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**Journal
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Jedi 24 octobre 2002

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Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 October 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 octobre 2002

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CLEAN AIR PLAN

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I move that, in the opinion of the House, the government of Ontario should immediately implement the Ontario Liberal clean air plan that would: ensure all gasoline sold in Ontario contains at least 5% clean-burning ethanol by 2007 and 10% by 2010; and develop and implement an Ontario biodiesel strategy that includes a mandatory clean renewable biodiesel content in diesel fuel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Cleary has moved ballot item number 63. According to the standing orders, I would ask the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for a 10-minute presentation.

Mr Cleary: I'm pleased to present my private member's resolution today. I know that citizens and households across the province are beginning to plan for the upcoming winter season. Many of them are now working outside, something they couldn't do during the summer months when temperatures were so warm. They welcome this season to get away from the smog-filled hot days of one of the hottest summers in many years in this province.

Many of the seniors in my community and other communities were virtually imprisoned during those hot days with respiratory problems and had to stay indoors. Smog is not only an inconvenience, it is dangerous to the health of all Ontarians. Ground-level ozone, or smog, is a dangerous respiratory irritant that affects the health of thousands of people.

According to Dr Halparin, president of the Ontario Medical Association, dirty air is responsible for "1,900 premature deaths, 13,000 emergency room visits and \$1.1 billion in health care costs and lost workdays each year." These statistics are not acceptable and the people of Ontario are increasingly concerned about the quality of the air they breathe. And not only are they concerned about the air they breathe, they're concerned about the water they drink.

Today I want to discuss sweeping plans to clean up the air Ontarians breathe and to make this province a healthier and more comfortable place in which to reside.

On September 9 our leader, Dalton McGuinty, unveiled a clean air plan. This plan is ambitious, the most ambitious plan of its kind in Canada. It is progressive and it is feasible.

The Ontario clean air plan is a five-point plan that encourages cleaner power generation, cleaner fuels, more public transit, more energy conservation, and demonstrates a real commitment to renewable fuels. Of particular interest to me is the plan's pledge to mandate the use of clean renewable transportation fuels in the province of Ontario.

The select committee on alternative fuel sources released its final report, published in June of this year. As the culmination of work by a tripartite committee of the Legislature, the report represents an important step in developing an ongoing strategy to achieve environmentally friendly and sustainable sources of transportation fuels.

According to the report, the transportation sector in Ontario is a major source of air emissions along highways and in major urban centres. As I travel from Toronto to eastern Ontario every week, I can see that very clearly. Producing these emissions, gasoline and diesel fuel account for 97% of the transportation fuel consumed.

The committee also outlines growing interest on the part of the public and industry to incorporate renewable fuels, stating, "There is considerable public interest in reducing air emissions and growing interest on the part of motor vehicle manufacturers to utilize alternative fuels to respond to these concerns." Finally, the committee's report draws strong parallels with the clean air plan, maintaining there is significant potential to improve air quality by accelerating the introduction of cleaner gasoline and diesel fuels.

Part of the clean air plan is the implementation of clean renewable fuels like ethanol. In fact, under the McGuinty plan, all gasoline sold in Ontario will be required to contain at least 5% clean-burning ethanol by 2007, rising to 10% by 2010. Ethanol is a liquid alcohol produced from agricultural products such as corn. As a renewable, clean-burning transportation fuel, ethanol represents an exciting environmental and financial opportunity for the farmers of this province. I know that in our part of Ontario we have been trying to get a plant built since the mid-1990s, yet we have not got it off the ground.

The environmental benefits of ethanol are extensive, and attempts to reduce smog and greenhouse gas emis-

sions will be greatly enhanced by the extensive introduction of ethanol-blended gasolines. According to the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association, "The emissions produced by burning ethanol are less reactive with sunlight than those produced by burning gasoline and are thus less likely to produce damaging ozone gases." Furthermore, the use of ethanol-blended fuels will reduce the net emissions of equally dangerous greenhouse gases by up to 3.9%.

In addition to ethanol's proven environmental track record, the application of alternative fuels will create jobs and market opportunities for Ontario's rural communities and farmers. I know that in our part of Ontario the community, the farmers, have raised \$16,249,000 toward a Seaway Valley ethanol co-operative. They're an environment-friendly group back our way. The plant is \$48 million. At the annual meeting, that amount of money had been raised, and more has come in since. I know they're looking for all forms of government to get involved with some type of loan guarantee to get this plant off the ground.

