August or early September 2002."

With all your resources, I say to the government across the way, ensure that our graduating students for once graduate with honour, with distinction. Make sure they have their high school diplomas.

MARGARET LYON

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I am sad today to inform the House of the passing away of a dear friend in Niagara Falls, Mrs Margaret Lyon. Marg died peacefully with her husband Harry at her side on Thursday, May 9. My deepest sympathies go out to Marg's daughter Kimberley and her husband Ron Gibson. Marg will also be sadly missed by her beautiful granddaughter Kaitlin Margaret.

Marg is survived by her sister Sarah Muirhead, nephew Brian Muirhead and niece Margaret McLean in Scotland.

At 76 years of age, Marg was an active member of the community. She was a lifelong, spirited member of the Progressive Conservative Party and a proud, active member of the Niagara Falls Curling Club. She was also a

past president of the Niagara Women's Club and served on several other charitable organizations.

As a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, Marg served on both federal and provincial executives for many years. Every campaign that the Conservative Party has had in the past 40 years has had her input—lots of her input.

She recently became very well known for running our riding's Breakfasts with Bart. Every few months I would ask a colleague to come down to the riding to meet with members of the community, and Marg would do the rest. You could always count on Marg to pull off a successful event. Other MPPs now hold similar events in their ridings and have often joked about borrowing Marg for her expertise to help organize them.

Margaret Lyon will be fondly remembered by her many dear friends and family in our community. Her memory we shall always hold dear.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise today to speak on behalf of the people of Ontario, whose school boards, on behalf of students, will be receiving notification from this government about whether or not the government is actually interested in public education. Sadly, as each one of them opened up their computer file on Friday they found out the answer. The answer is that this government has put its priorities where it really matters to them: this year this government will give \$1,400 more to every private school student in this province. Every person in a private institution will receive \$1,400 of public money, of taxpayer funds, courtesy of this government, for absolutely no requirement in return. This government has decided that that is their priority.

But when it comes to public schools instead, they have shown us by contrast how little respect, how little commitment they have to the ideal of providing a decent education for everyone in this province. When you shake out the announcement, what many of those boards are finding out on behalf of their students is that the net increase after inflation in enrolment is \$14 per student in the public system.

The members opposite have failed to fight for their constituents, for their special-needs students, for the double cohort students, for the students who have trouble with the new curriculum and for the kids who can't wait for this government to change, who needed them to show some indication of priority. Instead, we find out that this government has 100 times the appreciation, 100 times the regard for private school students than it does for those for whom they have direct responsibility in public education.

GEORGINA AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to talk about the Georgina Awards of Excellence. This is an award system that was established three years ago and it

recognized the importance of businesses and the contribution they make in our own community.

It's sponsored by the chamber and by the town. It was designed specifically for recognizing the kind of work and contribution that individual businesses make to our communities. They are examined on the basis of their overall proficiency in providing service to their customers as well as their contribution to the town as a whole.

The various categories include both small business and large business. There is also a category that deals with service delivery and, finally, agribusiness. People don't recognize how important agribusiness is, and this gives us the opportunity to recognize both large and small agribusiness.

The importance of this recognition I think has earned the respect of members within the community as each year more and more people have been nominated for these awards. I want to ask all members to wait until May 29, when the award winners will be announced.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we continue on, we have in the Speaker's gallery a former MPP, Mr David Warner, who was the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere in the 31st, 33rd and 35th Parliaments. Also, of course, Mr Warner was the Speaker from 1990 to 1995. Please join me in welcoming our honoured colleague.

I offered Mr Warner the opportunity to take question period today but he declined, so he will be watching from up there. I wish I had been better behaved when I was a member.

We also have today in the Speaker's gallery Mr Nikos Papadopoulos, who is a member of the Swedish Parliament, and he is joined by his son. Please join me in welcoming our honoured guest.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VICTIMS OF IDENTITY

THEFT ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LES

VICTIMES DE VOL D'IDENTITÉ

Mr Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to provide civil remedies for the victims of identity theft / Projet de loi 26, Loi prévoyant des recours civils pour les victimes de vol d'identité.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The bill provides that a person may apply to the Deputy Attorney General for the issuance of a certificate establishing that they have been a victim of identity theft. The certificate shall

contain such directions as are necessary to correct personal information held by public sector organizations, financial institutions and credit-reporting agencies. The certificate may be issued even if there is no conviction of a person for identity theft.

The bill also provides that a person may bring an action for damages against the perpetrator of identity theft and against financial institutions and consumer-reporting agencies that knowingly or recklessly accept personal information acquired by identity theft or, without lawful excuse, fail to take corrective action after a certificate has been filed with them.

1350

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With your earlier welcoming announcements, I would like to share with the House that my riding has always very strongly supported this Legislature through having a page present. An example of that is Melyssa Kerr, from Belleville, who is currently a page here.

I would also like to recognize and welcome Laura Chapman, in the members' gallery, who was a page here 23 years ago and who has some photographs showing a much younger Sean Conway, Jim Bradley and Norm Sterling.

I would also like to introduce to the Legislature, sitting to her immediate right, Don Shea and his wife, Marg, from Belleville. Don was a page here exactly 50 years ago, at a time when they were here for an entire year. He has with him his autograph book, signed by the Premier at that time, Leslie Frost, although in the background you can still see Sean Conway. I would like the House to extend a welcome to them today.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): I move that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees: Mr Chudleigh replaces Mr Wettlaufer on the standing committee on estimates; Ms Mushinski replaces Mr Ouellette on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly; Mr Wettlaufer replaces Mr Ouellette on the standing committee on government agencies; Mr Sampson replaces Mr Hardeman on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs; Mr Hardeman replaces Mrs Molinari on the standing committee on justice and social policy; and Mr Stewart replaces Mr Gill on the standing committee on public accounts.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Baird: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: that Mr Christopherson and Mr Hampton exchange places in order of precedence; and that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot item 44 now standing in the name of Mr Hampton be waived.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITEUSES

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais souligner la présence dans la galerie des députés la maman et la grand-maman de Nicolas DesForges, un page du comté d'Ottawa-Vanier. Alors, bienvenue à Queen's Park.

ROSS MACKENZIE WHICHER

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak a few minutes on the passing of Ross Mackenzie Whicher.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Murdoch: I rise today on behalf of the government to join all members of the Ontario Legislature in recognizing the passing of an esteemed former member of this assembly and a friend of mine, Ross Mackenzie Whicher.

Ross passed away in Warton, Ontario, on Friday, April 19, 2002, at the age of 84. Born and raised in Colpoy's Bay, Ross served five years overseas while serving with the 4th anti-tank regiment. Following the war, Ross came home to open the Warton Dairy, which remained a popular and successful business for decades.

Ross was the popular mayor of Warton from 1953 to 1955. He was first elected in 1955 to the Ontario Legislature as a representative for Bruce county and was re-elected in 1959 and again in 1963.

As financial critic, he was always chastising the government for overspending. Ross used to joke about how much he enjoyed his years here in Toronto, especially when he was always asked by the Conservatives to join their side. That was Ross. He was in every way a public servant who won the respect of his peers, no matter their political stripe.

Having served as a member of provincial Parliament for 12 years, Ross won the 1968 election to become Bruce's federal member of Parliament and was re-elected in 1972. Ross served Bruce for over 20 years, running in

and winning seven elections until his retirement in 1974. As Ross said, "It has been a great life, and for the opportunity that has been mine, I am most grateful."

He was proud of his riding and championed it, always boasting of its place as a great tourist attraction, a great rural area with a quality of life that was unsurpassed. Ross was proud to represent its people. Ross always took the time to listen. He had a mind like a steel trap and a rapport with people that reassured them he was listening and, more importantly, that he understood. Murray Gaunt, MPP for Huron-Bruce for 18 years, said of Ross, "He was a people person. No problem was too small, and that's why people elected him year after year. He was a person very committed to his riding, and I think people sensed that."

I honour him here today as a good legislator and an astute politician. He will be remembered for his outstanding record of public service in our community, the province and our country.

Ross was also a comrade of mine, as he was in the legion. He was my brother in the Masonic Lodge and, most importantly, Ross was my friend. We had many times in his home when we would talk about things, and I want to tell you a little story about Ross.

He had in his room a chair he sat in when he sat in Parliament in Ottawa. As you know, a few years ago we redecorated this place and got rid of those chairs that were so uncomfortable. Ross and I were talking and he wondered if he could get his old chair. We made a deal here and I delivered it to him at his place. He was really excited the day he got his chair from here. When we went up to his room, Ross would say, "I've got three chairs in my room now. I have the one for the retired politician from Ottawa and the one for the retired politician from the provincial government. I have that chair over there for present-day politicians. You sit there, Bill." It turned out that was the commode. That was Ross's little joke on me. He said, "That's where the present-day politicians will sit."

As I say, I had many great talks with Ross, and I certainly will miss him. I want my condolences from this Parliament to go out to his wife and family. He will be greatly remembered.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm pleased, on behalf of the Liberal caucus and Leader Dalton McGuinty and former members of the Legislature, to pay tribute to Ross Whicher for his many years of service in this House, but also, we can recall, at the municipal and federal levels. He was one of those unique people who actually served at three different levels.

When I want to recall somebody who's been in the Legislature before most of us entered the Legislature, I go to the ultimate source, the dean of the press gallery, none other than Eric Dowd, who has files on everyone who has served for years and years. Eric is our resident historian and always has a story or two to tell about these individuals.

One of the things that was noted about Ross Whicher was that he was a very businesslike person in an era in this House when things were perhaps more businesslike

than they are today, much to the chagrin, no doubt, of the present Speaker. But he was also a person—and we paid tribute to some of these individuals recently who have passed on—who was very tied to his constituency, whose roots were in his constituency and whose primary purpose for being in the Legislature was in fact to deal with problems which were unique to his constituency and which his constituency had in common with the rest of the province.

Also, you would find that he was not an ideological person in terms of his approach to politics. I think today we all observe that politics seems to be more ideological. Although Ross, as Bill Murdoch has noted, was an ardent Liberal, he had among his close personal friends and greater group of friends a number of people who were not affiliated with the Liberal Party and were in fact Tory partisans, and that prompted the government of the day, from time to time, to urge him to cross the floor.

He was also interested in some issues that keep recurring. I was looking at one of his speeches. I was going through Hansard, and fortunately we still have these. He was talking about, believe it or not, Hydro and as it was then called, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission. He was noting that it allows a very obvious overcharge of the citizens of today for the benefit of those tomorrow. So he was, perhaps, before his time in dealing with what we would now call Ontario Hydro, then called the Hydro-Electric Power Commission.

1400

He was also an individual, much like many of the people in the House—we try to follow his example, no doubt—who spoke only when it was necessary to speak. He didn't get up in the Legislature to give a speech simply for the sake of giving a speech, as perhaps some might be prone to do. Instead, he was an individual who spoke when he felt it was important.

He had an expertise, as people in his riding and legislators of the day knew, in the field of the work of the Provincial Auditor. I was reading through one of his speeches where he was asking questions about the use of government cars for personal purposes. Throughout history, people ask about this. But there he was, back in those days, asking these very questions and being concerned about all public accounts of the day.

To show he was non-partisan, he once said Leslie Frost was the finest Premier Ontario had ever had. He liked Les Frost and Les Frost's business approach to the Legislature, but also his personal friendships that he had with all members of the House.

He also served at a time, for most of his time, perhaps for all of his time, in a situation where there were no constituency offices. Today, those of us who are members of the Legislature rely heavily upon our staff in the constituency office and here at Queen's Park in the provincial Parliament building. But in those days, people had to hold court—as we've noted with others who have passed on from that era—in their own homes or had to go to the homes of individuals or have town hall meetings. So it was a different era of politics in those days. The proceedings of the House were not televised, so the

importance of communicating one's message on a personal basis to people in the constituency was even more important than it is today.

I note as well that he started out—and this is true today to a certain extent, but I think much more so in those days—in municipal politics, getting that rounding, getting the level of the politics which is closest to the people themselves, getting grounding in that area, becoming aware of what the problems were in the constituency, and then reflecting those problems to the provincial Legislature and the federal House of Commons.

I certainly join with others in paying tribute to Ross Whicher. He is one who will be remembered, in Bruce county in particular, for what he has done. He is one who made many friends amongst all members of the House during his time as a member of the Ontario Legislature. Certainly, we all regret his passing, which is, for all of us in life, one of the inevitable things that will happen to us. We regret that. We send along our very best wishes and our condolences to the family. We know that Ontario, in particular Bruce county, was a better place because of Ross Whicher being a member of this Legislature and serving in so many capacities the people he represented in that part of our province.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It's an honour to stand among my colleagues today to pay tribute to the life and work of the former member who made his maiden speech in this House almost 50 years ago.

Ross Mackenzie Whicher was born in 1918 in Wiarton, Ontario, in what was then called the riding of Bruce. Though we as parliamentarians take special interest in his work at Queen's Park, there are many other aspects of Mr Whicher's life that deserve mention. I note that some of the other members mentioned those.

For example, as the owner of a dairy, he was very involved in the farming community in his riding throughout his life. During the Second World War, Mr Whicher served in the 4th anti-tank regiment in Europe, an experience from which he would frequently draw while addressing this very chamber.

Upon returning to his home at the conclusion of the war, Mr Whicher decided to throw his hat into the ring of electoral politics. He became mayor of Wiarton in 1953 and served in that position until 1955.

It was the philosopher Hannah Arendt who once said that through our speech do we reveal our true nature to the world, and thus by our words do we provide posterity with a sort of lasting impression. Mr Whicher was one who chose his words carefully, I've been told, demonstrating his awareness of their impact. In his maiden speech to the House, he said, "I realize only too well that fundamentally all of us are here in this Parliament for exactly the same purpose—to attempt to leave a little better place for our children and our grandchildren, with better living conditions and an easier way of life." I think we can all safely say that Mr Whicher did indeed do that in his time.

Mr Whicher deeply appreciated his role in the socio-political community of this province and represented his

constituents with great pride and determination. He was an honest man who possessed an impressive intellect and a sharp wit. He used to say he admired the advertising campaign of Red Rose tea as it was short and to the point, that campaign being, "Red Rose tea is good tea." "Likewise," he quipped, "The people of Bruce are good people; no more need be said."

I've heard it said that for every one of his speeches recorded in Hansard, he recorded three times as many interjections. Colleagues of his spoke with a spark in their eye about how thoroughly Mr Whicher enjoyed the playful exchange of ideas across the floor. It's no surprise I've been told he was one of the best. Once during debate Premier Frost accused Mr Whicher's comments of being prejudiced. To this he quickly replied, "I say to the Premier, since he is on his feet about half the time, I suggest he has as much prejudice as the rest of the honourable members put together."

Though Mr Whicher worked tirelessly on many different subjects, he focused especially on the concerns of the constituents he represented. Many times in the Legislature he brought forward their concerns about education, health care and farming. He took great interest in the relationship between the province and municipalities, and yes, as has been mentioned, Mr Whicher even spoke about the Ontario Hydro commission from time to time.

It is humbling in a sense when we look back on the career of Ross Whicher. In many ways, his concerns then continue to be our concerns now, reminding each of us of our place in the grand scheme of things. As we pass along our most sincere condolences to the entire Whicher family, may we assure them as well that in remembering the life of Mr Whicher we are reminded of the value of acting as he did: with honesty, with respect and with a vision of how we may contribute to the benefit of those here now as well as those yet to come.

The Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their kind words, and I will ensure that copies of the Hansard are forwarded to the family.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move and pass the following motion without debate:

That the Ontario Legislative Assembly encourage our federal government to ratify the Kyoto agreement.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is to the Premier. Today a video was released which captured the desperate living conditions of some of our homeless right here in Toronto. I watched it and I urge you to do the same, Premier. Let

me tell you what you are going to see: row upon row upon row of people sleeping so close together that they were in fact touching one another. I don't know how they can move about inside the basement room in which they were sleeping without tripping over each other; that's how little space was found between the floor mats.

1410

Premier, your government's housing policies are an abysmal failure. If you ever needed more evidence of that, this video provides it. My question to you is, what are you going to do for our most vulnerable, our homeless? These are people. These are our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers. These are people in need of some basic accommodation. What are you going to do for these people, our homeless, some of our most vulnerable?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I would concur with the leader of the official opposition that the situation as depicted in the video is unacceptable, not just here in Toronto and in the province of Ontario but anywhere in this country of Canada in today's age. I think there is the spirit of co-operation among the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government now to deal with what is obviously a very important issue not only here in Toronto but across the country.

Mr McGuinty: These people are looking for more, and need more, than simply some kind of esoteric spirit of co-operation. They need better housing, and they need it now. They need mental health supports, and they need those now. These living conditions, as portrayed in the video, are not humane and they are not safe. Healthy people are going in there and they're coming out sick, because they're being exposed to diseases like scabies and tuberculosis, and lice.

A nurse tells us that these shelters violate the United Nations most basic requirements for refugee camps. I am embarrassed, as an Ontarian, to know that in my province there are people who are homeless living in those conditions. I hope you too, sir, as Premier, are embarrassed to know that in our province there are people, our homeless, who are living in those kinds of conditions. So I ask you again, on their behalf, what is it that you are going to do specifically for some of our most vulnerable, our homeless?

Hon Mr Eves: This is more than just a housing issue; this is, as the leader of the official opposition points out in his question, an issue that deals with mental health in some cases; it's an issue that deals with providing accommodation—

Interjections.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): All the stuff that you cut, Ernie.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry for the interruption. Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: I'm glad to see the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora is taking a totally non-partisan approach and doesn't want to play politics with a very serious issue in Ontario.

The province has several initiatives, obviously, that deal with homelessness.

Interjection: What?

Hon Mr Eves: Shelter allowances worth \$1.7 billion a year, to name one.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Excuse me.

The Speaker: Order. Premier.

Hon Mr Eves: We have increased the hostel program. Last year we spent over \$70 million with respect to the emergency hostel program. As you know, municipalities determine what services they will offer to homeless people, and the provincial and federal levels of government automatically pay the money that's required for the spaces determined by the municipality. But I do agree that there has to be a more concerted effort among all three levels of government to get to the root of the problem.

Mr McGuinty: Where were you, as finance minister, on this issue when you wielded your knife with wild abandon? That's what you did to the homeless of Ontario. This is your record, in which you can take a great deal of pride, Premier, when it comes to our homeless. You cut the welfare allowance by 22%. You've now frozen it for seven years straight. You have downloaded social housing on to municipalities, which simply do not have the financial wherewithal to carry out that responsibility. You have put in place rent decontrols. You have cut mental health services and you have closed six out of 10 of our psychiatric hospitals.

When it comes to ensuring that our large corporations have another \$2.2 billion in large tax breaks, we know exactly where you stand. You tell us you're going to get the money and you're going to make that work. But when it comes to our most vulnerable, our homeless today in Ontario, you can tell us nothing more than that somehow you are going to inspire governments to come together in some spirit of co-operation.

I ask you again, specifically, what are you going to do? We know what you're going to do for the large corporations. What are you going to do specifically for our most vulnerable, our homeless?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition seems to be confusing several issues. He's confusing tax reductions with lack of revenue when in fact reducing taxes has actually increased revenues in this province by some \$12 billion to \$15 billion a year.

We do in fact need a concerted effort among all three levels of government to deal with this issue. I understand that we are in the Ontario Legislature, but this is a problem that is not peculiar to the province of Ontario or to the city of Toronto; it is a problem that exists in many provinces and many large urban centres across this country.

I would concur with him that the conditions that are depicted in the video are unacceptable for Toronto, they are unacceptable for Ontario and they are unacceptable for anyplace in Canada.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My second question is to the Premier as well. Premier, there is an interesting contrast in the situation facing our homeless and the pay package given to your president and CEO at Hydro One, who's receiving more than \$2.2 million on an annual basis. Her golden parachute totals in excess of \$6 million. The board you appointed hired the president and CEO and also made the decision to ensure that she received \$175,000 as a car allowance and \$172,000 for vacation pay.

Premier, ultimately this is about you and your standards. I'm not sure if you had the opportunity during the course of the long weekend to talk to some Ontario families about this pay package and some of the challenges they have to grapple with, day in and day out.

But what I want to know from you, Premier, is, do you support this pay package? Could you not at least admit, sir, here and now, that there is something fundamentally wrong with a pay package of in excess of \$2 million, including \$175,000 for cars and \$172,000 for vacation pay?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): In fact this issue was dealt with in the Legislature on Thursday. I made the comment then that it was inappropriate, and I asked the Minister of Energy to look into the matter.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, asking the Minister of Energy to look into these gross expenditures is like asking Don Cherry to crack down on violence in hockey. This is the guy who said he never knew there were any rules forbidding requiring the public to pick up his bar tab expenditures. That's the guy that you would have us take confidence in in terms of investigating this matter.

What I want to know, more specifically, is about this \$175,000 for cars. Do you know how many families are out there struggling to get by in some minivans with 150,000 or 200,000 kilometres on them? What I want to know is whether you think it's right or wrong for the president and CEO of Hydro One to be given \$175,000 as a car allowance. By your standards, Premier, is that right or is it wrong?

Hon Mr Eves: Again today I say to the leader of the official opposition, I regard those amounts as being inappropriate, and I've asked the Minister of Energy to look into them.

Mr McGuinty: How could this happen? Have you asked yourself that question yet? How could this happen? The board at Hydro One is appointed by your government. The board then hires the president and CEO of Hydro One. Your board confirmed her pay package. Your board approved this pay package, Premier.

1420

One of the problems we've got to grapple with here is that your government has removed Hydro One from under the ambit of the freedom of information act. You are in fact a co-conspirator to keeping these matters silent and away from public eyes. You can't say that's a prob-

lem connected with Hydro One and that it's inappropriate. By shutting that avenue down to us, by shutting this down from public oversight, you in fact are co-conspiring.

Premier, this is not a matter that needs to be sent out to review. This is a matter that requires you to say, "Mea culpa. This will never, ever happen again. It is wrong, it is entirely inappropriate and I will do everything in my power to make sure this never, ever happens again."

Hon Mr Eves: We are looking into the matter; I have said that. Neither I nor anybody on this side of the House, nor anybody on that side of the House, for that matter, sits on the Hydro board. You surely don't expect the government to send a representative to monitor every single board decision taken at Hydro.

By the way, aren't you the one who wants to leave Hydro One the way it is? You think the board works just fine. You think it's working great.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Since you put your government's cronies in charge of Hydro One, they've certainly done some outrageous things. First, the top four people over there get a \$13-million pay package. Now we discover that your cronies at Hydro One have agreed to a \$1-billion contract to purchase payroll and customer services from a company set up by Cap Gemini Ernst and Young, even though this new company has "not previously provided the extensive range of services covered by the agreement to any other electric utility company."

Premier, your cronies at Hydro One are involved in a \$1-billion gamble involving the people's hydroelectricity system with a company that's never provided the services before. Are you concerned about that, and what do you intend to do about it?

Hon Mr Eves: It is my understanding that the 900 employees who are part of this new company, as he describes it, are indeed Hydro One employees who have provided these services in the past. As I understand it, they will be providing the services to Hydro One in the future through the new company that they've contracted.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you ought to be concerned about the \$1 billion, but you ought to be concerned about something else as well. It works like this: Ernst and Young is the auditor for Hydro One. Cap Gemini Ernst and Young now provides consulting services to Hydro One. This is a lot like what happened in the United States with Enron, where the auditor couldn't keep straight whether they were auditing or whether they were providing Enron with business advice.

You may think this is all right, but yesterday in the United States, the Securities and Exchange Commission laid charges against Ernst and Young for creating virtually the same kind of business situation with a company there, virtually the same kind of situation as you have going on at Hydro One.

Premier, you're the investment banker. You're the one who ought to know that this should be looked at very, very carefully. If it's not good enough for the Securities

and Exchange Commission in the United States, why is it good enough for you?

Hon Mr Eves: I believe the leader of the third party is quite aware that the Ontario Securities Commission is looking into the matter. It is they who should be ruling on whether there is a conflict or not, and that is exactly what they are in the process of doing.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I'm quite interested in the securities and exchange part of it. It was I who wrote to the head of the Ontario Securities Commission, asking him to review it. But I'm also asking you because, you see, we're dealing with the over 11 million people in Ontario who now have to purchase their electricity from your cronies who inflate their own pay packages and then do \$1-billion contracts with companies that have no experience, no track record, have never delivered these services before. So I want to know, what are you going to do for the consumers of Ontario? We see what you're doing for your Bay Street friends. What are you going to do for the consumers of electricity in this province should this deal go bad, as the prospectus said it very well might?

Hon Mr Eves: Every time there's an incident that comes up the leader of the third party relates it to Enron in the United States and the Securities and Exchange Commission. As he points out, he himself has asked the Ontario Securities Commission to rule on the matter. They are looking into the matter. He talks about people who have had no experience providing these services when he knows full well, I would suspect, that the 900 people who will be providing the services are the same 900 who have been providing the services as employees of Hydro One in the past. They are the ones who have been hired by the new entity and they will be providing the services for the next 10 years through the contract, as I understand it.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Again to the Premier: I think virtually everyone in the province is outraged to learn that the people you have put in charge at Hydro One since 1998 have awarded themselves what amount to \$13-million pay packages, when you include all the bonuses and all of the excesses. What's really amazing, though, is if you privatize Hydro One they get to walk away with \$13 million; if you decide not to privatize Hydro One, they get to walk away with \$13 million. These people take the consumers of Ontario, whether the door goes in or the door goes out. You've had five days to figure out what everyone else in Ontario knows, that this is outrageous, this is disgusting, this is greed. What are you going to do about this bloated executive salary payout?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the third party knows full well—he was here on Thursday—that the matter is being reviewed and investigated by the Minister of Energy, as it should be.

Mr Hampton: Premier, the people of Ontario found out about this five days ago, but you must have known about this a long time ago. It was under your watch as Minister of Finance that Hydro One was split off from

Ontario Hydro. It was under your watch that the so-called private sector rules were put in place. You got to pick your people to put in place at Hydro One. So you've known about this for a long time. We're told that you and members of your government reviewed the so-called prospectus which admits to all this information. So you've had a lot of time to do something about this. What have you done about it? What have you done to protect the interests of consumers in Ontario rather than adding to the inflated pay packages of your cronies at Hydro One?

Hon Mr Eves: They're not my cronies. To the leader of the third party, as I recall last week, you and the leader of the official opposition were arguing for the status quo at Hydro One: you loved the board, you wanted it to stay the same, you didn't want it changed, you didn't want private sector discipline brought to the board. And this week, when it suits your political purposes, now you want to turf the board: they're no good, you have to bring some private sector discipline to them. You can't have it both ways, Howard.

As a former Attorney General of this province, surely you should know above anybody else that this is a matter for the Ontario Securities Commission to look into. They rule on exactly these types of conflicts and I presume that you'll be happy to live with the ruling that the Ontario Securities Commission brings down.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. First Mike Harris was for Kyoto and then he was against it. Could you tell us now, where does your government stand on this fundamentally important environmental policy issue?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I believe that my predecessor, Premier Harris, stated on several occasions, as indeed I have, that the province of Ontario is in favour of the Kyoto agreement, provided that there's a level playing field as we go forward.

1430

Mr McGuinty: Just a moment ago, Premier, were you not the guy who was lecturing the leader of the third party on trying to have it both ways? Were you not doing that, or am I mistaken? Within the last 60 seconds, you did that.

Premier, if you are truly committed to doing something about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, then here are some of the things you could do in a positive and concrete way: you could get into the business of funding public transit in a real and meaningful way; you could encourage renewable electricity generation in Ontario; you could phase out our coal-fired hydro plants; you could begin to promote energy conservation in Ontario; you could begin to promote the use of renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. Those are all things you could do, Premier.

The last time I checked, you were doing none of those things. Now, talk is cheap when it comes to these issues.

When is it, Premier, that you are actually going to do something in a real and concrete way, something that we could legitimately describe as “action” when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario?

Hon Mr Eves: We’re doing every single one of those things that the leader of the official opposition talks about.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question. I guess we go to the NDP now. The member for Beaches-East York. Sorry, I apologize; the next rotation was the Leader of the Opposition. The government misses it, they weren’t ready, as one of the members was down. So the leader of the official opposition and then the NDP.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question to the Premier. Premier, it’s a fact, an undeniable fact, that during your seven-year reign as finance minister you took Ontario’s auto industry for granted and that’s now catching up with you.

Here are the facts. Of the 16 new assembly plants built or announced in North America since 1990, only one was located in Ontario. During that same period, they closed the GM van plant in Scarborough and they have announced the closure of a Ford assembly plant in Oakville and a DaimlerChrysler plant in Windsor. I’m sure you will understand, Premier, that when an assembly plant is shut down, the parts plants are sure to follow.

What specific actions—and I want to be able to legitimately describe those as “actions,” Premier—are you taking to preserve and indeed enhance the over half-million direct and indirect jobs the auto sector brings to Ontario?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I refer the question to the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): As we discussed last week in this place, there have been some terrific steps forward in the automotive sector in Ontario even in the last two weeks. UBE opened the most sophisticated technological wheel-producing plant in the world in Sarnia, Ontario, last week. That will employ more than 100 people. It’s an investment of \$180 million over time. They chose to invest in Ontario because of low taxes, because of an investment-friendly environment, a welcoming environment much heralded since 1995 by the work of the Conservative government in this province. That’s just the first one.

Then Honda, in Alliston, in the riding of Jim Wilson, opened the line for the SUV Pilot. Again they chose to bring this new product to the province of Ontario. Then, two weeks ago yesterday, as a matter of fact, General Motors of Canada Ltd announced a third shift to build the Impala automobile at the Autoplex in Oshawa, a thousand—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I’m afraid the member’s time is up. Supplementary?

Mr McGuinty: I’m not going to argue, Minister, that there have been a few good-news stories, but they more than pale into insignificance as a result of the loss of 15,000 full-time jobs. That’s what we’re talking about here.

Here are three specific actions that you should be taking on this front. First of all, let’s do more with respect to developing research. Let’s do more to ensure that we have the necessary investment in research into fuel cells, for example. Let’s get into the next generation of research for the next generation of locomotion.

Let’s do more with respect to training. It’s going to take more than simply your obsessive fixation with the lowest corporate taxes; it’s going to take more than that. What we’re hearing from the auto sector these days is that we need to do more to ensure that we’ve got the necessary skilled workers in place.

Finally, we need more skills retooling. Some people have lost their jobs and this government has done nothing with respect to ensuring that those people get back on their feet at the earliest possible opportunity.

What I put before you now, Minister, are three specific ideas. Will you act on any one of those ideas?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The automotive sector is a global industry; it’s a highly competitive industry.

I met last week with Buzz Hargrove, the head of the Canadian Auto Workers union. The Canadian Auto Workers have put forward a very helpful paper and I commend it to the Leader of the Opposition, that he read the paper and see what’s being recommended by the CAW. I’ve certainly read the paper in my capacity with responsibility for that sector.

Tomorrow we’re hosting an automotive round table here in Toronto being attended by leaders in the assembly business, leaders in the parts business, academic experts from around the province of Ontario. We’re co-operating with the federal government in developing a national auto strategy for Ontario and for Canada. These are steps forward. This is what we need to do to meet the challenge of growth in the automotive sector in Ontario and in Canada.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, constituents in small towns in my riding have been asking me why they have to travel so far, sometimes an hour or more, to the nearest LCBO store to purchase a bottle of wine for family gatherings. Frankly, I agree with them. I think Ontarians in rural and small communities deserve more convenient access to beverage alcohol. I was so pleased, Minister, when I was allowed to visit an LCBO agency store just yesterday in Severn Falls that had opened up on the weekend and the business owner was so pleased with the response he had received from that community, which borders Parry

Sound-Muskoka and Simcoe North. Is there anything else you're doing, Mr Minister, to resolve this issue?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I appreciate the member for Simcoe North's question. He's a strong advocate for small and rural Ontario who wants to see expanded services from government and government agencies to his constituents. In fact, I've begun, under my predecessor Minister Sterling, an expansion of the agency stores across the province. By October we'll have 70 additional stores open in small and rural Ontario.

In fact, for Victoria Day weekend we had 13 new agency stores open in places like Eagle Lake and Turkey Point that will help bring more business to the small community stores, provide better access to rural Ontarians and to develop economic development opportunities in those small communities.

I want to commend the member for Simcoe North, who has been a very strong advocate for communities in his riding to receive these agency stores.

Mr Dunlop: These new stores are great news for communities in my riding and of course in many of our ridings across the province. You mentioned that these new outlets are placed in existing stores. I know my constituents will expect the same high standards as a regular LCBO outlet, such as product selection, excellent service and, most importantly, checks to ensure that minors are not accessing alcohol. Minister, what are you doing to ensure that agency stores follow the same high standards as regular LCBO outlets?

Hon Mr Hudak: We want to ensure that people purchasing alcohol through the LCBO agency stores are going to receive the same high level of service no matter what store they go to. We want to ensure that the high standards are there and that they have access to the wide array of products available at the LCBO or the Beer Store.

We also want to make sure that every participant in the program goes to the social responsibility training program of the LCBO to identify and prevent minors from buying alcohol. We also ensure that the alcohol is physically segregated from other products to prevent minors from accessing it.

We also want to make sure that there are great job opportunities and that the quality of service is strong, whether you're in a small town like Stevensville, Ontario—also getting a store—or in a larger city such as Toronto. I'm very pleased that the service is coming to at least three new communities in Simcoe North.

1440

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Mr Premier, this morning I attended a shocking news conference at Toronto city hall where people were packed in like sardines in a homeless shelter in conditions that would not even be tolerated in a United Nations refugee camp. You spoke earlier and you said that homelessness was a complex issue. Yes, it is,

but it has increased hugely since the election of Mike Harris and your government.

Outside of Trinity Church behind the Eaton Centre is a monument to the homeless, which lists all those 200-plus poor souls who have died on our streets since the 1970s. The overwhelming majority of them died between 1996 and 2002.

Mr Premier, you like to say that these have been good years. Perhaps they have, but not for the homeless. We need something dramatic to be done. We on this side are proposing that the lion's share of the land transfer tax be turned over to municipalities, some \$650 million, to build low-cost, affordable housing. Will you commit yourself here today to the same?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I appreciate that this is indeed a problem. The situation depicted in the video should not exist, not just in Toronto but in any community in this province or in this country.

Having said that, I don't believe his suggestion to remedy the situation is going to work. I believe that the three levels of government have to co-operate to deal with this situation that exists not just here in Toronto but in other communities across this country.

Mr Prue: Mr Premier, Ontario won't even match the federal government's pathetic effort on housing. Today, your Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services referred to these conditions, that is the homelessness and the video, and I quote, "They're certainly not Holiday Inns." The people in shelters can't even dream of a Holiday Inn. There has been a 21% reduction in shelter allowances under your government. There has been a 20% increase in rents in Toronto and in other cities as a result of rent decontrols brought about by your government.

You say you have a social conscience. Will you increase the shelter portion of social assistance so that these additional people do not swell the ranks of the homeless and make an already bad situation worse?

Hon Mr Eves: I refer this question to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): To my colleague across the way in the opposition I again say, and echo my Premier's comments, that we are very concerned about this situation. We are concerned when people are living on the streets. It is an issue that is brought to the attention of all three levels of government. Co-operation must occur from all levels. It's complex and will only be solved when all three levels work together.

I want to assure my colleague across the way that we work very hard on this side to try and find solutions. It is complex. It's a mental health problem; it's a housing problem. We have been working with the federal government. I know my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would like to respond as well in indicating how far we've gone. The city of Toronto receives \$74 million a year in support of homelessness from our ministry. Our commitment to finding solutions

to this very complex and troubling problem has never been greater.

MINISTRY SPENDING

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the Premier. Over a 15-month period Chris Stockwell and a handful of staff racked up more than \$25,000 in restaurants and bars. That was a pattern of abuse. Week after week, night after night, Stockwell and his staff drank the bar closed on the public's tab. Some of that money is finally coming back to the public, but we have no idea if it's the full amount.

Chris Stockwell has been a minister since 1999, but all we know about so far are 15 months of those three years. Premier, will you commit today to do two things: first, will you ask the Provincial Auditor to determine how much Chris Stockwell should return to the public for publicly funded boozing since 1999, and will you agree today to enforce the rules you have established for your cabinet throughout your cabinet and outlaw once and for all these publicly funded booze-ups?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister came to me the very afternoon this question was asked in the House last week. He told me he would take the appropriate action to reimburse the taxpayers of Ontario for any amount in any expenses he had—and it included alcohol—and his staff would be doing the same. It is my understanding they have done so.

Mr Smitherman: The ooze of entitlement goes on on that side, Premier. If you knew anything from this morning's comments by the minister's spokesperson, you'd know they decided that the only amount they need to repay is that which fell between 12 am and 2 am. That's what they've determined to be repayment of the appropriate amount.

This is really just the tip of the iceberg for the Ernie Eves trough over there. You received \$78,000 in severance when you left this place. Less than a year later, you wander back in. While civil servants are expected to repay that, you have guarded your treasure rather aggressively.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander, Mr Premier. Despite the public outcry, you refuse to repay your severance. Mr Stockwell should pay back all of his bar tabs, and the Provincial Auditor should figure out what the exact amount is. You should agree to enforce the regulations that are there for all of your ministers, and you should pay back your severance. Will you?

Hon Mr Eves: Despite the fact that there is no requirement making me do so, the honourable member might be interested to know that on the morning of April 15, the morning I was sworn in as Premier, I wrote a cheque to the Legislative Assembly fund for \$78,007.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Attorney General. One issue that

comes up when I am going door to door is elder abuse. Seniors have the right to live with dignity and safety. This situation, which is faced by many older Ontarians, is deeply unsettling for all of us and something we all find abhorrent.

Recent studies have shown that between 4% and 10% of Ontario's seniors experience some form of abuse. That's 4% to 10% of our parents and grandparents who are being taken advantage of. Financial abuse is the most common type, where unscrupulous crooks and scam artists bilk unsuspecting, trusting seniors out of their savings.