1010

In addition to ethanol's proven track record, the application of alternative fuels will create jobs and market opportunities. Needless to say, this is a new and exciting market opportunity for Ontario producers. When you think about what's happening in the United States, new plants are coming on stream, several of them a year.

The reception of the news from the Ontario Corn Producers' Association has been overwhelming. Commenting on the implications of the proposed plan, Mr Dennis Jack, president of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, believes the objective is good news for the industry, consumers and the environment, which will receive direct benefits from a stronger reliance on corn-based ethanol, and this gentleman should know. In an off season, when you have a bad year, it's my understanding that corn which doesn't mature can still be used for ethanol.

As an existing additive, ethanol has immediate promise. In fact, low-concentration ethanol mixtures added to gasoline can be used in most internal combustion engines. Presently, all automotive manufacturers in Ontario approve the use of a 10% ethanol blend and some even recommend it for environmental reasons.

Because it is a progressive and necessary alternative fuel, the government of Ontario needs to take immediate steps to implement an ethanol strategy. This will clean up the air we breathe and will create jobs and opportunities for rural Ontario.

Working with farmers and industry, a McGuinty-led government will also develop—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): You were going to say "Cochrane South," Speaker; I saw you coming. But it's Timmins-James Bay now.

As the NDP transportation critic and northern development critic, I'd like to rise in support of this resolution.

The member, I thought, gave a brilliantly put-together speech on the importance and positive aspects of using ethanol and other biodiesels.

I just want to say there has been some move already by the provincial government to exempt these fuels from provincial sales tax; I think that was a good step forward.

The alternative fuels committee is looking at the various aspects of various kinds of renewable energy, and I know that this is one of the issues they looked at. I'm glad to see that the member has gone a little bit further than the recommendation of the alternative fuels committee in moving toward the ethanol and biodiesel initiatives. I want to say that I support that.

I also want to say that this whole issue of trying to find green sources of energy is something I really believe we need to spend a lot more time on. We all know we're going through this whole process of what's happening with the Kyoto accord. We all need, as member nations who signed on to the Kyoto accord, to find ways to reduce greenhouse gases. Ethanol fuels and other biodiesels are less harmful to the environment when it comes to emissions. Certainly, the more of these we use, the less gas and diesel we'll use and the less we will have emissions into the atmosphere and the easier it will be to meet the Kyoto Protocol.

I think it's a big, big disappointment and quite hypocritical of the American government to take the position they have. We all know that member nations have signed on to Kyoto, and the great American power, the United States, says, "You know, we believe in free trade. We believe in internationalism. We believe in doing our part in the world," but they are nowhere to be seen on the Kyoto accord. They're doing everything they can to sewer the deal, and it's putting Canada and other countries around the world into a very odd position. Here we are trying to do the right thing as member signatories to the Kyoto Protocol—our federal government wants to forge ahead and our provincial governments are now opposed to it, as we saw with Ernie Eves getting together with Ralph Klein yesterday. But I think we all agree that we have to do something to reduce greenhouse gases, and we all agree that Kyoto is a good step forward and a good way to start.

The unfortunate part is that the Americans are nowhere to be seen in trying to meet the targets set out under Kyoto, so that tells me the Americans are nothing but a bunch of hypocrites. They're perfectly prepared to show their might when it comes to using their arms around the world to bomb anybody who doesn't agree with them on whatever issue, as we're seeing with what's happening in Baghdad. But when it comes to really making an impact on the world that would be positive, the Americans are nowhere to be seen. Where are they on Kyoto? They're nowhere. They're on the opposite side.

I find it quite frustrating, as a Canadian and as a member of this little planet we call Earth, that the Americans take the position they have on Kyoto and say, "Down with Kyoto. We don't believe we should do it, because we're the mightiest nation in the world and we

can do what we damn well please and to hell with you all." I think it's really a bad thing for the Americans to do and it shows just how hypocritical they are when it comes to really being a member state of this little planet we call Earth.