However, physical and emotional abuse are also sadly part of this tragic reality. Clearly, there is a need for government to continue to act. What support is the government providing to seniors and community agencies to combat elder abuse?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the honourable member for raising this very important issue in the House. While I am on the subject of thank yous, let me also reference Minister Jackson, the current Minister of Tourism and Recreation, who was the minister responsible for seniors when this important initiative went forward. Frankly, we wouldn't have the elder abuse strategy we do today but for the fact that Minister Jackson made this a cause that he wouldn't say no to, and to which he wouldn't accept the answer no.

What we have in fact is an elder abuse strategy that is the first of its kind in North America. It is the envy of North America. We are getting inquiries from all over this continent. What we have done is identify elder abuse as a problem that needs attention from governments, from agencies and from individuals. Too often this is a silent crime, and with this strategy we will bring it out of the darkness and shed light upon it.

1450

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate what our government is doing. One of the most terrible things about elder abuse is the abuser is often a family member, someone trusted by the victim, someone who has control over their financial or personal affairs. Statistics Canada tells us that over two thirds of seniors who were physically abused reported they were assaulted by a family member.

One of the most tragic parts of elder abuse is that it often goes unnoticed and unreported, as you indicated. Seniors may have no one to turn to, especially when the person they should be relying on most often is the family member mistreating them.

I'd like to know how a recent action taken by our government ensures that this abuse will no longer occur in silence.

Hon Mr Young: The honourable member is quite right, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this again. Too often victims are too embarrassed or too afraid or simply don't have the wherewithal with which they would be able to speak to the abuse that they experience. The abuse comes in various forms. We all of

course acknowledge that physical abuse exists on occasion and should not be tolerated, but it is also mental abuse and financial abuse.

What we are going to do is spend almost \$5 million with this strategy to ensure that local officials and officials in the province and frankly family members are all able to identify the type of abuse that may occur. I think this is very much akin to what we as a society did a number of years ago dealing with domestic abuse. A crime is not always just a crime. Sometimes special attention, sometimes special resources are needed, and that is exactly what we are doing here.

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question to the Minister of Citizenship, and at the same time I want him to know that we have a fundamental disagreement with the way he's running his ministry, and his previous colleagues as well. But I want to congratulate him on his appointment.

Our late Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau left us a lasting legacy by proclaiming as policy the multicultural model of integration for all Canadians. In 1971 he followed that up by creating for the first time in our history a Ministry of Multiculturalism.

Since you are the new Ontario Minister of Citizenship and are responsible for multiculturalism, can you tell the people of Ontario how your view of multiculturalism is different from the vision of our late Prime Minister—or is it the same?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member for the question. As the member knows, I am very active in the diverse communities of Ontario. I'm sure the member has seen me on many occasions in the different communities. I can tell the member that our vision of Ontario is that Ontario is made up of diverse communities. We cherish that vision. We are proud of our multicultural heritage and we are proud of the contributions that people from different countries have made to Canada.

Mr Ruprecht: That goes a long way, but it didn't answer my question. As you know, one of the reasons d'être or the reasons for existence of your ministry is to supply services for newcomers, since we need them to be productive citizens. Why would you slash immigrant settlement services? Why would you gut English-language classes for newcomers? Why did you sit on your hands and watch silently while the other ministers cut the heart out of adult education programs and job training programs? And for God's sake, why did you let the Premier take \$35 million that he got from the federal government for newcomer services and fold it into general revenue?

I'm asking you now as the Minister of Citizenship to stand up and tell us, are you going to cut any more programs or are you now having a review that says to everyone in Ontario, "Yes, we will support you, we will have the money, we will produce the funds so we can

have English-language classes, we will have new programs for newcomers in Ontario"? Is that going to be a new policy? If it is, we salute you for it.

Hon Mr DeFaria: I would like to indicate to the member that Ontario welcomes the majority of immigrants to Canada. We welcome approximately 60% of all immigrants to Canada and we get from the federal government, the federal Liberals, only 40% of their funding to immigration.

My friend opposite should consult with his federal Liberal friends on exactly why Ontario doesn't get a fair share of the funding. Why is it that Quebec gets higher funding per immigrant from the federal government and we don't get that share? Why is it that the federal Liberals discriminate against Ontario when it comes to funding?

LONG-TERM-CARE FACILITIES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question today is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know that many constituents in my riding of Perth-Middlesex have questions about the new placement regulations with respect to long-term-care facilities. I know these regulations came into effect on May 1 this year, but many of my constituents want to know why they were necessary and what purpose they serve. Could you please explain to all members of this House today, for the benefit of all their constituents, why our government has introduced these new placement regulations?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the hard-working member for Perth-Middlesex for this very important question. Our government has demonstrated that we are committed to providing quality sustainable long-term-care services in our province. We recognize that as the population ages, increased demands on long-term-care services will be felt. We want to ensure that patients who need long-term care are able to get it as quickly as possible. That's why we have worked with our partners in the long-term care and community care sectors to bring in new regulations that will shorten waiting lists for long-term-care facilities as well as speed up the application process for patients. Indeed, these changes mean that all bed vacancies in long-term-care facilities will be filled more quickly by persons who have the greatest need for facility care.

Mr Johnson: I want to thank the alert and effective Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care from Scarborough for his response. My constituents in Perth-Middlesex will be pleased to note that these regulations will ensure that services are available to them when they need them most.

Minister, can you please expand on these regulatory changes, what they mean and how they compare with other jurisdictions in Canada?

Hon Mr Newman: The changes in the placement regulations with respect to long-term-care facilities may be summarized as follows: establishment of a limit of

three long-term-care-facility waiting lists per patient; establishment of a one-offer policy for offers of admission to long-term-care facilities; extension of the bed-holding period in a long-term-care facility from three days to five days; mandatory reporting of all long-term-care facility bed vacancies to community care access centres; expansion of professionals permitted to complete nurse assessment forms to include registered nurses and nurse practitioners; an increase in the notification period from eight weeks to 16 weeks for planned voluntary closure of a long-term-care facility. There are new prioritization criteria for admission to long-term-care facilities, and there is also the provision of information to long-term-care-facility applicants about retirement homes and other alternatives.

These changes are consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions. For example, in Newfoundland, Manitoba, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia, patients are requested to choose three long-term-care facilities.

ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Today the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres released two excellent reports on aboriginal child poverty and on urban aboriginal youth sexual health and pregnancy. Some representatives from the organization—quite a few of them in fact—are here with us today. They are calling for your quick and urgent response as they try to break a damaging cycle that is hurting their young people. Minister, will you work with the OFIFC to develop, fund and implement policies that address the very serious concerns that are outlined in these reports today?

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Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague across the way in the third party for the question. We believe that all children's best interests are a priority of this government. We do understand that social problems can be more complex in some of the aboriginal communities, especially in the remote areas. We know that we have a role in trying to help children in these communities grow up strong and healthy and we take that very seriously.

Our ministry spends approximately \$184 million each year on social services to the First Nations. This includes funding for a program called the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy, as well as social assistance, child welfare, child and family services and indeed child care. This \$33.3-million project provides a number of services, including funding to provide education and referral services and funding for crisis intervention. We have taken steps, we think, to assist in addressing the needs of aboriginal children. We continue to work to improve our programs and our services.

Ms Churley: Minister, I suggest you take a look at these reports. What they outline is that there are no adequate programs in existence now to deal with the

urban aboriginal youth and families who are mired in poverty and a vicious cycle that needs to be broken. They are telling you in these reports what some of the answers are. The voices of aboriginal young people are heard loud and clear in these reports. They know what needs to be done and they want to be involved in the solutions.

Minister, I'll ask you again: will you commit to mandating a joint ministerial committee involving your ministry, the Minister of Health and OFIFC to develop the framework and policies that address a health promotion strategy and a proactive approach to educate urban aboriginal youth about the lifelong effects of uninformed sexual activity? That's what these reports are about today.

Hon Mrs Elliott: I thank my colleague again. As I said, we take these issues very seriously. When new information is brought before me or my ministry staff, certainly we will read it and consider it and do our very best to respond.

But again, we have made a tremendous commitment toward the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy, a \$33-million commitment. It is community-based. It is driven by needs within the aboriginal community. Certainly, if the views in that community are different or if there's a different direction—it should be taken at the view of the aboriginal community—then we will consider those views.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who just spent some time speaking about the marvels of the long-term-care sector. My question for this minister is simple: I would like to know how many times a week this minister takes a bath.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd just ask how this question is relevant there. It has nothing to do with it.

Mrs Papatello: I think it has a lot to do with it. All across Ontario today in the home care sector, which is under your purview, and in the long-term-care sector—these sectors have faced such cuts to services, and specifically to our seniors, our elderly and most vulnerable, that people in the home care sector receiving CCAC support, in-home service, are cut back to one bath a week. Many of our seniors in long-term-care facilities are getting maybe one bath every 10 days.

I would like to ask this minister if he thinks that's appropriate when Canadians, on average, 80% of them, take a shower every day. Does this minister think it's appropriate, given your inappropriate funding of the home care sector, that our elderly, our most vulnerable, should be getting a bath once a week?

Hon Mr Newman: Our government is committed to providing quality, sustainable long-term-care services in Ontario. Our primary concern is for the patients, and we take concerns expressed about compliance very seriously.

That's why I would encourage the member opposite to look at the Nursing Homes Act, subsection (56)(a) of

regulation 832, that says, and I hope the member is listening, "The nursing staff shall ensure that residents who are confined to a bed who are incontinent have a complete bath daily or more frequently where necessary to maintain cleanliness and that ambulant residents have a complete bath at least once a week." That's what it says.

I say to the member opposite that if there's a concern about compliance with respect to our legislation or regulations pertaining to long-term care, she can take one of the following actions: she can launch a complaint with the facility administration, she can launch a complaint with the local community care access centre or she can launch a complaint with the appropriate Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care regional office. All formal complaints will be followed up by a compliance adviser from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Mrs Pupatello: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have to tell the Speaker that's a completely inappropriate answer. I'd like to register my dissatisfaction with the line taken with the appropriate papers.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member can do that.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is for my good friend the Minister of Transportation. As you will no doubt recall, I've been in touch with you and your predecessors on several occasions to bring attention to the need for noise barriers along the 401, specifically in the village of Newcastle.

Highway 401 was widened at Newcastle many years ago, and residents who live close to the highway have brought to my attention the need for noise barriers. I might add the village is growing rapidly, with more new subdivisions being built close to the 401. These noise barriers need your attention now more than ever, especially with summer approaching and families spending more time in their backyards.

Minister, could you kindly advise me of the ministry's plans for this noise abatement project and when the residents of Newcastle can look forward to seeing and hearing the barriers being installed?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): Actually I travel down the 401 past Newcastle on many, many occasions going back to Lanark-Carleton. I'm pleased to inform the member that through his lobbying with the former minister, who did specifically inform me of lobbying by the member for Durham not only on this issue but on other issues as well, in fact my staff has gone out and actually reviewed the situation. We've worked up several design options for these noise barriers. For this particular noise barrier, we've recognized that this area is a very, very high priority.

I hope that in the very near future I'm going to be able to provide the member for Durham and his constituents with a construction date for a start to remedy this situation.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, it's certainly good news for me and for my residents. I'm a little disappointed that you're causing some of that noise on your frequent trips back to your riding.

I just want to bring to your attention one more area, now that you're in a good mood. I understand that noise abatement is part of a study of improvements needed on a stretch of Highway 35-115 in Orono. As you know, this is a very, very important section of the highway, not only for local commuters and travellers, but also for people heading to cottage country, like the city of Kawartha Lakes, which is the preferred destination, and also the city of Peterborough. Could you kindly provide an update of the ministry's schedule for making the necessary improvements on Highway 35-115, also in my great riding of Durham?

Hon Mr Sterling: Again I have the distinct pleasure of driving up that other way toward my riding when I'm going toward Perth at the other end of my riding of Lanark-Carleton. I go by Highway 7 and then up this particular area. I always want to go by Orono, because they still have their fairgrounds there. My eyes look off to the racetrack that's still there. I'm always interested in seeing if anything's going on in that particular area.

We have completed a study in that area because of the increasing traffic volumes. We've identified some safety improvements, including fully paved shoulders, rumble strips along the side, lengthening the interchange ramps and improved lighting. I can tell you that after completing our design, I will be pleased to report to the member and we can get along with the construction. I know this is very important to the member, and it's also important to me as I go back to my riding on a weekly basis.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd ask for unanimous consent to let Mr Sorbara indicate whether he's sent in his cheque or when he intends to do so.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard a no.

1510

PETITIONS

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the secondary students of the city of Windsor believe that the new curriculum is poor because it makes classes too difficult and students are dropping out because their grades are going down;

"Whereas OAC has been taken away, leaving students to prepare themselves for post-secondary studies;

"Whereas students believing that adding grade 7 and 8 students to secondary schools will overcrowd schools;

"Whereas students believe that the French immersion program should continue;

“Whereas there is a lack of funding for textbooks and other important educational resources;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Ernie Eves government review the policies adopted by Mike Harris and make the proper management and funding of education a priority.”

This petition, done by students in my riding, gained over a thousand signatures in two days and I’m pleased to affix mine to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas the Ontario government abandoned the minimum requirement for 2.25 hours per day of nursing care for seniors in nursing homes; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s own study in January 2001 showed Ontario’s long-term-care residents receive less nursing, bathing and general care than elderly people in comparable jurisdictions in Canada, the United States and Europe; and

“Whereas poor management of residents leads to excessive acute care hospital stays and the added strain on staffing levels in long-term-care facilities; and

“Whereas Ontario long-term-care residents now receive an average of only 2.04 hours of care per day, well below the level of care of 4.2 hours that even the state of Mississippi provides; and

“Whereas US studies have indicated that total nursing care hours for long-term-care residents should be in the range of 4.55 total hours of care per resident per day;

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

“We call on the Ontario government to regulate a minimum requirement of at least 3.5 hours of care per resident per day.”

This petition, signed by thousands of people, has been sent to me by John Van Beek of the SEIU. I’d like to thank him and his members for gathering that. I agree with them entirely.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, from many residents of my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, organized by Retired Teachers of Ontario, District 12-Norfolk. It’s titled, “Petition to Halt Deregulation of Electrical Energy in Ontario”:

“Whereas electrical energy is an essential service used by 100% of all Ontario citizens; and

“Whereas the experience in deregulating and privatizing the generation and retailing of electrical energy in other jurisdictions has led to enormous problems, including huge increases in hydroelectricity rates;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop further progress and action on the deregulation of electrical energy.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Because we, the undersigned, believe in our responsibility as teachers to maintain a high degree of professionalism; and

“Because such professionalism is best served when professional learning is self-directed and based on teaching need, improves professional skills, improves student learning, is based on best-practice accountability and is funded by the appropriate educational authority; and

“Because we oppose the government’s teacher testing program in the College of Teachers’ professional learning program because they do not meet the objectives of effective professional learning;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request that you repeal all clauses and references to professional learning from the Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001.”

It is signed by a number of my constituents and I’ve affixed my signature to it.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition signed by citizens from Hamilton and as far away as Scarborough, Mississauga and Oakville. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the recipients of benefits under the Ontario Disability Act have not received a cost-of-living increase since a \$2.50 increase in 1987; and

“Whereas the cost of living in Ontario has increased in every one of the years since, especially for basic needs such as housing, food, utilities, transportation, clothing and household goods; and

“Whereas disabled Ontarians are recognized under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, and as such have the right to have their basic needs met, including adequate housing, a proper and healthy diet, a bed that does not make them sicker and clothing that fits and is free of stains and holes; and

“Whereas their basic needs are no longer being met because the Ministry of Social Services has not increased the shelter and basic needs allowances of disabled Ontarians eligible to receive benefits under the Ontario disability support program to reflect the increased costs of shelter and basic needs (and in fact have reduced these benefits for those recipients who receive a disability benefit under the Canada pension plan);

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, request the Ontario Legislature to urge the government to

respect their own definition of basic needs and provide a cost-of-living increase to recipients of benefits through the Ontario Disability Support Program Act that is sufficient to cover the increased costs of their basic needs as of 2002 prices, and that this benefit not be reduced as a result of increases in the Canada pension plan benefit.”

I proudly add my name on behalf of my constituents in Hamilton West and my NDP colleagues.

ABORTION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition from hundreds of Cambridge residents, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on October 31, 2001, in a submission to the federal House of Commons finance committee, Canadian Abortion Rights Action League executive director Marilyn Wilson said that women who seek abortions do so for socio-economic reasons rather than a necessary medical procedure; and

“Whereas the results of a 1998 study using findings from 32 studies in 27 countries stated that worldwide the most commonly reported reason women cite for having an abortion is to postpone or stop child bearing—the second most common reason is socio-economic concerns; and

“Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and

“Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

“Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

“Whereas the funding of induced abortion requires an estimated minimum of 25 million Ontario health dollars annually;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deinsure therapeutic induced abortion.”

As required by the rules of the House, I sign my name thereto.

HYDRO ONE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the provincial Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the Conservative government plans to sell off Hydro One and Ontario’s electricity transmission grid to private operators; and

“Whereas Ontario Superior Court Judge Gans ruled it was illegal for the province to sell off Hydro One; and

“Whereas the government never campaigned on selling off this vital \$5-billion public asset and never consulted the people of Ontario on this plan; and

“Whereas Ontario families want affordable, reliable electricity—they know that the sale of the grid that carries electricity to their homes is a disaster for consumers; and

“Whereas selling the grid will not benefit consumers—the only Ontarians who will benefit are Bay Street brokers and Hydro One executives; and

“Whereas selling Hydro One and the grid means the public sector will no longer be responsible for its security and protection;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

“To demand the Conservative government obey the law and immediately halt the sale or lease of Hydro One until the government has a clear mandate from the owners of Hydro One—the people of Ontario.”

This is signed by 131 constituents, primarily from the small community of Atikokan. I affix my signature in full agreement with their concerns.

CHILD CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been sent to me by R. Martino of Mississauga and Maycourt Children’s Centre in Sault Ste Marie. They read as follows:

“Whereas an internal government document states that the Conservative government is considering the regulated child care budget by at least 40%;

“Whereas the same internal document states the government is also considering completely cutting all funding for regulated child care and family resource programs in Ontario;

“Whereas the Conservative government has already cut funding for regulated child care by 15% between 1995 and 1998 and downloaded 20% of the child care and family resource program budget on to municipalities;

“Whereas Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain identified regulated child care and family resource programs as integral to early childhood development;

“Whereas the Conservative government will receive \$844 million from the federal government over five years for early childhood development;

“Whereas Ontario is the only province which didn’t spend a cent of last year’s federal money on regulated child care; and

“Whereas the need for affordable, accessible, regulated child care and family resources continues to grow in Ontario,

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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“We demand the Conservative government protect the current regulated child care and family resource program budgets and invest significant federal Early Years funding in regulated child care and family resource programs. We demand future federal Early Years funding be invested in an expansion of affordable, regulated child care and in continued funding for family resource programs.”

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition I want to present on behalf of the hard-working, energetic and effective member for Oakville.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, believe a strong, broadly based and fully funded public education system is the basis for a vital and prosperous Ontario;

“Whereas we, the undersigned, as residents and taxpayers of the province of Ontario, are gravely concerned regarding the present state of financial support for publicly funded schools in the province of Ontario;

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

“(1) We respectfully request that immediate actions be taken to review the current education funding model in order to eliminate shortfalls currently being experienced across the province.

“(2) We further respectfully request that this review be conducted in full and open consultation with concerned parent groups, teachers and school boards across the province.

“(3) We finally respectfully request that the upcoming provincial budget be structured so as to provide funds to remedy current shortfalls in classroom-based salaries and benefits, school operations and maintenance, transportation and special education funding as reported by school boards to the Ministry of Education.”

I sign this.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a petition signed by hundreds of members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Because we, the undersigned, believe in our responsibility as teachers to maintain a high degree of professionalism; and

“Because such professionalism is best served when professional learning is self-directed and based on teacher need, improves professional skills, improves student learning, is based on best practice accountability and is funded by the appropriate educational authority; and

“Because we oppose the government’s teacher testing program and the College of Teachers’ professional learning program because they do not meet the objectives of effective professional learning;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request that you repeal all clauses and references to professional learning from the Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001.”

I will be adding my signature to this petition.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Petitions, the member for Hamilton East—Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): It makes a big difference, Speaker.

A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To the government of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, recognize that,

“(1) Electricity rates in deregulated, private, for-profit markets such as Alberta and California fluctuate wildly in supply and price and are much higher-priced than in comparable public power systems;

“(2) Deregulation in California caused more blackouts than Ontario has suffered from ice storms or other natural disasters while public power has protected us from market fluctuations in supply as well as price;

“(3) At-cost electricity has helped build and support Ontario’s economy, while deregulation would destabilize the economy, with soaring rates, reduced reliability and increased production costs leading to plant closures, job loss and economic decline;

“(4) Soaring electricity rates would put a significant burden on school boards, hospitals, public transit and other public services which cannot afford to pay double for their electricity;

“(5) Seniors and other members of our communities on fixed incomes would be hard-hit by increasing rates, and the living standards of millions of Ontarians will be harmed;

“(6) Privatization will trigger NAFTA provisions, making it practically impossible to reverse this dangerous experiment and would cost us Canadian control over electricity;

“(7) Privatization, deregulation and loss of sovereignty would close the door on public accountability of the industry in regard to environmental safety and energy security concerns; and

“(8) An alternative exists in the form of a truly accountable, transparent and affordable publicly owned and controlled system operated at cost for the benefit of all Ontarians;

“Therefore, we demand that the Ontario government immediately halt the planned privatization, sell-off and deregulation of the public electricity system.”

I agree with my constituents and I add my name to this petition.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition comes to me from Gwyneth Rooke of Stouffville and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas an increasing number of Ontarians are turning to horseback riding as a recreational activity; and

“Whereas many of these inexperienced riders are children; and

“Whereas an unacceptable number of preventable injuries and fatalities have occurred while horseback riding;

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

“To amend Bill 12, the Horse Riding Safety Act, 2001, by amending:

“(1) the definition of ‘horse’ to include those equines under 14.2 hands (considered to be ponies); and

“(2) the definition of ‘horse riding establishment’ to include all commercial stables.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): This concludes the time allocated for petitions.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): I will just bring this to the attention of members. Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Windsor West has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning home care. This matter will be debated at 6 pm this evening.

OPPOSITION DAY

HYDRO ONE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I move the following:

“The Ontario Legislative Assembly calls on Ernie Eves to either keep his promise to take the sale of Hydro One ‘off the table’ by abandoning his plans to proceed with legislation which would enable the government to privatize Hydro One or call a general election on the issue.”

Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to move a very important motion which speaks to a very important issue which we have been addressing during the past couple of weeks in this Legislature, since its resumption of sittings. The people of Ontario have a right to feel secure about their electricity, they have a right not to worry about huge price increases, and they have a right to expect that the people transmitting their power to them have their best interests, and nothing else, at heart.

Electricity is not just another commodity. People need it. They need it to run their businesses. They need it to heat their homes. They need it to feed their families. We need it to run our hospitals and our schools. People need to feel secure about all those things, and that is what we over here are fighting for. It’s what everyone in this Legislature should be fighting for.

This is a motion that I would expect might get unanimous support in this House, and it certainly should. I know the NDP oppose the selling of Hydro One. It’s

one of the few things on which we agree. As for my colleagues opposite, my motion would allow them to actually have an answer when people ask them what’s going on with Hydro One. They could respond, depending on how this thing unfolds, either that it is off the table, as was promised by the Premier on the morning of the recent by-elections, or they could respond that the matter will be decided by voters at the time of the next provincial election. Imagine how liberating that would be for our friends opposite, to actually have an answer when it comes to the future of Hydro One.

As things stand now, when the members opposite are asked about Hydro One, they pretty well have to consult a calendar. If it’s Tuesday, they tell us that we must be privatized. If it’s Wednesday, they’ll tell us that we are leasing and the status quo is definitely not on the table. Tomorrow, though, the status quo will definitely be on the table.

1530

The spectacle of the last few weeks has been an embarrassment for this government and frankly an embarrassment for the people of Ontario. They’ve had to watch their new Premier dreaming up policy on the fly while trying to keep his various ministers onside—not an easy feat when nobody knows what side the government itself happens to be on.

This motion should clear things up nicely for the Premier, for the energy minister and for the rest of the members opposite. Don’t sell Hydro One. It’s a bad idea. There is simply no good reason to sell off Hydro One. The energy minister himself admitted last week that there is no sound business case to support the sale of Hydro One.

I can’t actually fathom contemplating a multi-billion dollar sale of anything without a good business case to back it up. We’ll let that go for now, but the fact is not only is there no good reason to sell Hydro One, there are numerous very good reasons not to. For a start, it happens to be making money. I want to say that again, because it doesn’t seem to register with the members opposite. Hydro One is making money.

What would possess the government, I mean any government, to sell an asset that generates 300 million some odd dollars every year? Furthermore, Hydro One is a natural public monopoly. There are no other transmission grids. There exist no other means by which we can convey electricity from the source where it is generated into our homes, into our businesses, into our schools, into our hospitals. There is just the one electricity highway. It’s the only game in town.

This government should know that when you turn a natural public monopoly over to the private sector, it is the consumer who ultimately pays the price. Rates would go up. Rates could in fact go up dramatically and there is nothing consumers could do because, as I said, it’s the only game in town.

You cannot talk about the sell-off of Hydro One and not think about the sell-off of the 407. Today, at least when it comes to the 407, consumers, users and drivers

have the availability of an alternative route. If you don't like the tolls on the 407, you can at least get off the darned thing and use an alternative route. When it comes to our transmission grid, when it comes to Hydro One, there is no alternative electricity highway. If the rates skyrocket, I guess the energy minister might suggest that we break out the candles. We think there's something that we can do now. We can ensure that Hydro One is in fact not sold off.

One of the options the energy minister is tossing around is a straight sale to an individual. From our perspective, that represents a real security issue. I don't want to sound alarmist, but isn't that effectively handing one person or company the power to shut this province down? Hydro One is the central nervous system of the Ontario economy. How could this government possibly contemplate what they call a strategic sale: you turn ownership of Hydro One over to one individual or to one corporation. Just how sensible is that?

If the energy minister had spent a little more time listening to people during his so-called consultation hearings instead of telling them what they couldn't say, he'd have heard that Ontarians are very concerned about the future of their transmission grid. I think it has taken us close to 100 years to cobble together this transmission grid.

I can recall one particular time—I used to be our party's energy critic—when an elderly gentleman came forward and made a presentation to this committee which was considering a Hydro bill of some kind in the early 1990s. He recounted in some detail how as a boy in his small community the lines actually were sent into the community and they put up Christmas lights for the first time in that community. I was thinking of that story and how we have developed this very strong dependence—and that's the right word, it's a dependence—on our transmission grid, and it is absolutely essential, as we contemplate its future, that we do nothing to put our dependence on that grid at risk.

I was mentioning a moment ago how the energy minister should have spent a little more time listening to people and how people are now very worried about the future of their transmission grid, and well they should be. This is, after all, news to them. Ontarians certainly didn't hear anything about selling off Hydro One during the last election campaign. Wouldn't selling off a huge natural public monopoly, a multi-billion dollar transmission grid, be the sort of thing you'd somehow want to, at least in some oblique way, make reference to during the course of an election campaign? Not one word was uttered at the time of the last election about the potential sale of Hydro One, not a single word.

I say to the Premier, and I say to the energy minister, if you really think this is the right thing to do, then put it to the people. Have an election on the issue. That's the right way to proceed. That's the democratic way to proceed.

When you get right down to it, this is all about the next election anyway. The government members are a

little tight for cash just now. When you're an unpopular government trying to make up for seven years of incompetence, being tight for cash is not a good thing. The members opposite could use a few billion dollars extra to fund the promises they're about to start making, promises they hope will make people forget about the sad state of our health care system, promises they hope will make people forget about the shambles this government has made of our public education system, promises they hope will make people forget about Walkerton and Ipperwash.

I can tell you, these people opposite will be buying their way out of those things. They're certainly not buying their way out of this by selling this province's transmission grid. It would be nice if this government had the courage to stand by what it believes, to defend it and to put it to the people of Ontario for their approval. It would be nice if this government didn't make policy on a whim, saying one thing one day and another the next.

You might not agree with that government, but you could at least respect it. The soap opera that has played itself out over the past few weeks has not been worthy of respect. It has been worthy of nothing more than a channel change. We have witnessed flip-flops. We have witnessed a consultation process in which people were told what not to say, and from which the energy minister stormed out when he didn't like what people did say.

This government has variously committed itself, thus far at least, to the following: an IPO, an income trust, a not-for-profit corporation, some kind of leasing arrangement, a strategic sale, the status quo, anything but the status quo. Then this government has the unmitigated gall to reveal that they are not going to announce their final decision with respect to the future of Hydro One until after this House has recessed.

I refer you back to the recent throne speech when this Premier, through the Lieutenant Governor, told us that this marked the beginning of a new era. We were on the threshold of a springtime in Ontario politics. Birds would sing, kids would play soccer and the sun would rise. He spoke about how listening would be seen as a mark of courage and no longer as a weakness. He talked about a government that was going to be both responsive and responsible.

I ask you, Speaker, is it really responsive and responsible, is it really doing courageous listening when you say to the duly elected representatives of some people of Ontario, and through us to them, "We're going to introduce a bill. We're going to drive this thing through. We're going to get this thing wrapped up by the end of June. You people are going to go off to do whatever you do during the summer break, and then we will make the final decision with respect to the future of Hydro One"?

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That does not speak to me of us finding ourselves in a new era here, on the threshold of a new springtime in Ontario politics. It speaks to me of the bad old days of Mike Harris, when he rammed things through and did not give us due regard. More importantly, it's not about us;

it's about the people of Ontario whom we enjoy the privilege of representing. That's what this government is doing. They are one and the same. Are these people opposite so afraid of scrutiny, are they so afraid of questions? We say enough is enough. Either take this thing off the table or let the people of Ontario know where you stand, and then let them tell you where they stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Thank you, Speaker, for this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: Dalton, they still can't get over your speech. That's so nice. You've got so many supporters.

Interjection: Where are your colleagues?

Interjection: Where's your support there?

Mr Marchese: We don't need so much support here on this side.

I'm happy to speak to this motion, and I want to say that it's so good that Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, made reference to the fact that they agree with the NDP on this particular issue. We're happy to have them agree with us.

Interjection: No, you agree with us.

Mr Marchese: Oh, is that the way it is? I thought we took this position quite a while ago, as long as a year or so ago. But some of you could be right. You were dormant for quite a while, and now you have awakened to the issue. That's OK. It's good to have both opposition parties on the same side on the issue of Hydro One.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You're quite right, Dominic. You guys are doing well and you have more members, it's true. All I'm saying is that on this issue I'm happy we are now on the same team.

For those watching, what we're talking about is Hydro One. Most of you don't have a sense of what this is all about, and it's true that most MPPs didn't have a clue before this issue broke. There's this Hydro One issue and there's power generation on the other side, and nobody seems to understand the difference. In fact, many people link the generation of power and Hydro One as being the same issue, and they're not.

For many years no one in Ontario had to worry about that distinction, because for over 100 years people in the province of Ontario got Ontario Hydro power at cost without worry, without the insecurity of whether or not they would have it one day, without the insecurity of knowing that the price might be higher one day, lower another, jacked up another day and so on. One hundred years ago Sir Adam Beck, this wealthy individual, felt it was in the interest of all Ontarians, both rich and poor, to have a public monopoly delivering hydro to our homes. This man, 100 years ago—he wasn't a poor guy; "Sir" is usually attached to people who are fairly well to do. Most poor people I know never acquire such a title. He was a rich guy. This rich guy said everyone deserves to have

hydro no matter where they live, and this is a big province. This province is three times bigger than Italy. Italy has 60 million people; we have 11 million people. It's a big, big province. Our leader represents a riding that's just as big as some of those European countries. Sir Adam Beck felt and understood that there ought to be a state monopoly that would deliver hydro safely to their homes, far and wide, north, east, west, south. It worked well.

I don't know anyone who complained about Hydro, really. I don't know anyone in Ontario. I'm not sure if some of you watching are those who called upon the former Premier to change the status quo because it wasn't working. I certainly don't know anyone. People got hydro at cost and it worked.

Then of course the Tories began with Darlington. Darlington, by the way, was a Tory initiative and cost 14 billion bucks to build. It began with the Tories. By the end of it, we held in our hands a very huge cost that, by the way, we never paid back at the same pace or in a way that we would be certain to have it paid off. So we have a huge debt as a result of the construction of Darlington that was not paid in a very timely way. We could have asked the people of Ontario to pay their fair share and get rid of that debt, but we didn't. We put it off year after year. But it was the Tories who did that one.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): Give me a break.

Mr Marchese: Darlington was a Tory initiative, Norm.

Hon Mr Sterling: No, it wasn't. It carried on. It takes 15 years to plan a nuclear plant.

Mr Marchese: All right, Norm. You'll be up soon and you can have your say.

Harris, of course, the demagogue of Conservative politics, came along and he said, "A public monopoly is simply a bad thing." Who says that it is a bad thing? Mike Harris said it was a bad thing. Does any Tory know anyone in the lower ranks, the lower echelons of society, who said to him or you, Tory MPPs, "The state monopoly is bad and it's got to go"? I don't know anyone.

Harris and some of the gang across the way—not all Tory MPPs, because not all are wealthy. Some are, but not all. Certainly they're all influenced by the big-money-making boys, of course. But Harris is someone who believes in private enterprise, and so do the vast majority of Tory MPPs. They believe public ownership of anything is bad. "We cannot improve public ownership. We improve it by destroying it." So Harris comes and glorifies the private sector, puts it on a pedestal next to godliness and says, "Privatizing Hydro is good."

So he decided to do two things: deregulate power generation—and by the way, I'll just explain that, and then I'll try to get into Hydro One. Deregulating hydro generation meant that we now rely on the marketplace to determine the price of hydro. No longer do we have the assurances we had in the past, where you paid what was fair and what was right in order to pay off your debts. We

now leave it to the market to determine the cost. We have the uncertainty of the private sector marketplace determining the price of hydro. Mike Harris says this is good. Who says that's good? Mike Harris. Who else says it's good? Those who stand, of course, to profit from it: those who want to make a lot of money.

Remember, the generation of hydro is by and large now controlled by Ontario Power Generation; 60% to 80% of it is in their hands still. They will privatize that slowly in the next 10 years. Twenty per cent of it is now in private hands, those who generate hydro privately. Then you've got all these retailers who buy from those who generate electricity and they come knocking at your door saying, "I can sell hydro for cheaper than some other retailer who comes to the door saying he or she can sell it for cheaper," and so on and so on down the line.

The Liberals support the privatization of the generation of power, which they call—

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): So do you. Your leader said he supports TransAlta in Sarnia.

1550

Mr Marchese: The Liberals support the privatization of power generation because they say that competition is good. They agree with the Tories that the privatization of the generation of power is good, on some assumption, Marie Bountrogianni, that this is a good thing. The Liberals don't speak much about that because they'd rather keep that hidden under the carpet, so to speak. We want to put this out to you, that you should ask the Liberals and the Tories—

Mrs Bountrogianni: And Howard Hampton.

Mr Marchese: —and Howard Hampton what his views are, because we're opposed to it.

Marie Bountrogianni is supportive of the privatization of Hydro, but today—

Mrs Bountrogianni: No, we're not.

Mr Marchese: Marie Bountrogianni, you'll have your opportunity to speak for sure, and we're looking forward to your remarks, but you have supported the deregulation of Ontario Hydro. Marie Bountrogianni, when you stand, tell the public of Hamilton what your views are on this matter, because I certainly am interested to hear them. I'm interested to listen to any Liberal who has a position on this. I know you don't call it privatization; you call it competition, I think it is.

Mrs Bountrogianni: What does Howard call it?

Mr Marchese: Howard Hampton calls it that he is opposed to the privatization of the generation of power and we are opposed to the selling off of Hydro One, the transmission lines, those lines that bring hydro to your home. We're opposed to that and we are opposed to giving it to the private sector to sell off the generation of power to private companies. We're against that too. Howard Hampton, our leader, is against it; I'm against it; David Christopherson is against it—we're all against it on this side.

Good people of Ontario watching, I know it's complicated understanding transmission lines, Hydro One,

the generation of power as a separate issue. For you, they're all the same; all complicated. For the NDP, it's quite clear. We are opposed to deregulation of hydro and the privatization of it, and the privatization of Hydro One, the transmission lines. It can't get any clearer than that. I leave the flip-flops both to the Tories and to the Liberals. On this side, it's quite clear that we are opposed to both.

I remember Jim Wilson here in this House making references to California. He used to stand up and say, "We want to do what they've done in California." David, do you remember that?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Yes, I remember.

Mr Marchese: He used to use it as a model of what Ontario was going to do. Then lo and behold, California collapses under the schemes and the manipulation of their marketplace, to the extent that those who were controlling those power grids were making big, big bucks. It even involved BC Hydro—our own provincial government selling hydro down there and making some big bucks too. What a scheme it is.

Now the state of California has to put in \$20 billion to \$30 billion to save Californians from the disaster that Enron and others have caused. Who pays when private corporations go bust, when they get caught manipulating markets? Who pays for that?

It's the little guy—you, the little guy, the person who works out a day, sweats his butt out every night and every day making an honest living. But no, we idolize the marketplace. We idolize the private sector. We say, "Oh no, God, they can't do any wrong," until they do wrong and then you pay. Twenty billion to thirty billion bucks of the public's money that the state of California has to put in to fix something that the private sector said, "Oh no, we can deliver energy cheaper, more efficiently." What a big cost—20 billion to 30 billion bucks. It ain't cheap.

By the way, Jim Wilson doesn't talk about California any more. "California Dreaming"—that was long ago. He doesn't sing that song any longer.