If you take a look at the Americans when it comes to the United Nations, they all believe in the United Nations and they want to support the building of democracies around the world, something we can all agree on. But when it comes to paying their dollars to allow the United Nations to do its work, the only time they give us the money is when they're looking for support so they can go and bomb somewhere in the Middle East.

I say to the member who brought forward this resolution, this would go a way in allowing us to meet the Kyoto Protocol on the emission of greenhouse gases, but one of the things we need to do is figure out as a nation how to embarrass, how to force, how to coerce the Americans into doing their part. What's going to be very difficult is that in taking the position they have, the Americans are setting the playing field quite low when it comes to meeting greenhouse gases because they are one of the biggest polluters in the world when it comes to emissions. If they're not on board, it means other signatory countries like Canada will have to go a lot further in order to reduce greenhouse gases. Meanwhile, they'll be doing nothing.

I just wanted to put that on the record because of what has happened recently with the meeting between Mr Eves and Mr Klein. I think they're twins now. They get along quite well. They came out of there singing the same kind of thing. It really puts us in a bad position, the Americans doing what they're doing. I just say again that it's extremely hypocritical.

To the Premier and to Mr Klein, who met yesterday, shame on you. We should be taking a leadership position on the Kyoto Protocol. We agree that it's not easy. We agree that you have to define what these emissions are as far as the targets. We understand there are some difficulties. Nobody is saying that's not the case. But what is more dangerous is us not doing anything.

When Klein says he's looking for a made-in-Canada solution, Klein is looking for nothing of the sort. He wants to get away from the Kyoto agreement altogether. That's how I'm reading what he's up to.

I'm disappointed that Eves has taken the position he has because I have a lot of respect for Ernie Eves. I did not like Mike Harris; I could not work with Mike Harris. I found him to be boorish and a thug. But when it comes to Eves, I had a little bit more respect. I'm somewhat taken aback by the position he has taken on Kyoto. It's clear now that he's got a twin: his twin is Ralph Klein and they're marching down the same road.

I'm saying that Ontario, being the largest industrial partner in our federation, should be taking a lead in order to try to do what we can to meet our commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. The government's taking the position it did yesterday, through the meeting with Mr Klein, I think was just an abysmal thing. We could have been

seen as leaders. We could be doing everything we can to develop green industries and to assist industries to meet the protocol over a period of time. We're now not meeting the Kyoto Protocol. We could have been world leaders. We could have been there at the forefront.

When it comes to other nations being able to do things to reduce greenhouse gases, one only has to take a look at Europe and the Scandinavian countries. I've been doing a fair amount of research in regard to what they've been doing around both solar and wind technologies. They've really done a lot to develop those industries and technologies so that they become much more affordable when it comes to the production of electricity. As a result, Norway, Denmark and other countries are now starting to corner the market somewhat on these technologies.

So here we are. We know there's going to be a market. Hydro prices are going through the roof because of deregulation and this government's attempt at privatizing of hydro, and around North America we're privatizing the entire hydro grid. So we know hydro prices are going to go up. They've gone up 40% in the last number of months and they'll probably go up far more than that in time. It's going to come to a point where people will be looking at green energy because it's going to become more affordable with higher hydro rates.

I say to Canada, and specifically to Ontario, that we should be jumping on the bandwagon and supporting the development of these technologies, because in supporting industries that are developing wind, solar and other green energies, we can become a world leader. We could export that technology; we could export the products we build here in Ontario when it comes to generating electricity in a more green way, thus reducing greenhouse gases.

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I say to the government, you're really missing an opportunity by crawling into bed with Ralph Klein. All Ralph Klein is interested in is supporting his buddies in the energy industry, who are the bigger polluters and are not interested in doing anything whatsoever when it comes to supporting a green industry. Frankly, and I understand this, the energy sector in Alberta is the most important sector of their economy, so they're doing all they can to protect their energy sector. I'm saying that here in Ontario we should be taking the view of trying to develop alternative energy sources when it comes to green energy, and we should be doing all we can to support them.

I just want to give you a couple of examples. In the riding I represent, there are a number of communities that don't have electricity through the hydro grid. A good many of the communities up on the James Bay coast and the Hudson Bay coast and also in my leader Mr Hampton's riding of Kenora have to generate electricity by way of diesel generators. I look at communities like Peawanuk, Port Severn, Ogoki and many other communities across the north. The only way they can produce electricity in those communities is by burning diesel fuel to run generators to produce power for their citizens. I say there's an opportunity here.

Do you know how much it costs to ship diesel up into Peawanuk? I'm just going to give you the story of Peawanuk, one of the communities in my riding, and the difficulties those First Nations communities are having. The federal government decided about three, four or five years ago that they would no longer pay the hydro costs of that community. It used to be that INAC, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, used to give the bands money to pay for the generation of their electricity, and it didn't come out of their band funds. The federal Liberal government changed that policy and said, "Now you've got to go out and charge local citizens for the purchase of power," and the federal government eliminated the cost they paid toward producing electricity.

There's no money in those communities. The unemployment rate is 90-some-odd per cent, and people don't have the money to pay hydro bills. They're basically living on the meagre amount of money they get on what we now call Ontario Works and don't have money to pay their hydro bills. As a result of that, the band has defaulted on their energy bill.

The oil that was shipped by barge from Moosonee up to Peawanuk used to be shipped into the harbour, old Winisk. They have been unable to pay for that fuel. As a result, the shipper does not want to send fuel up there any more until the previous bill is paid—Catch-22. The community doesn't have the money. It's not because they don't want to pay. Boy, they'd love to pay, but they haven't got the money, and the reason is that the federal government eliminated the money they used to give the band to pay for diesel. They're now saying, "Go collect it from the citizens," and the citizens don't have the money. So the band is stuck between a rock and a hard place.

As a result, they're now having to fly fuel in to Peawanuk. Can you imagine how expensive it is if you have to put diesel fuel on an airplane and fly it up to Peawanuk to produce electricity? I'm just going to give you a bit of an idea of the distance. If I fly from Timmins to Peawanuk, because that's where they're shipping the fuel from, it's almost as far as going from Timmins down to Philadelphia. Imagine how expensive it would be if the people of Philadelphia had to get their electricity generated by diesel from Timmins and we shipped it by airplane. That's the reality for Peawanuk. They're having to pay exorbitant amounts of money for diesel to generate their electricity.

I've been talking to the Minister of Energy, and I'm glad Mr Baird has agreed to take a look at the issue of supporting some kind of initiative that would look at communities like Peawanuk moving over to green energy, use them as pilot projects to develop either wind or solar technology as, first of all, maybe a supplement to the amount of electricity they generate and, hopefully, eventually replace the need to bring diesel into those communities that are not connected to the hydro grid.

I've already talked to Peter Tabuns at Greenpeace, who is going to provide me with a great amount of information about which companies have which type of technology, the stats on how much it costs for those

technologies and how much electricity they produce. I know Mr Baird's office is doing the same; I've contacted Mr Baird and asked him to provide me with the same information. I've talked to some people in the sector who I know are working in that particular area, and I hope to put together a package and meet with the community of Peawanuk and Ogoki over the next little while to say, let's take a look at coming down to Toronto and talking to the Minister of Energy to see if he's interested in developing some sort of a project that allows them to develop green energy as a way of being able to produce electricity.

I'm looking forward to that process, and I want to thank Mr Baird for being willing to work with me on that, because I think it could be a win-win. I think it could be a win for the government in the sense that it says, "Hey, look at what we've done on green energy; we have some pilot projects in the First Nations communities," and it would certainly be a win for the communities of Ogoki and Peawanuk and Port Severn, because those communities can use the help when it comes to reducing the cost to produce electricity. It would be better if they were able to do it themselves, and do it in a way that's in keeping with their beliefs as First Nations people—the Mushkegowuk Cree and the Ojibwa—of being in tune with nature and not having to pollute. So I think this is really a win-win situation for both the communities and the government, and I'm glad to be able to play a part in bringing those people together to look at what can be done.

So I say again to the member who brings forward this motion that it's a good motion and we'll be voting in favour of it. I have to say again, however, that I am extremely disappointed in the position Ernie Eves has taken on Kyoto. I always thought he was a little bit more reasonable on this than Ralph Klein. I've changed my view. He has basically cuddled up to Ralph Klein, just in there like bosom buddies, holding arms, walking down the road, saying, "We want to develop a made-in-Canada solution," but there's no such plan. The plan of Ralph Klein is simple: he doesn't want Kyoto because it's going to hurt the energy sector.