Now we have Alberta. Oh, it couldn't happen in Alberta, could it? No, Alberta would be different. Alberta would be able to do it more efficiently because presumably they have got regulatory bodies that can make certain that none of the scheming and the controlling of the market would go on in Alberta. Oh no, not under Klein, good God, no, because Klein knows better, like Harris. Harris and Eves say, "Oh, no, it can't happen in Ontario. We've got the IMO." Don't worry about the acronym; some organization that's going to keep an eye on these things, like in Alberta, like in California.

In Alberta, you may or may not know—I don't know—that two billion bucks comes out of the heritage fund, the fund they have that comes out of the generation of oil. That's a fund they keep for a rainy day. Do you know what they're using that fund for? They're using their heritage fund—\$2 billion a year—to subsidize those homeowners who are paying skyrocketing prices for their

hydro. Imagine: the people of Alberta are subsidizing the corporate sector by \$2 billion a year to line the pockets of the private sector, which says, "We can deliver hydro cheaper to your door." You see how nuts that is? People are paying the private sector money to fix a problem they caused.

You, watchers of this program, are the ones who will suffer. You suffer, under the deregulation of generation of power that Liberals and Tories support, the insecurities of not knowing when hydro is going to go up or down. And, by the way, it will go up and up, but don't worry, you've got the assurances of Ernie Eves, who says, "It can't be." Jim Wilson says, "It cannot be." Stockwell says, "No, don't worry; it cannot be. It will be different in Ontario." It hasn't worked anywhere else, but Stockwell, Wilson and Eves say, "Don't worry, in Ontario it will work."

How will it work? On the stupid promise of a "trust me" kind of politics? It has worked nowhere else but it will work here? It's dumb politics, people of Ontario. It's dumb, dumb, dumb politics. You can't be sucked into these politics.

By the way, they leased Bruce B to British Energy. That lease gets us enough money from British Energy to pay for the decommissioning of this nuclear site and it covers the disposing of the spent fuel, more or less. That's all it does. So they pay us to worry about the decommissioning and the disposing of spent fuel and we give them \$500 million a year. Isn't that a great deal? It's a blood-sucking machine, sucking your blood, our blood. They make money; we give it to them and we lease it.

Do you remember about the 407, when the government said, "We're ending that lease; we're going to sell it off," and the prices just tripled? It's nuts. You're getting gouged. We're all getting gouged.

We don't know what's going to happen, because Ernie said, "Look, we got stopped from going around talking to people. We've got some ideas. Yes, maybe we'll lease it; I don't know." We don't know what they're going to do but they will certainly tell us after we leave here in June. You need to demand that we need to know what they want to do with this.

Remember, the leasing of Bruce B is pocketing British Energy close to \$500 million a year. Hydro One, those transmission lines, does not require a great deal of maintenance. They get in \$500 million to \$600 million a year, and you want to sell it off to the private sector so they can make money as they suck your blood and mine, so the private sector and the buddies of Ernie and of Dalton McGuinty—because the Liberals claim that only the Tories have links to the corporate sector, but Liberals have the same links, the same tentacles out. They don't want to say that but, between you and me, they are in the same kind of boat. The same kind of people go to the same fundraisers. You may or may not know it but it's true.

What are we saying? I'm saying to you that an election would be good. Hold off this issue. Put it off for an election. Do not introduce a bill that either leases or

sells it before that election. Tell the public what you want to do. Put it out to a vote. The public is not demanding selling off Hydro One, the wires. The public is not demanding selling off the Ontario generation of power. The public is not asking for it. The only ones asking for it are Eves, the former Premier, Mike Harris, and a couple of their rich buddies with whom they have lunch and dinner daily—good lunches and dinners.

1600

Sometimes I miss those things. I'd like to be able to have a couple of bucks to—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Who's picking up that tab?

Mr Marchese: Who's picking up that tab? I can tell you it isn't them.

Mr Kormos: Stockwell?

Mr Marchese: No. I'm sure those picking up the tab are the full of pocket.

I say to you, people of Ontario, I know it's confusing. We will end this confusion by you demanding, "Let's take back the market that has been deregulated, the generation of power." New Democrats promise to take that back. You need to demand of the Liberals to take the same position on the issue of Hydro One, the sell-off of our grid: "You can't sell it off. It's too important to Ontario. You cannot sell it off."

Imagine these grids connected across North America. Imagine the power that the private sector wields by being able to control these grids. You decide, Ontario government, you're going to get out of the way and let them control those grids and who gets what and when, have the private sector manipulate when you will get hydro and when you won't, and manipulate the fact that prices will go up. Because it's the nature of the beast. You privatize so they can make money. That's what it's about. It's not about giving you cheap hydro. It's about involving another party to put money deeply in those pockets of the wealthy.

So I'm urging the public to fight against this. I'm urging the public to call an election. I'm urging the public to call upon Ernie Eves and say, "Stop. You can't do anything with Hydro One. You have no mandate. Stop." That's what you've got to tell them. You, only you in those areas where you support these Tories in the 905 and beyond, only you. Not only you, but you have tremendous influence on these guys. You've got to get off your butts and say to the government, "Stop. You can't do this." I know many of you are saying it. More and more are saying it. That's why Ernie's backing off. That's why he's afraid. You've got to keep fighting. You've got to keep the pressure on. Keep the pressure on Ernie Eves especially; Stockwell as well, of course, but Ernie in particular.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to join the debate today on the opposition day motion which, as with most of their positions unfortunately, does not reflect the factual situation facing the province of Ontario, the ratepayers and our electricity market.

Many jurisdictions around the world have undertaken opening up their electricity markets to competition. In

every one of those jurisdictions, consumers have seen stable or declining prices.

We followed through on our government's commitment to fix the problems of the past and to safeguard the future of the electricity supply in our province. We made the move to a competitive market because the old monopoly system was clearly not working in the best interests of our taxpayers. We could not continue to use taxpayers' money to throw into that bottomless pit that was the old Ontario Hydro, and that had run up \$38 billion—\$38 billion, \$3,000 for every man, woman and child in this province—as the accumulated debt. The transition to competition was so smooth, the event has barely registered on the public consciousness.

It's like Y2K and all the sound and fury signifying nothing around that event. The only issue there is how retailers get rid of the thousands of generators they bought because it was supposed to go dark at 12:01 in this province. Here again, we heard the doom-and-gloom artists on the other side of the House, aided and abetted as they always are by the Toronto Star and other electrical engineers I guess they have on their staff at the Star, say that we would have blackouts, brownouts and all sorts of problems with electrical supply after May 1. Well, you know what? It didn't happen. What did happen is precisely what has happened in every other jurisdiction around the world that has opened up to competition. The price has fallen.

I know the opposition does not like to hold debates using the facts. Just minutes before Mr Marchese finished his comments, I went on to the Web. I called up the current hourly price in the electricity market in the province of Ontario today. I would want to remind everyone watching here today and those who read Hansard that the reference price on April 30, under that vaunted monopoly system we hear our opposition colleagues trumpet so much, was 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour or alternatively expressed as \$43 per megawatt hour. I'm sure it comes as a great disappointment to those doom-and-gloom artists that the price as we speak, right now, is \$30.56. That is \$12.44, or almost 30%, lower today than the price on April 30. And just in case folks think that is a flash in the pan, you can also go to the Web site of the Independent Electricity Market Operator. The Web site, for those who are interested, is www.theimo.com. You will find you can click on there and get not only an hourly rate right now; you can find out what the average price is so far today, so far this week, and what the price has been every week since the market opened. You will find, if you look at the various weekly reports, that while there are daily fluctuations—and of course there will be daily fluctuations; just as there are fluctuations in demand, there will be fluctuations in supply—the average price every single day since the market opened is fully one third below the price that utilities all across Ontario were paying on April 30.

Now, I do recall one news event, one news article over the last two weeks, that commented that for a two-hour period the price had gone up to nine cents a kilowatt

hour—nine cents. It sounded like we may have made a mistake, if that had been extrapolated. Unfortunately, the same newspaper article didn't mention that that same day, the average in the 24-hour period was 3.2 cents. The blatant dishonesty, the misleading of the ratepayers of this province, has to stop. It has to stop from members here and it has to stop in the media. The fact of the matter is, there is greater access to information about the price, the supply and all of the details surrounding the electricity market than ever before in our history. Utilizing the Web and utilizing the resources of the independent market operator, the Ontario Energy Board and the Ministry of Environment and Energy, we have been able to present to people all of the evidence, and it's overwhelming. This has been a good-news announcement, and it will continue to be.

Throughout the course of the year we'll also see seasonal fluctuations. That too is to be expected. We get some of our least expensive power with the spring runoff running through the Niagara Falls turbines, the Beck system, and of course all of the other hydraulic systems all across this province. That generation is at its peak in the spring. At other times, we rely on nuclear power for the bulk of our electric generation. The good news there is that another 2,000 megawatts, enough power for another entire city of Toronto, will come back on line over the next two years. At intervals of about six months each, 500 megawatts will be coming back on line as the Pickering A nuclear generator is brought back into the system.

The other good news is that with the announcement two years ago that we were opening up the market to competition, the private sector has responded. They have announced, and in some cases are already constructing, a total of 3,000 megawatts of privately owned generation. Again, that's enough power for one and a half more Torontos, a staggering increase in the amount of supply. I would challenge the members opposite and I would challenge the doom-and-gloom artists in the media to cite one product they have ever encountered in the marketplace where when there is increasing supply they have seen an increase in costs.

I think back to a decade ago when telecommunications was opened up to competition. There was a time in this fair land when we had a choice of one phone supplier, and that was Ma Bell. We know that with that monopoly came a complete lack of customer relations, came a complete lack of choice for consumers, came a complete lack of protection against the monopolistic abuses, against the monopolistic inefficiencies and bureaucracy, that typified that operation. Today you have a choice of at least two local phone services, an infinite number of long-distance suppliers, and four cellphone companies. In real dollars today, you're paying less for your phone bill than you paid 10 years ago. That was a commodity; that was a monopoly. We had, quite frankly, the same suggestions in many quarters, that somehow breaking up the Bell Canada monopoly would spell the end of quality phone service in this country. Nothing could have been

further from the case. In fact, even Bell Canada today would admit that the transformation they have had to undergo to remain competitive, to remain viable, to keep customers, has left them a far more efficient operation today. I'm sure if they were to be challenged to take a position one way or the other, the senior management of Bell Canada would applaud the fact that our country had to go through those changes.

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One of our key objectives in restructuring obviously has to be to put the electricity customers first. We've done this in designing the entire marketplace. We had the benefit of looking at what had happened in every one of those jurisdictions all across the world that had opened their marketplace to competition. In the United States alone there are 13 states—13, not just California. We've heard our colleagues opposite trumpet that old saw.

But by the way, even in California the market opening took place two years before the so-called crisis hit that state. The shortage that they faced a year ago in California was not the result of opening up the market to competition. It was the fact that the largest natural gas pipeline that services the turbines from which they get the bulk of their power blew up, denying the south end of California the source of most of its electricity. At the north end a drought in Washington state, coincidentally at precisely the wrong time, denied the north end adequate supplies of electricity. But through it all, the greatest mistruth that has been perpetuated about what happened in California is that the consumers suffered. As a result of very sloppy legislative design in California, the utilities were caught between a rock and a hard place and in the course of a few weeks found themselves \$15 billion in debt. But the good news was that no consumer saw their price change by one red cent. The consumer never saw the price change.

Clearly the legislators had not envisioned the kind of loophole that some unscrupulous operators found in the States. However, we have had the benefit of seeing the legislation they designed, we have reflected on the failings in California's legislative umbrella and we have made sure that the same opportunities for abuse do not exist in Ontario. We've had the benefit of the other 12 states, we've had the benefit of countries in Europe and in Australia and all around the world that have opened up their marketplaces to competition.

In the first 20 days of the new market, electricity prices have averaged 2.9 cents per kilowatt hour. I think that's a great start and something I would have thought all the members opposite, if they truly cared about their constituents—if they truly cared about that single person or the elderly person facing one of their greatest expenses every month, the hydro bill—that knowing it had dropped by one third, they would have put aside their partisan challenges in here and applauded what the private sector and the forces of competition have already achieved in just three short weeks.

The bottom line is that utilities are continuing to be mandated to supply them with power. You can sign up

for a long-term contract at a fixed price if you're at all concerned about fluctuations in the marketplace. I'm not aware of a single government member or any of their families that have signed such a contract and I think that speaks to the confidence we have that the market will continue to guarantee that we have affordable electricity, because the generation of electricity is now a competitive activity in the market, with supply and demand determining the price.

Whether or not a contract is signed with a retailer, local utilities must continue to deliver electricity and bill customers for transmission and distribution. No matter what choice consumers make, their local utility will still be responsible for the safety and reliability of local distribution.

I think there's a point that bears very strong emphasis and that's the misuse of the words "regulation" and "deregulation" in this debate. We are not deregulating the electricity market in the province of Ontario. In fact, there are more regulations in place governing the production, transmission and distribution of electricity than at any time in the history of this province. And anyone using the word "deregulation" is committing as great a fraud, as great a fearmongering as I could imagine in this whole debate.

It would be fair to say we're opening up to competition. It would be fair to say we're bringing in the private sector. It is not honest to say that deregulation is taking place. If the members opposite believe that to be the case, I challenge them here and now to come and stand in their place and talk about how many regulations there are now and talk about the specific regulations that once may have been in place that are not there today. The reason they won't do that is that they know, first off, that we have more regulations, but they also know that the nature of the regulations has changed. Probably for the first time in all of our lives the regulations surrounding the act are now understandable by lay people. You can actually understand what the Ontario Energy Board is supposed to do on your behalf, what the Independent Electricity Market Operator is supposed to do on your behalf, what Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One are supposed to do. You had to be a lawyer before this last redrafting, and that may please the members of the opposition who are lawyers, but I can tell you that the average customer didn't even try to get into the depth of understanding the regulations that surrounded the generation, transmission and distribution of their power. We've made it understandable now.

We've also dramatically beefed up the area of consumer protection. The members opposite will know that for something as simple as leaving one line out of the form that some of the utility retailers were using to attract new sales, they have been assessed extraordinary fines by the Ontario Energy Board; any reasonable person would have said a fairly minor transgression of the act, but we're taking a zero tolerance approach to consumer protection in this issue.

This matter is too important to leave to any one corporation. This is something where the province must

guarantee that as the market evolves, from that old monopoly, that hidebound, inefficient, bureaucratic monopoly that did nothing but drive up debt, to a competitive marketplace with more supply, lower prices, greater choice for customers, there is obviously a need for continued government oversight. We're doing that and we will continue to do that for as long as it is necessary. By law, the Ontario Energy Board will continue to strictly regulate the transmission and distribution of electricity. By law, the Independent Electricity Market Operator must protect the interests of consumers with respect to the reliability and the quality of electricity all across this province.

So there is no deregulation. It's competition combined with strong regulatory oversight.

I mentioned that we've put in place strong consumer protection when it comes to energy retailers. We've given the OEB all the tools it needs to oversee these new retailers and deal with those engaging in any kind of questionable practices. For example, as a condition of their OEB licences, all retailers must follow a new electricity retailer code of conduct that establishes very clear guidelines and standards. The code requires retailing salespeople to carry photo identification when they go door to door, to indicate clearly that they don't represent a distribution utility, to clearly state the price and other terms and to provide a clearly printed contract.

As well, we've guaranteed that retailers must provide a customer ample time to not only understand the offer without pressure or harassment but then to get out of the deal if they've changed their mind a short time after. No customer is required to show their electricity bill or any other information to a retailer unless they decide to sign a contract with a retailer. All electricity retailers are also subject to the same consumer protection laws as all other sellers in the province under the Consumer Protection Act.

Direct sales contracts must include what we're calling a buyer's-right-to-cancel statement in not less than big 12-point type, which is a very readable size of printed type, much larger than what could be suggested as fine print.

If there are problems, the Ontario Energy Board, headed by the former NDP cabinet minister Floyd Laughren, has the authority to levy financial penalties against a retailer or to revoke or suspend its licence. On April 25, in fact the OEB's director of licensing levied significant fines on two electricity retailers for violations of the code of conduct.

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As one more tenet of our consumer protection, the energy board is maintaining a log of all public complaints, as well as details on the nature of the complaints. The OEB licensing staff committed to investigating these complaints work with the companies involved. One retailing company has already established a six-point plan to instill the highest integrity in its sales force. We certainly encourage all retailers to adopt a similar attitude.

The energy board also has a dispute resolution process in place, and the director of licensing has the power to make a ruling if the dispute can't be resolved with the retailer.

A contract is a legal and binding document, and customers have the right to cancel a contract without penalty by notifying the company within 10 business days after they've signed it.

We've got to take some other steps, and I'll be quite candid: the government has to make sure that consumers better understand what has happened in the marketplace. There are a lot of changes taking place, and I think they're all good-news announcements. But the bottom line has to be that our motives are made very clear to every ratepayer, to every taxpayer. Our commitment is to supply an adequate and affordable supply of electricity within a strict regulation and with a guarantee of adequate consumer protection. Every decision we make will be consistent with those principles, but we are committed to making sure there is the greatest possible information available on the Net or, if someone doesn't have access to a computer, in written form.

Over the last few years we've produced brochures, fact sheets, bill inserts, a toll-free information line, the ministry Web site, town hall meetings, seniors information sessions, radio, print and television advertising. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that we're prepared to continue in all those areas as we move forward to make sure every single citizen in this province understands that, just like Y2K, the sky isn't falling, only the prices are.

In fact, since 1999 the ministry has distributed 1.3 million brochures and 11 million utility bill inserts in an effort to inform customers well before the marketplace opened. If consumers have questions, I invite them to phone the ministry's toll-free line at 1-888-668-4636. You can also get information off the Web site at www.est.gov.on.ca. If they have any questions about electricity retailers, consumers can call the Ontario Energy Board's customer service centre at 1-877-632-2727 or visit their Web site at www.oeb.gov.on.ca.

We've put electricity consumers first in designing our new electricity market, and we've made consumer protection priority number one. As we move forward with the restructuring of the electricity market, we're going to continue to put the needs of Ontario's electricity customers first and ensure their interests are protected.

I should also note on the record that next week we intend to table in this House what I believe will be the most progressive and the most aggressive program to promote alternative fuel sources in the province of Ontario and perhaps in the world. The restructuring of the marketplace was a necessary first step if we're going to take advantage of all the technical and technological opportunities out there.

We need to have more green power. We must move away from the use of carbon-based fossil fuels in the generation of power. I think the fact we actually have a unanimous report that was agreed to by representatives of all three parties is a very promising start, and I don't

believe there was any partisanship demonstrated throughout the course of the almost one year of the select committee's existence. It has the potential to dramatically change the way we get our electricity generated and, in turn, dramatically and positively impact air pollution in our province. It is necessary to have an open marketplace to take advantage of these opportunities, because now, as a matter of right, if someone puts up a wind turbine or builds a massive solar array or taps into the methane in a landfill site, they will have the right to sell power into the grid.

Green power is the future of this province. Consumer choice is the future. And everything we've done—restructuring, opening up to competition—is consistent with those goals of adequate supply, consumer choice and consumer protection.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I feel like I've been on the other end of a wind turbine for the last 10 minutes. Isn't that just like the Tories to try and obfuscate and throw up a smog screen in the midst of a debate about Hydro One transmission? I guess the government's speaking notes say, "Whatever you do, don't talk about the subject matter of the opposition day motion. Talk about generation. Don't talk about transmission."

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm just wondering if the word "obfuscate" is parliamentary.

The Acting Speaker: Yes. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: In the midst of this illusion of confusion, they try to obfuscate the obfuscation. They try to throw confusion into the mendacity of the debate from Scarborough East. They stand in their place and try and kill time instead of facing the music. And here's the music, here's the question, here's the story that this government's going to have to answer: why did you sell off the money-generating, publicly controlled, publicly owned electricity transmission highway?

This government will not answer that question. This government won't even talk about transmission. I listened, and it was painful. I listened to the entire speech of the member for Scarborough East, the entire speech, and at no point did he talk about transmission; he talked about generation.

All three parties agreed in 1997 in a joint committee report that there needs to be reform to electricity generation in the province of Ontario. Why? Well, either we are going to have to buy power from the United States or we are going to have to ensure that we have electricity made in Ontario. And if we're going to have electricity made in Ontario, if we're going to have cheaper electricity and electricity for the future—and, yes, all three parties agreed to the restructuring. All three parties agreed. We didn't agree on exactly how you do that. But in the midst of that debate, the government decided to sell Hydro One.

I've got to tell you, that issue was never on the table in the midst of the debate over electricity restructuring ever before. It would be the equivalent of talking about health care restructuring and in the middle of that deciding that

you're going to privatize ambulances. One has got nothing to do with the other.

So let's be clear. This opposition day motion is about the sale of the electricity transmission highway. It is not about what the member for Scarborough East was talking about—generation. That's an important issue and an important debate, but it is not one before this House right now.

What we are here to talk about is this government's attempt to sell off Hydro One, what turned out to be an illegal sale that had no statutory authority, under the noses of the people of Ontario, without any electoral mandate whatsoever, without any statutory authority to do it, without any political authority to do it.

I would love it if members Guzzo and Kells were participating in this debate, but I don't think they will be. According to media reports, the government caucus rejected the privatization of Hydro One. So who supports this privatization? Who does? The people don't. The opposition doesn't. The member for Scarborough East won't even talk about it.

I'd love to hear from the government members in the time remaining as to whether or not they actually support the privatization of our electricity transmission highway. Do you support it or not?

The Premier said that selling Hydro One is off the table for now. For now it's off the table. What a joke that is. What a future flip-flop that is. Either it's on the table or it's off the table. It can't just be suspended in mid-air beside the table, it's got to be on the table or off the table.

Over the course of the last three weeks, we have gotten every day a new story on Hydro One, every single day. One day, of course, in December of last year, we were told that Hydro One is going to be sold, out of nowhere, out of the blue. The only previous comment from this government on it was from energy minister Jim Wilson, and he said privatization of transmission is not on the table, it won't happen.

Out of the blue, without any mandate whatsoever, the announcement is made. No bill, no debate, no legislation, no nothing. The announcement is made: they're going to privatize Hydro One. Then of course it's found to be without any statutory authorization whatsoever.

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Mr Justice Gans ruled that it would be an illegal sale. The government would not have the authority to sell it. Then, a week later, the Premier says, "We're going to sell it anyway, but we're going to have public hearings on selling it," as if they're listening to the public when the decisions are to be made, "and we're also going to appeal the decision." Either you're going to legislate your result or you're going to actually listen to the courts. I think the government is wasting the courts' time by bringing forth this appeal when they are going to legislate their own answer. I don't know of another occasion when the government has decided not to hear from the courts before moving forth with an issue, but on this one occasion, the government is hell-bent on ramming through the privatization of electricity transmission in the province of Ontario.

The question I have is, why? Why would the government do it? Does anybody have an answer over there? You can't say it's competition, because this is a natural monopoly, transmission. There ain't no competition. You're not going to have one transmission company competing against another. The government has never suggested that's the case, and it would be misleading for anybody to suggest that selling off Hydro One is about competition.

This is a monopoly and the government knows it. There's no competition when it comes to Hydro One. It's a natural monopoly. That's why it's a natural money-maker. It makes \$330 million every year for the people. We, the people, get that money. The government is concerned about Hydro debt all of a sudden, and the government can be taking that money and paying down the Hydro debt. Over time, they could pay far more down of the Hydro debt by keeping Hydro One public than by any of the privatization options.

So why are they selling it? What is this about? Let's be clear. The debate here should be about whether or not to keep Hydro public or private, but the government throws up a smog screen whereby they don't want the public to understand what's going on here. That's why you had a speech such as we just had, where the member didn't talk about transmission; he talked about generation. It's an insult to the intelligence of the voters of Ontario.

So why are they doing this? They want to privatize Hydro One. That's the agenda, that's the mandate, that's what the government wants to do. They have five options: privatization, privatization, privatization, privatization or privatization. Income trust, privately controlled not-for-profit, a lease, a sale, a strategic sale—privatization, privatization, privatization, privatization, privatization—all options are privatization, so it's just which one.

This government's idea of consulting is to say, "We made a decision, we know exactly what we're going to do, but we want to hear from you anyway." That's not consulting. The government knows that. It's a faux process. It's part of the smog screen.

So why is the government doing it? Why are you selling Hydro One? I'll tell you why. It's one of two things. This is my best guess. It's ideology—and it's fitting that the member for Scarborough East should speak—and a belief that privatization is necessarily better. Privatization at any cost would be the government's approach, I suppose, in this case. "We're going to privatize no matter how much it costs the public." Why? That's just their ideology.

So it's either ideology or it's just incompetence. Now you say, "The Eves government is incompetent on the sale of Hydro One?" I'll say. This billion-dollar botch-up of electricity restructuring is of historic proportions. First, they never had any statutory authority to sell Hydro One. Then they decide to proceed. Then the next day the energy minister shows up in a scrum, in the midst of a public consultation that he stormed out of—he stormed

out, by the way, in the middle of a presentation by Duncan Hawthorne, of all people.

Anyway, the energy minister, because he doesn't want to have a bad news day, then throws out income trust as an option, out of nowhere. Where did "income trust" come from? In other words, "Trust me," says the government. "I know you couldn't trust us before when it came to the sale of Hydro One, but you can trust us now." Fine, we never went around to getting legal authority for it, engaging in the kind of tyrannical acts that I thought we got rid of in the 17th century in our parliamentary system. "Just trust me," says the government. We don't trust you. You say it's off the table, and then it's on the table. So then the next day—that day, rather; it's hard to keep track of all the flip-flops this government has undertaken with respect to the sale of Hydro One.

Mr Gilchrist: Nice try. You were there—

Mr Bryant: The member for Scarborough East says, "Nice try." You tell me what this is: one day you're selling it. The next day it's income trust. No, then you're selling it. No, now we're going to look at not-for-profit. Then the status quo is off the table even though in fact the status quo is making the public \$330 million. Then, wait a minute, keeping it public is on the table, the minister told me, but he said the status quo is out. So then I asked the Premier, "What about keeping Hydro One public as a publicly owned company?" He said yes. Guess what? The status quo is back on the table: off the table, on the table. Selling it is off the table, on the table. Keeping it public is off the table, on the table. It's impossible to keep up with this government. I don't know what they're going to do tomorrow. What are you going to do tomorrow? Do you know? Are you going to sell it tomorrow or not? No answer. So it's either ideology or incompetence.

What's the case for the sale of Hydro One? I'd love to hear the government stand up and make the case for the sale of Hydro One. Why would you sell it? The argument that has come out, not in this House but through painstaking efforts to get the justification for the sale of one of our most valuable assets, has been twofold: the argument is selling off Hydro One will decrease debt; second, private sector efficiencies. Let's address that.

With respect to debt, as I've already said, if you want to pay down the debt—and this government knows something about raising the debt; they raised it by more than \$20 billion in their first term—if you want to talk about debt, the government of Ontario can take the \$330 million that it earns every year from Hydro One and put it toward the debt. Over time, you're going to wipe out far more debt than by selling it. If you sell it, \$1.5 billion is all you get from the sale that you could put toward the debt. You can pay down that much money, \$330 million, every year. So why wouldn't the government take this current, constant flow of income and put it toward the debt, when they have before? They have found religion when it comes to paying down Hydro debt through Hydro One. But in any event, if they want to pay down the debt, then they should keep it public.

With respect to private sector efficiencies, I guess we can say this: with the management team that's in place, with the current salary-and-benefit package they have in place, one cannot imagine that it would be anything but an enormous failure by the government of Ontario to suggest for a moment that they haven't been able to get Hydro One in a position where it can in fact provide the kinds of efficiencies the public would expect.

Lastly, it has to be said that the great counter-argument to the sale of Hydro One is in fact the risk that's involved. We would lose control over this asset. We would lose control over the transmission of electricity—particularly troubling for northern and rural communities, where there's just that one line heading up there. If in fact we don't have the priority placed on the public, instead of on shareholder value, then just for electricity transmission—and again, the government wants to distract you and talk to you about electricity generation. But one of them is upstream, generation, and the other one is the stream, transmission. Don't be fooled, I say to the public. This is about the government either being incompetent in the way they address issues of debt or acting in an ideological fashion. This is either the nadir of Thatcherism within the Eves-Harris regime or it's an enormous admission of failure.

This has got to be the most important debate of this year, and yet the great tragedy is that we in this House are never going to have an opportunity to vote on the government's final decision. The member for Scarborough East won't get to vote on the government's final decision. We won't have legislation that gives us the opportunity to determine the fate of Hydro One. It is one of the worst abuses of executive—

Mr Gilchrist: What are you talking about?

Mr Bryant: Do you know something that I don't know?

Mr Gilchrist: Yes, a lot of things, actually.

Mr Bryant: No, no, just wait. Are you telling me right now that in fact the government is going to introduce legislation which provides the final—

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: No, it's not. I say to the member for Scarborough East, you bring the bill in. The government brings the bill in and we will debate the final result. We will debate the government's final decision. We, who represent communities in Ontario, will have an opportunity to be held accountable. Instead, what's going to happen?

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You're not going to get to vote on this, I say to the member for Scarborough East. You don't get to vote on the final decision of the government. Why? Because you are not in the cabinet. The cabinet's going to get to decide this in the middle of the World Cup. That's how it's going to work. In the middle of July, they get the power to do it and then they're just going to go ahead and do it—no accountability. This government wants to fool the public into thinking there's accountability. This government wants to fool the public into thinking this is

about generating electricity. It's not. The Premier promised to keep the sale and privatization of Hydro One off the table. It is a promise that he won't keep.

Mr Christopherson: Many of my comments will segue nicely from where my friend from St Paul's was in terms of his comments.

I want to read into the record precisely what the former energy minister for this government said just a short while ago, a few short years ago, when he was responsible for hydro and for all energy in this province. He said, "We do not want a fire sale, so we are not talking about privatization." Guess what? The fire sale is on and privatization is on.

My friend from St Paul's hits it dead on when he says it's a disgraceful process because this place won't even get an opportunity to have a say. The government has already said, through the Premier, "We'll make this decision in the summer." It's so blatant and so obvious.

I agree with the member from St Paul's. Let's ask the central question: why is it being sold?

Mr Gilchrist: What would you like the government to do, David?

Mr Christopherson: You didn't want to answer questions before, when you were given an opportunity. Why don't you just sit there? I listened to you and you can listen to me, or will I just talk over you the whole time? I'm prepared to.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough East isn't being very helpful.

The member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: The central question is, why is it for sale? If you take a look at my community of Hamilton as an example, you've got a rare coalition who agree that this is a bad idea, certainly for our local economy in Hamilton but also for our citizens. Unless something has changed—and if it has as of this date, I'll be prepared to stand in my place and correct the record—then to the best of my knowledge, the position taken by Stelco and Dofasco is still one of saying, at the very least, "Slow down. Take a look at this." They have real concerns. Their concern is both the price of power and the availability. When you're in steel production, you've got to have power there when you need it. They can't afford to be saying, "OK, the economy's moving. We've got orders in here. We're going to crank things up and start hitting all the buttons," and nothing happens, particularly when you take a look at the history of this province, where we haven't had that problem. This is not a problem out there that's broken and needs to be solved.

So you've got the example of Stelco and Dofasco in Hamilton. You've got the labour movement, environmentalists, people who care and know a lot more about the future of energy than most of us in this place and you've got the average citizen all united in saying, "Why are you doing this? I don't see any benefit. You don't have a mandate. Stop it."

One of the reasons they give—and we've heard it over and over—is the debt. Well, first of all, let's remember that the party of the current government was in the

driver's seat when the bulk of the debt was generated, with a little help from the Liberals when they were in power. A lot of this is Darlington.

Mr Gilchrist: Hear, hear.

Mr Christopherson: Well, you can applaud that, I say to the member from Scarborough East, but nonetheless it was your party that said, "It's OK to run these kinds of debts."

What amazes me is that somehow selling Hydro is going to solve the debt problem and leave the public off the hook. If it stays in the public domain, obviously the debt is going to be paid by the people who pay their hydro bills. But do you know what? If you sell it to the private sector, do you think they're going to make a gift to the people of Ontario of paying off the debt and saying, "That's our contribution to society, and now we'll go about operating everything from here on in"? It's one of those myths about privatization that drives us crazy. You talk about privatizing things like suddenly it materializes money out of nowhere. When private entities buy a public entity, it's still going to be paid for, and it's going to be paid for by the same users of the system.

In most cases when this government talks about efficiency, it's a nice code word. What it usually means is eliminate jobs, pay the people who remain less and pay them less benefits. In the case of Enron—a word this government just hates to hear—we find out that not only did they make money by following the usual process I just described, but they also manipulated the availability of power. The story is coming out slowly but surely, but it's there to be seen. Major private power producers in the States deliberately withheld power from the grid. How did they do it? Well, you have maintenance programs that suddenly appear out of nowhere that weren't there before, so you have to shut down some operations, or maintenance programs that were supposed to be a month or two suddenly are six or eight months—whatever excuse they could come up with. Why would they want to do that? Supply and demand. The less supply, the greater the demand and the greater the price.

I for one don't have a whole lot of faith, nor for that matter a great deal of expectation, that private power generators and suppliers are supposed to make the public concern their number one priority. They've certainly got a lot of obligations, and where they won't do it willingly, you bet, let's legislate. Let's use the hammer of the law to make sure the public's needs are met. But it's not the *raison d'être* of business. Government, better than most, knows that.

What we had in Ontario was the provision of power for almost a hundred years that said, "Power at cost." I've never known a blackout or brownout as a result of any kind of lack of supply. There have been interruptions because of storms and things of that nature but never a lack of availability of power. It's one of the reasons the Golden Horseshoe is the economic engine of the entire nation and plays a key role in the entire North American economy. It was always at cost. Nobody was in there

ripping off the system, ripping off business and ripping off homeowners. Yes, their *raison d'être* every day was public interest. It served us well for a hundred years. Why, suddenly, doesn't it work?

I guess this great right-wing thinking would have come about in, what, the last three years and a bit? Jim Wilson said just in 1998 that they weren't going to do it; it would have been a fire sale. I think he went on to say he was hoping for the future that they would turn Hydro around and it would continue to contribute to society and the betterment of our economy. Sounds to me like what it's been doing all my lifetime, all my parents' lifetime and into my grandparents' lifetime. Left alone it would be there for my daughter and the generations that follow after her. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, we're going to sell it. Mike Harris says, "I'm leaving and, by the way, on the way out the door I'm putting a 'For Sale' sign on Hydro One."

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This government says, "Don't worry about California. Don't worry about Alberta." Can you imagine if either of the two opposition parties were on the other benches and they were over here and somebody had the audacity to stand up and say, "Yes, there have been these disasters in California and there have been these disasters in Alberta, but it's going to be different for us just because it's us." What a joke. It would be a lot funnier if it weren't so serious.

When I visit the Hamilton chamber of commerce, I don't run into a single business person who says this is a good idea; in fact, quite the contrary. What I hear is that they're worried about what it means for the future on both sides, supply and cost. When I talk to seniors in Hamilton, when I talk to disabled in Hamilton and to other people who are on fixed incomes, they're terrified, because they can't say yes or no to hydro. When we live in this part of the planet where we have the kind of weather we do, it makes absolutely no sense to go from a system that is virtually guaranteed—that when Ontarians need heat, it's there, when they need light, it's there, when they need power, it's there—and then the very next day turn around and say, "Now things are a little uncertain." Yet that's what this government is putting forward.

A couple of quick points before I leave time for my leader to wrap up our debate in the next rotation:

I want to just talk for a second about NAFTA. You've got NAFTA out there, and it covers practically everything, but power is exempt. Right now, our power is exempt from the agreement, meaning that we can supply our domestic market first, foremost and at whatever price we want, and we can export any surplus into the American market and sell it at market demand. That makes a lot of sense. As we understand the interpretation of NAFTA—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): You're wrong.

Mr Christopherson: I hear one of the government members say, "You're wrong." There's his contribution to this debate: "You're wrong." The fact is, your govern-

ment says you've got a report, but won't release it, that says differently. But as we understand NAFTA, as soon as you privatize it, you remove all the protections, the exemptions we currently have protecting our power to our citizens and our businesses, and you leave us subject to all the rules of NAFTA, meaning we can't do anything for our domestic market first as a priority. Why would we give that up for a roll of the dice? Why would we allow something to go from an exempt status vis-à-vis NAFTA to suddenly being captured by it? We would do it willingly, deliberately by a supposedly democratically elected government who, by the way, didn't mention this in the last election in 1999. This worries people, and there's good reason for it to worry them.

I want to make sure I give thanks to CEP and CUPE. There are a lot of people, especially on that side, who like to say, "Oh, you know, the unions were great back in the old days, but we really don't need them any more." Give yourselves a shake, folks. If it wasn't for the organized labour movement putting their funds and their means to this issue and taking this to court, it would all be over by now. It would already be sold. It was stopped because of the labour movement saying, "This is important to our members and society, and we're going to take this government to court." They did, and they won.

The last thing: if anybody still has any doubts about whether we should take this risk, keep in mind that one of the key advisers leading up to the sale was Enron. If you haven't accepted the fact that from a business perspective they're totally incompetent, then you ought to be terrified by their business ethics, and I say that advisedly. These are the key people who advised the government on how they ought to go about selling Hydro One.

This is a bad deal for the people of Ontario and for the businesses of Ontario. The labour movement has given us an opportunity to stop this government, and my friend Mr Marchese is absolutely right: by virtue of the public pressure, by people caring enough, signing petitions, phoning Tory backbenchers, getting messages into the Premier's office, they're stumbling; they're wavering. They're doing their polling and it's coming back massively, it has to, unless Hamilton is way out of step with the rest of the province on this, and I don't think that's the case.

They are vulnerable, finally, on one of their dictatorial decrees, and we can stop them if we care enough to take action. Part of that is speaking out today but the rest of it is in the hands of the public. They've got to care enough. You've got to care enough to do something, to send a message, because on this one we can beat them.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm very pleased today to join in on opposition day and add to the member from Scarborough East and what he was talking about in terms of the opening of the market and consumer protection. I can certainly see why people might be nervous about what's going on if they've been listening to the third party especially, the opposition parties. I know the leader of the third party was in my riding and he was quoted in the local papers talking about how

prices were going to double and triple, quadruple; I believe I heard him say "quadruple."