Ontario should take a leadership role, Ontario should look at ways of being able to meet the Kyoto Protocol and how to support the development of green industries and help to support the technologies to make our industries greener, because that technology and the work and the wealth it would create would put Ontario in the driver's seat and make us a leader, and what's wrong with Ontario being a leader? Certainly the government doesn't want to go that way, and I think it's a damned shame they're going the way of following Ralph Klein, because he's certainly going in the wrong direction.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I'm pleased to make some comments about the resolution brought forward by the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. The two points this member brings forward are quite laudable and quite supportive, but he really messes it up when he says that in the opinion of

this House the government of Ontario should immediately implement the Ontario Liberal clean air plan.

If he just said "should implement" and then went to his two points, I think he would get a lot of support in this House. But talking about bringing in the Ontario Liberal clean air plan, a plan that's significantly flawed, a plan that really hasn't been thought through—when you're in opposition, of course, you can promise the moon, you can promise anything when you don't expect to come to office, and so what? They just disappear and it didn't really matter very much at all.

Our government has been very, very responsible and has brought in a many, many clean air programs. Just to name a few, Drive Clean, as you know, started in the difficult areas such as Toronto, where there were more pollutant problems, but it has expanded and extended across southern Ontario. I would hazard the guess that probably there's no other state or province where a program such as Drive Clean is so broad, so extensive—a tremendous program.

A regulation that changed not too many years ago under our government, just to give you an indication of some of the things our government is doing: we reduced the level of the evaporative of gasoline—there's a special name; I believe it's the Reid Vapour Pressure. We moved it from 72 kilopascals down to 62—that's during the summertime. If you're pumping gas, you don't notice the odour of gasoline in the summertime. Of course in the wintertime it doesn't evaporate nearly as much, so the regulation on Reid pressure is not as important. But it's all about those volatile organics that go out and are converted to ozone. Add that to dust particles and you have smog. So this is another step.

Many of our generating plants have been converted, such as the Lennox generating station. It used to be an oil-fired plant. Therefore, peak periods have been converted to natural gas.

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There are many, many programs that our government has implemented to ensure that we would have clean air here in the province. Have we got there at this point? No, there's a lot yet that needs to be done but we are certainly working toward it. When you see McGuinty's plan, his plan says that we're going to get rid of all coal-fired power plants, have them shut down by 2007. That's just barely four years from now. It takes almost that long to build some of these plants, especially if it's nuclear, but Mr McGuinty, in the Liberal plan, has no solution. There is no solution; all he has is criticism, how he's going to shut things down.

When I chaired the select committee on alternate fuel sources, we had a signoff of all members, and that included the Liberals as well as the NDP. They signed off, and in that report, one that I am very, very proud of, they agreed that the coal plants would be phased out by 2015; and we had many other suggestions on where we would get our electricity from once they were being phased out—something that Mr McGuinty's Liberal plan has no solution to, no idea where the power is going to come from.

He's even going to seal it off from any power coming in from the US. That just points out how absurd his thinking is in the Liberal plan. It's just something that no one in their right mind could possibly support. The member bringing forth this resolution has two very good points in his resolution, except he messed it up by talking about the Liberal plan. If we bring that in, we are going to expect brownouts galore. I don't know. It will go beyond brownouts; it will simply be blackouts. There'll be no light on upstairs, as is typical in the Liberal Party.

On cleaner fuels: moving to looking at 5% by 2007 and 10% by 2010 are very laudable ideas, supporting farmers for corn production to convert to ethanol. Some of the things we've been doing, certainly in the budget back in June, which came in just a few days after my select committee on alternative fuel sources was tabled; we reduced the sales tax, the rebate on hybrid-electric automobiles, that would also cover sports-utility and light-duty trucks. We also reduced the tax on biodiesel, which would make it more acceptable, more usable by the industry.

I think a lot of things are happening, and our government is very, very serious about the select committee on alternative fuel sources. We've also invested some \$5 million into the ethanol plant in Chatham.

McGuinty's clean air plan also suggests various initiatives with respect to renewable energy. If we hadn't gone to competition in the electricity market, there would be no green power; that was not possible under the old system. They had a chance with their government, the NDP had a chance with their government, but did they do anything to bring in green power? No. We were up to a couple of windmills and that was just about it, a couple of solar panel units around the country, but now there are tremendous plans to bring in large wind farms in many locations across this province.