As the member from Scarborough East has pointed out, we've taken the first step to open the electricity market, on May 1. We now have a competitive electricity market, and what has happened? The average price has been about 3.1 cents per kilowatt hour. The old price before market opening I believe was 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. That is basically about a 30% reduction in the cost of the commodity electricity that has occurred since market opening. So I think it's fair to say that the third party has been trying to make people nervous about this and they've been not completely factual in the way they've been representing the facts on this.

Now it's time to take the next step. The legislation the government will be introducing will allow us to look at all possible options for Hydro One—privatization if necessary; not necessarily privatization.

The Premier asked the Minister of Environment and Energy, Chris Stockwell, to consult with the public and electricity stakeholders on electricity issues and the features of the legislation. As a result, a consultation paper on Hydro One was prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Energy, and the Ontario Electricity Restructuring Forum: Hydro One, headed by Minister Stockwell, travelled across the province between April 30 and May 8, hearing from many interested groups and people. We wanted to hear the public's view on our intention to develop legislation to permit Ontarians to invest directly in Hydro One and we received some innovative and constructive proposals.

Minister Stockwell asked for comments on what features the legislation should contain. He asked for people's advice on how to pay down the old Ontario Hydro debt; how to ensure adequate investment in our wires network; how to protect jobs in Ontario; how to ensure that transmission and distribution rates remain reasonable; how to make sure that our citizens will benefit from any transaction relating to Hydro One; how to ensure that Hydro One is efficient and enhance the safety and reliability of our transmission and distribution system; and how to ensure that Ontario citizens continue to have a say.

The consultations were also instrumental in explaining to people why our electricity sector needed restructuring. I'd like to take a few moments to review some of these important reasons.

Although the old Ontario Hydro had served us well for many years and delivered below-average prices for electricity, it had run into problems. Between 1983 and 1993, the price of electricity almost doubled, increasing by 94%. That's a 94% increase in the price of electricity from 1983 to 1993. That certainly affects the competitiveness of all the businesses in this province. It certainly affects all the consumers in this province in terms of paying their individual hydroelectric bills.

Debt and other liabilities ballooned from \$12 billion in 1980 to more than \$38 billion by 1999. This was about \$10,000 for every electricity customer in the province. It

was not well known that through the 1990s, more than 35% of every electricity bill in Ontario went to paying for debt interest on that \$38 billion. I'm not talking about paying down the debt; I'm talking about just paying the interest on that \$38 billion. This happens to be one of the highest percentages in the industrialized world. As a result, electricity rates were frozen between 1993 and 2001 in order to provide some stability and protection for customers, but this solution could only be a temporary measure.

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Ontario Hydro's faltering financial performance was closely associated with the mismanagement of its nuclear plants. By 1996, they were operating at 65% capacity, well below the 85% capacity level considered excellent within the industry. It's interesting that in the last year since British Energy took over the Bruce nuclear plant and has been leasing it, they have hit the 85% efficiency level which is so critical to having nuclear energy that is cost-effective. I think the 18,000-strong Power Workers' Union is very supportive of what's been happening in the electricity market, partly because they see the success that's been achieved at the Bruce nuclear plant.

In 1997, an all-party committee of MPPs, the select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs, reported that the "failure of Ontario Hydro management to arrest the deterioration of nuclear plant performance had cost Ontarians billions of dollars in replacement energy costs." Out-of-control costs meant that needed investments in the electricity sector were not made. Transmission and distribution were neglected as more resources were poured into nuclear plants. Without the necessary capital infusions, sustaining the reliability of the grid into the future is in question. As a consequence, Hydro One will have to make significant capital expenditures with respect to these assets over the next several years.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that Ontario Hydro was clearly out of control. But Ontario wasn't the only jurisdiction facing such problems. Governments around the world, from Britain to Australia, started reforming their electricity sectors to deliver stable prices and better performance to customers through competition. The world wasn't standing still. Our electricity system, that for so long had been an economic advantage, was at the risk of becoming a competitive disadvantage that would drive away jobs and investment from Ontario. We simply couldn't let that happen.

In 1995, our government made the commitment to stop the spiralling debt and high costs. We put a plan in place to restructure Ontario's electricity sector. The government asked former Liberal finance minister, the Honourable Donald Macdonald, to head a committee to consult with the people of Ontario on our electricity sector. The Macdonald committee heard from hundreds of people. In 1996 it issued its report, *A Framework for Competition*, which recommended major changes to our electricity system based on a competitive market. This is much like the one that existed for natural gas in Ontario for the past several years.

Some 18 months later, the government's white paper, *Direction for Change: Charting a Course for Competitive Electricity and Jobs in Ontario*, was released. It endorsed many of the proposed directions of the Macdonald committee.

The government then brought together industry and consumer experts to plan a new electricity market that would benefit customers. Chaired by Ron Daniels, dean of the University of Toronto law school, the Market Design Committee developed a detailed plan for a competitive electricity system.

In October 1998, the Energy Competition Act was proclaimed after much public debate and input. This transformed the old Ontario Hydro into two main commercial companies, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. It also created a new regulatory body, the Independent Electricity Market Operator, and strengthened the powers of the Ontario Energy Board to ensure that consumers would be protected in a competitive electricity market, because, as was mentioned by the member for Scarborough East, strong regulation is important in a competitive market.

We were able to eliminate the much-criticized practices of having the old Ontario Hydro regulate itself and having the transmission wires operated by the same company that owned most of the generating plants. Now, Hydro One operates the province-wide electricity transmission grid and serves local distribution systems with more than 1.2 million customers.

Hydro One and the other 94 local distribution companies are natural monopolies subject to independent regulation by the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Market Operator. The Ontario Energy Board regulates and approves transmission and distribution rates. No matter what form Hydro One is in, the Ontario Energy Board is the body that approves the prices that they charge. Their performance-based regulation will provide incentives for Hydro One and other utilities to lower costs and share savings with customers. The independent market operator must, by law, protect the interests of consumers with respect to the reliability and quality of electricity service in the province.

Now that competition is being introduced in the generation of electricity, customers can choose to purchase their electricity from a retailer or they can choose to do nothing and their current supplier will continue to supply them with power at market rates. I know in my own case, I'm just staying with market rates because I have confidence in the market.

The Ontario Energy Board is responsible for licensing all retail sellers of electricity and ensuring they abide by a code of conduct in order to protect customers by preventing abuse or fraud. The IMO ensures the efficient, safe and reliable operation of the market, while the Ontario Energy Board ensures fair competition.

Ontario Power Generation owns and operates the generating plants of the old Ontario Hydro. OPG is licensed by the Ontario Energy Board and is required, through the selling or leasing of its plants, to reduce its

dominance of the electricity generation market in order to ensure a truly competitive market. Currently they have about 75% of the market, and I believe within 10 years they need to be down to about 35% of the market.

Some people refer to this new structure as deregulation—I know I've heard that from the opposition benches a lot—suggesting that the system is no longer regulated. Nothing could be further from the truth. The old system was based on self-regulation by Ontario Hydro, which allowed the monopoly to set its own rates. Not surprisingly, self-regulation by the old monopoly was ineffective, in large part because of an inherent conflict of interest. The new, strengthened regulatory regime puts Hydro One's transmission and distribution businesses under independent regulation on a level playing field with other transmitters and distributors in Ontario. And under the new system, no matter who owns the transmission, distribution, retailing or generation businesses in Ontario, all of them, including those already owned by the private sector, are licensed and regulated by the Ontario Energy Board and the independent market operator.

Environmental protection is also one of the government's main objectives in restructuring Ontario's electricity system. Ontario's new environmental standards and emission caps for electricity generation are among the toughest in North America. Competition will allow customers for the first time to choose cleaner types of electricity, such as wind or solar power. The restructuring of our electricity system will create jobs, promote investment and ensure that electricity customers in this province enjoy a reliable supply of power at the lowest possible cost. In fact, a recent analysis by Professor Fred Lazar of York University concluded that the competitive market could save Ontario electricity customers from \$3 billion to \$6 billion by 2010. I say, that is essential for business in this province and it's essential for all those consumers in this province.

But we can't ignore the fact that our aging electricity towers and wires require significant new investment to maintain and strengthen safety and reliability. For this year alone, capital expenditures are estimated at \$550 million for Hydro One's transmission and distribution businesses. Government does not need to use taxpayer dollars to fund the investment required in electricity transmission, any more than it does in natural gas pipelines or local telephone or cable companies. Government should not take funding away from priorities such as hospitals and education—schools—to pay for our electricity networks. Alberta and Nova Scotia have transmission businesses that are owned by the private sector, so why shouldn't Ontario explore all its options?

Government spending is not required and the taxpayers should not have to take on the added burden of providing financial support for an electricity network that can be better provided by investors. Hydro One must improve its efficiency, for the benefit of its customers. A company with private investors will respond more aggressively to incentives under performance-based regulations to lower costs and share the benefits with consumers.

Taxpayers, the Provincial Auditor and electricity rate-payers expect that \$38 billion in debt and other liabilities to be paid down. The faster this debt is removed, the sooner the savings from competition can be reflected in lower electricity prices for consumers.

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We believe that further restructuring of Hydro One is the best guarantee that the necessary investment needed for renewal and innovation will be made, that the existing debt will be paid down quickly, that the taxpayer risk will be eliminated and cost and prices will be better controlled.

Once legislation for Hydro One is introduced, we will continue our consultation with the people of Ontario through an all-party committee. This will focus further discussion and debate on the future of Hydro One, keeping our promise to consult with the people of Ontario on the future of their transmission and distribution system. Based on this input, the government will respond with the best course of action that achieves the goals for Hydro One.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm delighted to join the debate on the motion by our leader, Dalton McGuinty, with respect to hydro and the possible sale of Hydro One. I hope that every member of the House today will support Mr McGuinty's motion. It's not asking very much of the Premier and the government when he says, "Either you tell us what you're going to do with Hydro—don't sell it—or call an election and go to the people."

I think Mr McGuinty is quite right when he tells the Premier, "We want to know, the public wants to know and the public wants to have a say with respect to the sale of Hydro One." If the Premier, Mr Eves, says, "We are going to sell it," then we are saying, "Before you sell it, go to the people. Consult the people."

When the Minister of Energy says, "We are consulting with the people"—you cannot consult with the people for two or three months and then make a deal after this Legislature is adjourned at the end of June and make a decision in May. We would like to make a decision in this House on behalf of the people of Ontario and we want to know exactly what the government is proposing as to the sale of Hydro One.

What is Hydro One? It is the only transmission line available that brings energy into the homes, industries and businesses of Ontario. There is no other. It's like selling the 407 and then trying to build another 407 next to it. It is impossible to build another 407 along the existing 407. It's sold, it's gone, and we cannot provide another 407. Therefore, we cannot provide another transmission line once this one is sold.

I think our leader, Mr McGuinty, is quite right when he says, "Mr Premier, the people of Ontario want to know. Don't sell Hydro One, and if you do, then call an election. Consult the people and see what the people have to say."

Why are we at this particular juncture dealing with the sale of Ontario Hydro? Did the people say, "Yes, it's beneficial to us"? Absolutely not. There is nothing the

public of Ontario, the citizens of Ontario, will benefit from with the sale of Hydro One.

Therefore, I would say to Premier Eves and to the members of the government, do not have a fire sale, do not rush into the sale of Hydro One, because there is no plan. They have not shown the people of Ontario that indeed there is a plan which makes sense, that the people of Ontario can benefit from it.

I think the people of Ontario are quite right when they say, "What is Hydro One? Why are they selling it, and why now?" We can't believe that the Premier is considering selling all the assets of Hydro One to pay down the debt. After all, Hydro One is making money for the citizens of Ontario.

We have seen the proof with the Bruce generating station, which was privatized and sold to an English conglomerate, and we couldn't make a profit; we were not showing a profit. Indeed, in the first quarter since that generating station was privatized, they are showing a profit of \$250 million. Isn't it nice that we are selling all the assets that are making money on behalf of the people of Ontario?

I think it's quite wrong that the Premier continues to say we are going to sell it through the Minister of Energy when the Premier himself said the deal is off the table. I think we are in a position to say to the Premier, "Let us know. Through this House, tell the people of Ontario exactly what your position is." The problem is that they don't have a position because their position keeps on shifting, changing—not by the day, but by the hour. It's on the table; it's off the table; it's under the table. We are going to have it partly private, partly sold. We're going to sell it; we're going to lease it. We are to create a trust fund. Who is going to be able to afford to invest in a trust fund? Certainly not the working people of Ontario.

That is why we should try to protect this wonderful facility which, if sold, will not come back into the hands of the people of Ontario any more. You know what? Like the 407, we will be at their mercy. Once it is gone, we have no resource, no control with respect to the rates, and they will go high. So when I hear the members from the government say, "Give us a chance; the rates will come down"—no, we have already seen what the government can do, and so far they have been extremely disappointing with their promises. Why should we, the people of Ontario, believe the government and the Premier now today? I don't think so.

I say to the Premier and the members of the government, do the right thing. Support the motion that has been tabled today by the Leader of the Opposition, the Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty here. It is quite proper to say to the government that there is no benefit in selling Hydro One. If you do, before you do, go to the people of Ontario and call an election. It is such a huge issue, it deserves a consultation with the people of Ontario. I do fully support our leader, Dalton McGuinty, and his motion today.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to join in this debate. I want to remind people at

home that this is a debate calling upon the government to either keep its promise to take the sale of Hydro One off the table by abandoning its plans to proceed with legislation that would enable the government to privatize Hydro One, or to call a general election on this issue. New Democrats support this resolution. We're going to vote for it.

But I want to ask the members of the Liberal caucus, where were you a year ago when New Democrats brought forward a resolution calling on the government to cancel privatization? All of the Liberal members spoke against it. In fact, all of the Liberal members—Bartolucci, Caplan, Cole, Conway, Crozier, Di Cocco, Gerretsen, Gravelle, Hoy, Peters, Phillips—voted with the Conservative government in favour of privatization.

Where were the Liberals when, this past fall, on October 31, 2001, the Liberal energy critic, Mr Conway, mailed out a letter to the people on Bay Street in favour of Hydro privatization? In the letter he says, "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton McGuinty "and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario" and of the restructuring, ie, privatization. Then please send your \$350 cheque to the Liberal Party.

Where were the Liberals on December 12, 2001, when the then Harris government announced that it was going to privatize Hydro One? Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty is quoted in the Canadian Press as saying, "Privatizing ... was the right move, but should have been done following an open debate in the Legislature." I can only conclude that just as this government is trying to flip-flop day to day to confuse the public, Liberals have been doing the same. But I'm glad to have the opportunity to debate this resolution, and I want to speak to the people at home, because this is who it matters to.

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This is probably the most important economic issue facing us today. What we have had in Ontario is a dedicated electricity system, a system dedicated to serving the consumers of Ontario and the industries of Ontario, and the mandate was to provide power at cost. If you look over the last 20, 30, 40, 50 years, Ontario has enjoyed some of the most reasonable and affordable electricity prices. But more importantly, we have enjoyed predictability and reliability of supply, knowing that when industries want to operate, the electricity would be there in a reliable, predictable form and at prices that could be predicted.

What this government has in mind is to sell off our dedicated electricity system so that we will no longer have an electricity system that is dedicated to serving us. What they have in mind, in fact, is to create a system whereby more and more of the hydroelectricity that is produced in Ontario is sold into the United States, where prices are already much higher, because the United States, in many state jurisdictions, has already gone down this road of privatization and deregulation, so their prices are much higher.

I invite you to make a comparison. Look at the price of hydroelectricity as provided by publicly owned

utilities and compare it to the price of electricity where it is privately owned and deregulated. Do you know what you'll find? In every case the price of publicly owned power at cost is much cheaper. Compare Manitoba Hydro and the price of electricity there with California, Pennsylvania, Montana or New York and you'll be amazed at how much more reasonable the price is in Manitoba. Or compare HydroQuébec or BC Hydro. Without exception, where provinces have kept control of their own electricity system and operated it as a public utility, the cost of hydroelectricity is much less than where it's been privatized and deregulated.

You've heard a lot of the Conservatives here spouting their line today. Let them say what they want; I want to say to you that the really important document is a document called the prospectus. When this government decided they wanted to privatize hydro, they had to put forward a prospectus, and the prospectus has to list what the business is, what the liabilities are, what the assets are, what the so-called strategic plan is. If you don't tell everything in the prospectus, it's a criminal offence. You can go to jail. What you find in the prospectus is a detailed list of what is going on.

I invite you to get this prospectus—the government says it should be available—and go to page 48. It lists the strategy of a privatized Hydro One. Do you know what it says? “Our goal is to be one of the leading electricity delivery companies in North America,” not Ontario. “We will seek to achieve this goal and to enhance our profitability by continuing to implement the following strategies.” Then it says, “Our transmission network runs the length of the entire Great Lakes region, positioning us to serve as a significant link between Canadian electricity generation sources and large neighbouring markets in the United States.”

In this document where they cannot tell a lie, otherwise they face a criminal offence, they admit the whole strategy of selling off Hydro One, of Hydro One expanding its transmission lines under Lake Erie, into Michigan, into Pennsylvania, into New York, is to sell electricity generated in Ontario into markets in the United States where they can get a higher price. That's the strategy. And let me tell you the price of electricity in New York City is double what it is in Toronto, the price of electricity in Boston is almost double, the price of electricity in Chicago and Detroit is almost double.

After the Bay Street cronies, the Bay Street friends of this government, succeed in privatizing, after they've sold it off and purchased the transmission lines into Boston, New York, Chicago and Detroit and can get a much higher price there, what do you think they're going to ask Ontario consumers to pay? They're going to say, “Well, if we can get this amount of money selling the electricity to New York, this is what you must pay.”

Right now as a public utility we are essentially exempt from the North American Free Trade Agreement, as are Hydro-Québec and Manitoba Hydro; that is, we can look after our own people in Ontario first at a lower cost, a lower price, and then, if there is a surplus from time to

time, we can sell that surplus into the United States at whatever higher price there is, and that money flows to the ratepayers of Ontario to maintain our system. We're NAFTA-exempt.

But should this government have its way and privatize the system, we would then be required under NAFTA to give up that two-price system. NAFTA says you can't have a lower price for Ontario consumers and Ontario industry and then sell the excess at a higher price. You have to let the market decide and, as you can read from the corporate plan of a privatized Hydro One, it's all about selling as much electricity in the United States as possible at a higher price. If Ontario industries and Ontario residents want to keep access to our own electricity, we would have to pay that much higher price too.

NAFTA also says you cannot control exports. You cannot say all this electricity is needed in Ontario; it can't be exported. NAFTA doesn't allow you to do that. NAFTA says the market will decide. Whoever is prepared to pay more money for the electricity gets it. That's what this is all about.

You know, I haven't heard anyone on the doorstep of this Legislature holding demonstrations demanding that we sell off our hydroelectricity generation or our hydroelectricity transmission. I've seen lots of articles in the business pages of the Globe and Mail and the National Post from this government's friends on Bay Street. Oh yes, they want it privatized, because they see the opportunity to make a lot of money here. First they make money selling the electricity into New York, Boston, Chicago and Detroit at much higher rates, and then they say to the 11 million people across Ontario, “This is the new rate.”