We're getting power plants on run of the river, rather than damming up water, which is not exactly environmentally friendly, but rather taking advantage of water that's simply running downhill and putting it through turbines and creating power.

Just in winding up so that the member from Simcoe North has about half of the time allocated to our party, I want to highlight the concern that our government has for clean air in the province of Ontario. I've spoken about several of our initiatives in that area, which will illustrate our dedication to taking action.

There is no way that we can support the Liberal clean air plan. I will reiterate, though, that I really support the thinking that the member has on his two points, but certainly not on the Liberal clean air plan.

In the interests of Ontarians, we must move forward with clean air initiatives while ensuring that we have the appropriate research and planning to stand behind our policies. Dalton McGuinty's plan does not provide us with this framework. Our government will continue to act in this area and build upon our successes.

Again, I laud the member on his two points. I think he had some really good thinking there, although the idea is

probably copied from the ideas of the select committee on alternate fuels. On the other hand, he's bringing in, in his resolution, that we would immediately implement the Liberal plan for clean air. In summary, that plan is a farce.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

I am most pleased this morning to have the opportunity to talk on this resolution concerning the clean air plan presented by my friend and colleague the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, John Cleary.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, has already presented the Liberal plan for clean air, and he has committed that Liberals would require all gasoline in Ontario to contain 10% ethanol fuel by 2010.

I am proud to say that McEwen Fuels, a small, well-known family business of eastern Ontario—to be more precise, from Maxville, which is in my riding—has already been offering ethanol at all its outlet fuel stations in eastern Ontario. We know that eastern Ontario—Glengarry, Prescott, Russell, Stormont, Dundas and Charlottenburgh—is one of the largest agricultural sectors in Ontario. So we are already very aware of the benefit of clean fuel. My constituents are looking forward to the implementation of the Liberal plan for clean air, the Dalton McGuinty plan.

We are aware that not all vehicles are presently equipped to handle ethanol, but we must work closely with the automotive industry to increase the number of cars that can use ethanol and keep our air clean.

For several years now, a group from eastern Ontario has been trying to get an ethanol plant, in Cornwall, to be exact, that could be up and running. Unfortunately, this plant is not a priority for the Harris-Eves government.

Canada previously committed \$4 million to this plant in Cornwall. The federal Minister of Natural Resources has committed another \$1.5 million. Farm Credit Corp also committed to guaranteeing \$10 million for the company under the name of Bud Atkins, which is planning to build an ethanol plant. I understand that if this Harris-Eves government were to jump on board, which it appears they are not willing to do—or they might just do prior to the next election to win votes—Farm Credit Corp might even double their commitment.

I am told that \$38 million is required to get this plant going, but not only that. We have at the present time 3,200 individuals who are farmers and also in the private sector who have already invested over \$16 million of their own money in this project. They could lose it all if this government won't commit.

After reading Mr Eves's comments in yesterday's Ottawa Citizen concerning the Kyoto accord, and knowing that this government voted against Mr Bradley's resolution to support the accord to improve Ontario's air quality, I can see that this government is not serious about improving health in Ontario.

I have here a copy of an answer dated October 16, 2002. John Cleary, my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, asked a question to the Minister of Energy. The Minister of Energy, the Honourable Mr

Baird, said, "As I said to the member opposite, I appreciate that he cares about this issue. So do I. I, along with my colleague the Minister of Public Security, Bob Runciman, and my colleague the Minister of the Environment, Chris Stockwell, took the opportunity to sit down with the group this past Friday in Kemptonville to learn more about the specific nature of their requests and their concerns."

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I wonder how serious we are about this issue. We know it is a very important issue. We know that the farmers and the private sector of eastern Ontario have invested over \$16 million. We know that Canada has already promised it would increase its participation. We know that other sectors like natural resources federally are ready to work with this group in Cornwall, but we need the support of this government to get it going. We have a lot of corn producers in eastern Ontario. If we want to increase air quality, this government has to commit itself and come up with the money required to get this going.