Boy, people can make a lot of money here. Do you want an indication of how much money can be made? Since the Conservatives put this plan in place—since they started working on this—the salaries of the people who work at Hydro One have gone from about \$400,000 a year to the president and chief executive officer to now over \$2.5 million, and the people behind her, \$1.5 million. If the government privatizes or refuses to privatize—their choice—the four top executives would get at least \$12.5 million in payouts. That's the kind of money that can be made, and this government is looking after—

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join the debate with respect to the motion put forth by the opposition. To be candid, there's nothing before the Legislature today with respect to Hydro One; nothing at all is in front of the Legislature. What has happened with respect to the electricity market, as my constituents are aware, is that it did open May 1.

In my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the source to obtain your electricity in the city of Barrie is Barrie Hydro. That hasn't changed. That availability is still there. In Bradford West Gwillimbury you can obtain your electricity through Barrie Hydro also. In the town of Innisfil you can obtain your electricity through Innisfil Hydro.

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To make it very clear, what we want to deal with here is what is before us. I think the public is confused enough as it is. There should not be any confusion in terms of what happened on May 1. Nothing has really changed. The availability in terms of how you purchase your hydro, certainly in my riding, has always been fairly simple. But what also happened on May 1 is that there is a greater choice in terms of where you want to get your hydro. I'm pleased to say that in the first 20 days of the market opening, electricity prices have averaged 2.9 cents per kilowatt hour, well down from the previously regulated price of 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. What happened on May 1 was that there was a market opening.

It's also important to know that there hasn't been a deregulation of the electricity sector. In fact, for the first time, the transmission and distribution of electricity will be strictly regulated by the Ontario Energy Board in order to protect customers. That's the regulatory body that will deal with electricity prices.

As well, the Ontario Energy Board has been given increased powers to license market participants and ensure they abide by the rules. We've put in place tough customer protection laws for energy marketers. They require electricity retailers and gas marketers to operate fairly and honestly. They have to be licensed with respect to being able to operate and they have to be licensed through the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board has the authority to levy financial penalties against a retailer or revoke or suspend its licence if there is a violation of the code of conduct.

There is zero tolerance for anyone engaging in questionable marketing practices. The Ontario Energy Board's director of licensing sent a clear message on April 25 by serving two electricity retailers with notices of fines for violations of the electricity retailer code of conduct. The government is doing its part through consumer education to ensure there is no misinformation in the market, and we have an extensive consumer education program aimed at developing a broader awareness.

It's important for the public to understand the sources of hydro that they have within their area, whether it's local—as in my area, Barrie Hydro or Innisfil Hydro. If they wish to go forth and try to get a price increase, or if you're looking at a decrease in terms of their operations, they've got to go through the Ontario Energy Board. That's the accountability that we have with respect to the electricity market, which a lot of people have to understand.

When we gave the opportunity to the city of Barrie in terms of how they wanted to operate Barrie Hydro, they had the choice to operate it as a profit corporation or as a non-profit corporation. The city of Barrie went ahead, as well as the town of Innisfil. They had the choice; they could decide to operate it as a profit or a non-profit corporation. They chose to operate it as a profit corporation in Barrie. That's not necessarily how I would have agreed to operate that particular operation, but that's what they chose. The council of the city of Barrie made

the decision that they wanted to operate Barrie Hydro as a profit corporation. Their accountability is to the taxpayers of Barrie, but in terms of making them accountable in terms of the electricity market, it's to the Ontario Energy Board. There's a very simplified procedure in terms of how to make them accountable.

What the opposition wants to put forth today in the Legislature and what they want to talk about, which is not in front of the Legislature, is Hydro One; how Hydro One will operate. It's a premature question. Certainly it's a question for the future.

The question is, what is the model for Hydro One? There's a lot of debate around that in terms of whether it should be under public ownership or private ownership, whether there should be different methods of public control. But the bottom line is—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You said the other day you wanted it under public ownership.

Mr Tascona: I said public control, to the member for St Catharines.

What we want to deal with here are a number of issues with respect to Hydro One as we move away from just dealing with the opening of the market. With respect to Hydro One, we know they are facing a debt. They have a debt of about \$38 billion. That's a fundamental issue that has to be dealt with: how do you remove that debt load? There is also an issue with respect to how you make Hydro One more efficient. Certainly there have been methods and progress with respect to Hydro One in terms of getting them to operate more efficiently. The bottom line is they still have that debt load. We have to look at ways to make it the most effective operation it can possibly be regardless of the ownership issue.

I want to be clear about this with respect to what we're dealing with here today. We're dealing with a process that we put in place. The Premier has said that he wants input from the public with respect to how Hydro One should be operated; in other words, the model in terms of how Hydro One should be operated. Yes, a court decision was rendered with respect to a number of issues. One of them was the right of the province to sell off Hydro One. That decision, as I understand it, has been appealed on a number of issues, not only dealing with the province's right to sell its own assets—not specifically just dealing with Hydro One—but also dealing with who has standing; in other words, who can go before the court in terms of a particular issue.

There are a lot of issues coming out of that. I would say it's not all just dealing with Hydro One; it's dealing with the fundamental question of what the government can do with its own assets and who has the right to object to a decision of the government, fundamental decisions that will be decided by a higher court. May I dare say, who knows how that will come out? But we have an appeal process, the Court of Appeal, and we also have the Supreme Court of Canada to deal with these fundamental legal issues, which are side issues with respect to how Hydro One can operate most efficiently and how you deal with their debt.

The opposition, with their motion here, wants to confuse the issue. They're good at confusing the issue. The bottom line is, consumers want to know where they're going to get their electricity. In the city of Barrie they get their electricity from Barrie Hydro. In Innisfil they get their electricity from Innisfil Hydro. Let's keep it simple.

As I said last week, certainly I'm in favour of looking at this issue. In terms of a model for Hydro One, it's public control. But we also have to deal with their debt. We also have to make sure that they effectively operate and that we have accountability for that particular operation. I've said my piece with respect to this motion.

Mr Bradley: I'm speaking in favour of the motion that Dalton McGuinty has put before the House today to prevent the sale of Hydro One to the private sector. I think anyone who looks objectively at Hydro One, the transmission grid in this province, would recognize that it would naturally be something that is best kept in public ownership and public hands. Even if we think of what happened on September 11 of last year and the security aspects that surround this major transmission grid, we would recognize that it is something that simply for security reasons, if for no other reasons, should be in public hands, protected by public institutions.

What the government is proposing when it sells it would be similar to selling all the 400-series highways—the Queen Elizabeth Highway, Highway 400, 401 and so on—across the province that we control now, that help us deal with commerce, that help us deal with transportation. To sell those off to the private sector would be a major mistake. To sell the highway system for electrical power in this province is a mistake.

I was heartened a bit to hear the Premier of the day waffling on this issue. Certainly his opponent Mr Flaherty accused him of that, and we have seen a lot of disarray within the government ranks on this issue, because they recognize that the people of this province want to retain the transmission grid for our purposes. Hydro One now adds \$334 million a year to the revenue base of the provincial coffers, all of which would be forgone if Hydro One were to be sold to the private sector. The province would lose control over the activities of the transmission company. After the IPO, Hydro One's board of directors must act in the best interests of the shareholders and not the best interests of the taxpayers of Ontario.

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People are also repulsed by the fact that there appear to be a few insiders who have an opportunity to make a great deal of money—hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars—through their involvement with Hydro One and its privatization. That's another issue which is concerning people out there. A lot of people who are struggling to make ends meet, when they hear of the potential severance packages, when they hear of the benefits that these individuals could possibly get from this sale, are extremely worried and they're quite angered.

Another aspect all of us encountered is that of fraud taking place in the province now. I think anyone ob-

jectively would look at some of the sales methods being used to sign up vulnerable citizens in our province, those who don't necessarily understand the intricate details of a contract. I suggest that's about 99% of the people in this province. Some of the tactics that have been used, even tactics that involve signing another person's name to it, are fraudulent practices. Our member for Prescott-Russell, for instance, mentioned that his name had been signed on a contract. So there's not enough protection there. What we need is the Ontario Energy Board to have the appropriate level of staffing, the financial resources and the clout to be able to administer this.

All of us are encountering this. Certainly in my municipality I see people who say, "Look, whatever you do, please retain Hydro One, that important transmission grid, in our own hands." The government is going through with the appeal in court. We can't stop that. The government has that prerogative. I don't agree with appealing that decision but they are doing so.

What I do disagree with is this government at the last minute, in the last days of the Legislature, introducing and trying to pass legislation which will be called enabling legislation. That is pretty vague legislation that permits, enables or allows the government to take any course of action it deems appropriate.

We saw, when there were so-called hearings with the Minister of Energy, that he sat in the hearings until somebody objected to what he said. Then he stormed out of the hearings and argued with everybody who wanted to make a presentation. So it wasn't really a hearing process, in effect; it was a process of trying to put forward the government position, the government propaganda.

I'm glad to see that the leader of the third party, Howard Hampton, has now joined us in our opposition to Hydro One. It's good to see him on board—always happy to see him join us in this regard. I would say to all members of the House that I think this is a resolution you could appropriately agree with. This is an opposition day motion which all of us in this House should be supporting with enthusiasm.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I too am very pleased to join this debate because I believe that this is the most important issue, second to the ongoing issues we have with our health care system, that has come before this House over the last seven years.

I know the government and indeed the NDP have been trying to confuse this issue as to who is on whose side on what. But let's make it perfectly clear that our electricity system is basically made up of three components: we have the generation component, we have the transmission component and we have the consumer aspect of it. On the consumer side, I totally agree there should be tough regulations and people should be able to compare apples to apples. It's with that in mind that many of my colleagues and I have recently produced an electricity update for the people in our constituencies to make them aware as to the kind of questions they should be asking and that they should be looking out for when the retail people come out to sell them different contracts.

But that's not what this particular debate and resolution are all about. This resolution is very simple: we do not want the government to sell Hydro One. We do not want the government, in other words, to sell the transmission lines that connect the generating capacity to the consumers in their homes or in their businesses. It's as simple as that. If we do not, as a government and as the people of Ontario, control that link between generation and the consumer aspect, the retail aspect, we in effect will be losing control of the electricity system of this province. I can think of no greater public utility than the electricity system that's out there, that successive governments have worked on over the last 100 years, under whatever stripe.

People keep talking about the stranded debt. It is a major problem, but how did this stranded debt occur? A lot of people will say, "There was mismanagement within Ontario Hydro. It was bulky. There were too many people. It just grew and nobody had control over it." Yes, that may have been part of the problem, but let's also remember that it has also been used, over the last 100 years, by successive governments as an economic development tool, the whole notion being that if we give industry cheap power, they will locate their plants in Ontario and people will be working in these plants. Community after community has benefited from that particular policy. In other words, that stranded debt is a real number but you cannot blame it totally on the hydro production system in this province over the last 100 years. If the electricity had really been sold at cost, we wouldn't have any more of a debt against Ontario Hydro than what the facilities are worth right now. It has been used as an economic development tool from which we've all benefited.

Should it be paid off? There's no question about it. But one way to pay this stranded debt is not by going out and selling Hydro One, and that's really what this government is doing.

You may recall, Speaker, last week we could not even get a commitment from the Premier and from the Minister of Energy to the effect that if Hydro One is sold—and we're dead set against it—will that money be used—whatever the proceeds are, the \$5 billion or \$7 billion—to pay down the stranded debt? There was no commitment given on that at all. In other words, they may very well use it in order to balance their budget in this year and the next. For us to sell one of the main assets in the province of Ontario for that purpose is absolute lunacy.

I say to my friends in the NDP, we may not agree on every aspect of this particular issue, but on the issue that Hydro One should not be sold, surely we can all agree. I attended a few meetings in Kingston where our position as Liberals was totally misrepresented by the NDP representatives who were there.

I would say to the people of Ontario, we can disagree about a wide variety of issues, but the worst thing that we can do as a province is to sell Hydro One. I would urge people—

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): And to play politics with it.

Mr Gerretsen: And to play politics with it. I would urge people to contact their MPPs, no matter what political stripe, and tell them, "We do not want Hydro One sold under any circumstances whatsoever." It is an asset that's owned by the people of Ontario and should remain in the people's hands.

I would urge the members opposite to vote in favour of this very sensible resolution.

The Acting Speaker: This concludes the time allocated for debate. I will now place the question.

Mr McGuinty has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will stand to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sorbara, Greg
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	
Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Eves, Ernie	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 40; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Windsor West has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

We'll pause for about a minute while we let the chamber clear.

Order. The member for Windsor West has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister will have five minutes to reply.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I believe this afternoon I asked a very relevant question of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The question was very simple: how often does this minister take a bath? Eighty per cent of the Canadian public says they take a bath or a shower at least once a day. It's entirely reasonable to assume that this minister is in fact very average indeed. I would suggest that this minister probably takes a bath or a shower every day.

But that's not what we can say of our people who are subjected to home care services that have been cut under this government. The newly minted Premier of Ontario, who wants to show a kinder, softer face to the nation now, is the same man who as Minister of Finance cut the budgets that went to home care, so that those community care access centres in fact cannot give the same level of service that they gave even two years ago. Those community care access centres, struggling to find \$175 million to cut in services, where did they cut them? They cut them from services like personal grooming, from those people who are most vulnerable: the elderly, our seniors, those who are infirm. And what did they take from them? Instead of what they may have been getting, which was perhaps two baths a week, they were cut to one bath a week.

This afternoon when we asked this minister a question, what did he say? He started spouting some regulation that is affiliated to a nursing home. This minister clearly is so new on the job he doesn't understand that we were talking about home care. These are the people we thought we wanted to stay in their homes as long as they can. In fact, they are in their homes, and now, with the changes in the long-term-care sector, what you're doing is eliminating people from waiting lists, subjecting them to staying in home care where they get less service.

So I ask the minister again, how many times a week does he take a bath? Is it reasonable for us as government to ensure that people who are getting health services at home, where we want them to remain as long as possible, get one bath a week? We don't believe that it is. Our party stands on the side of seniors who want good service at home. Our party stands for seniors who want to remain in their home and still be able to live the way this min-

ister perhaps lives, and that is, like 80% of the Canadian public, taking a bath or a shower every day.

So is it reasonable, then, for this minister to stand today and give that kind of nonchalant and glib answer this afternoon, telling people that if you don't like what you get, make a complaint? You can't even find an office to complain to. And who would they complain to in the home care sector? To the government-appointed CCAC board? This, after you passed Bill 130, which made all of them government appointees, loath to criticize, loath to say, "We don't have enough service," because you'll just cut them off at the knees like you did last fall when this government introduced Bill 130.

I ask the minister again, how many times does he take a bath? How many times does his family take a bath? Is it reasonable for us in this House, who should all be very average people living average lives, to expect to give our elderly and our infirm some dignity staying in their homes? We want them to have dignity in their elderly years. We expect that government services are there for people when they need them, but under your watch, Minister, and under the watch of Premier Ernie Eves, you've cut funding to the elderly to the point of taking away their baths from two a week—and some find that's not enough—to one a week.

We heard today about a woman in Ottawa, 76 years old, with a hip issue, a leg issue, a stroke and a heart attack, at her home with severe osteoporosis, cut to one bath a week. I ask the minister, is that appropriate, is that the face of your government? Is this the face of the kinder, gentler Ernie Eves? He presided over budget cuts for seven years and now he's the Premier trying to show a kinder, gentler face to Ontario. That is not what this government is. This government is about hiding away the problems we have in home care, hiding them under the guise of Bill 130, stripping local home care organizations to the point of being government-appointed. Who do they answer to? The Minister of Health directly. You have the gall today to stand and say, "Complain to your local authorities"? Who would they complain to? They're in fact supposed to find this minister and complain to him. The very guy who is taking away the baths in the first place is the guy they're supposed to complain to. I say shame on this minister.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise today to respond to the unsubstantiated motion of the member opposite. I say to the member for Windsor West, she's very keen on mixing her words and playing politics with the most vulnerable segments of our population. In her question in this House earlier this afternoon she indicated, "Many of our seniors in long-term-care facilities are getting maybe one bath every 10 days." Those were her words.

I want to be very clear that this government is committed to providing quality, sustainable, long-term-care services in our province. Our primary concern is for patients and we take the concerns expressed about compliance very seriously. I want to say to the member op-

posite, if she has a specific complaint related to the issue of non-compliance in a long-term-care facility, I would urge her as an elected member of this assembly, and I'm saying that it is incumbent upon her, to speak on behalf of the most vulnerable and to issue a formal complaint.

If I could have one of the pages come forward, I have a copy of the Nursing Homes Act revised regulations, as well as the long-term-care facility program manual for the member opposite so she can read through what is required.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order.

Hon Mr Newman: I want to be very clear that these unsubstantiated allegations about bath times and the quality of care in long-term-care facilities are very serious. We take them very seriously, and I say to the member opposite that she should as well. I say to her, if you have a concern about compliance with any of our legislation or our regulations pertaining to a long-term-care facility, I would urge you to take the following steps: you can launch a complaint with the facility administration; you can launch a complaint with the local community care access centre or you can launch a complaint with the appropriate Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care regional office. I want to assure all members and the people of Ontario that formal complaints will be followed up on by a compliance adviser from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Our government does indeed take compliance in long-term-care facilities very seriously. That's why we are the only government in over a decade in Ontario to shut down a long-term-care facility. That's not all. If the member opposite is so concerned about the issue of compliance, she should move to bring forward a formal complaint.

Further, you may be interested to know that the Liberal government did nothing when they were in government to meet this goal. I correct that; they actually did less than nothing. According to the Provincial Auditor's report in 1990, the Liberal government took no action related to compliance in the year 1989. An entire year went by and nothing happened. To put that into some sort of context, compared with the Bill Davis government's

record, that was a 100% decline in compliance-related activities.

Through the long-term-care compliance management program, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will continue to ensure that the highest possible standards and quality of care are provided to residents of long-term-care facilities. The ministry is continuing to conduct annual reviews of long-term-care facilities. We also have an ongoing professional development and training strategy that has been developed for ministry compliance advisers involved in the inspection of long-term-care facilities.

The strategy focuses on best-care practices, competencies, multi-disciplinary team approaches and consistency in interpretation and application of long-term-care facility standards, regulations and legislation.

The member's question today also speaks about the levels of home care funding. I'm pleased to report that our government is committed to creating a strong community care system and ensuring the right people are able to access the right level of service at the right time. In fact, since 1995-96 home care funding in this province has increased by more than 72%, which is unprecedented. Indeed, it was our government that created community care access centres in 1996 to better manage community health care.

We provide the most generous level of home care services in Canada—approximately \$128 per capita. CCACs provide service levels as high or higher than any other province in Canada. To put that into a national context, six of 10 jurisdictions charge copayments for personal care and homemaking services. For example, in the province of Newfoundland they charge their clients 12% of the overall cost to the client and there is no charge in Ontario.

I would also say, in closing, that our government is committed to creating a strong community care system and ensuring the right people are able to access the right level of service at the right time.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1814.

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