I was calling in Cornwall yesterday to see how much land we have in reserve. When I say "reserve," this group has already bought some 25 acres of land right in the core industrial sector of the city of Cornwall. They were not able to pay their municipal taxes because, again, we are not getting any government support on this important project.

When I look at the document I have here in which the Honourable John Baird answers my colleague John Cleary, there's a section I really enjoy reading: "There is some financial support that the previous Minister of Agriculture, Noble Villeneuve, made when he fought for this area." Noble was a well-known agriculture man in the area. He understood how important that plant was for the eastern Ontario people and the rest of the province and the rest of this beautiful country.

But we need financial support. How can we go about it at the present time to say to this government that we need it? We need the government to say, "Yes, we will support this plan as soon as possible," because we have to make a decision within the next three months. If we don't come up with any definite answer from this government within the next three months, the whole thing might fold. The farmers and the private sector that have invested over \$16 million might lose it all.

That is what I have to say. I hope this government will support this resolution because it's one of the most important pieces of legislation we could pass to guarantee the health of the whole population of Ontario.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to be here this morning, taking part in the debate on the resolution put forward by the honourable member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, asking us to support the Dalton McGuinty environmental plan. Of course, like any of our friend Dalton McGuinty's plans, there's no price tag attached to it whatsoever. It's simply a figment of our imagination, something that we can dream about, pie-in-the-sky, and absolutely no dollars.

For anybody in any political party to support a plan, there has to be a certain analysis done of the cost of that plan. Before Mr McGuinty provides more plans to this Legislature and to the citizens of Ontario as we lead up to a provincial election, I certainly hope he would attach some dollars to those, because what we've seen so far of most of Mr McGuinty's so-called plans is that they're probably going to cost Ontario taxpayers somewhere around \$12 billion to \$15 billion a year. Of course, Mr McGuinty has no idea where he's going to get that money to implement these plans, particularly in the light that he votes against every tax cut we've possibly had in Ontario, and those of course are what stimulate our economy.

The second thing I'd like to mention is the Kyoto accord and the plan that Mr Chrétien is trying to shove down the throats of all Canadians prior to a first ministers' or Premiers' conference on the Kyoto accord, which I understood was promised to the Premiers of our country. I think what's really important about the Kyoto accord that we as Ontarians and as Canadians should take a serious look at is that we live beside the largest economic engine in the world, the United States of America, with about 350 million people. My understanding is that the United States of America will not sign the Kyoto accord and will not be part of it.

I also understand that China and India, which I believe represent close to four billion people on our planet, are classified as developing nations and that they do not have to sign on the dotted line or are not part of it because they're developing nations.

What's incredible here is that with the emissions that come from the four billion people in India and China, as well from as the 350 million people who provide emissions into our air from the United States—I can't understand how we can think we're going to have any kind of impact by signing anything, particularly when any requirements we put on our industry to provide better emissions are just going to cost us jobs. What will happen is that people will simply go south of the border or to one of the developing nations, and our people who are paying taxes here and working and trying to raise families will have absolutely no chance of saving their jobs.

It's very important that any kind of plan should show exactly how the analysis is going to affect the economy of the particular country where the jobs will be lost. What will be the cost of implementing the recommendations of the Kyoto accord? I've heard nothing on that. We say it's X number of dollars for so much industry, and that there are these credits you can trade back and forth with other countries. I've seen no proof of what the savings will be or what the benefits will be to Canada when the United States of America is not signing on to the accord.

However, aside from the Kyoto accord, I believe, and I think we've proven it in a number of areas, that clean air is a priority for the government. When it comes to supporting clean fuels and energy sources, Ontario is a leading jurisdiction in North America. We've taken

numerous initiatives to tackle smog and improve air quality.

I'm really pleased that we heard some comments this morning from Dr Galt, the chief government whip, who chaired the alternative fuels committee. They examined options for alternative fuel sources and renewable energy across the world. The goals of the government, following the alternative fuels committee, are very clear: to provide a sustainable, efficient supply of energy to Ontarians at a reasonable cost, and to promote renewable and green energy initiatives.

I know that right as we speak there are some very interesting projects taking place with wind generation. Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde mentioned ethanol earlier in some of his comments. I know that's a strong suggestion from the alternative fuels committee.

It seems that when we're dealing with these plans, we don't have any solid, set plan from any one level of government. We've got the Kyoto accord and we've got Mr McGuinty's flip-flop sort of environmental plan, whatever he wants to call it, but we need to get something that analyzes the true cost of implementing the types of things that Kyoto recommends right across the planet, and that would include all countries on the planet, not just Canada, not just maybe Ontario, maybe Alberta, parts of Canada, parts of Europe.

I don't see where there's any consistency here, and I think what's important is that we as a country and as a province make sure we have a strong analysis of the true costs, not only to industry but to our environment, with and without the Kyoto accord recommendations.

In closing, I want to say that I appreciate the fact that we have these opportunities for debate in this House. The member, Mr Cleary, brings forth a resolution that's worthy of debate, and I think we have to work not only on the opposition's recommendations but on the government's recommendations, the Ministry of the Environment. And as a strong partner in Confederation and the leader of most of the industrialized parts of Canada, I think we have to listen to our partners in Alberta and Nova Scotia and right across our great country. I appreciate this opportunity this morning.

1050

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to commend the member for Cornwall, Charlottenburgh and other parts of the riding for bringing this resolution before the house. I think it's exceedingly important that we proceed with due dispatch to implement policies which are going to, first of all, bring about cleaner air; and second, will contribute to a solution to the problem of global warming.

Yesterday a report was released by Pollution Probe. By the way, I should not first of all that Pollution Probe is considered to be a very moderate, mainline environment group. It does not have any radical connotations, as it may have had many years ago. Today, Pollution Probe is seen as very centrist in terms of the environmental movement. That report was quite frightening in terms of what it points out for the Toronto and Niagara regions in

terms of some of the potential diseases and problems that could come as a result of global warming. This resolution goes part of the way to finding one of those solutions.

When I saw the Premier of the province of Ontario walk out of a meeting with Ralph Klein, the Premier of Alberta, and simply embrace the Alberta position, I was really, deeply disappointed. I can't think of many times that I've been as deeply disappointed as I was on that. The member for Timmins-James Bay made reference to the fact that we all thought there was at least a different approach that might be forthcoming from Mr Eves—I would have expected Mr Harris to step out with Mr Klein and take that position—and I was deeply disappointed when I saw that happen and when I see that Ontario apparently has not produced anything in the way of an implementation strategy for international agreements. But this resolution offers some hope in that regard.

I sat on the alternative fuels committee of the Ontario Legislature—I know the whip will give me a note of the appropriate time to sit down. That was a very good experience. We had members of all three political parties who checked their partisan hats at the door and tried to come up with some really practical, good, far-reaching and comprehensive solutions to air quality and global warming by looking at various forms of fuels and alternative ways of producing energy.

The report in itself provides a good framework for any government in Ontario to be able to meet the obligations under the Kyoto accord or any other international agreement. This is part of it. We have cleaner gasoline, we have said in the official opposition that all gasoline sold in Ontario will be required to contain at least 5% clean-burning ethanol by 2007, rising to 10% by 2010. That's not unrealistic; that's very reasonable. Ethanol is a cleaner-burning fuel produced from agricultural products such as corn. Cleaner diesel fuel as well: we want to work with farmers in industry to develop and implement an Ontario biodiesel strategy which will include in the future mandatory clean, renewable biodiesel content and diesel fuel.

So these are steps that can be taken. I hope that the members of this Assembly will agree with this. I'm pleased to see the resolution before us. I hope we can develop a consensus in this House and come up with some really practical and good solutions which will bring immense benefits.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): I'm really delighted to have an opportunity, short as it will be, to speak on this resolution, for two reasons. The first reason is that it's put forward by my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Mr Cleary, who has informed us and all of the world that this Parliament will be his last in Ontario. I just want to take a moment or two to say to him, to the members of this House and to the province what an outstanding job he has done over the many years that he has represented his riding in the Ontario Legislature. The member is quiet, soft-spoken and has a determination that should be the admiration of any parliamentarian, young or seasoned.

I remember that when we first began to sit together in 1985, I was struck by what tremendous support he had from his constituents then, and that has continued throughout his political career.

I assume that this will be the last resolution he puts before this Legislature. I want to tell you, sir, and the members of this House, that it would be a true triumph if we could just set aside the partisan nature of this place for a while and get unanimous consent or a majority consent to pass this resolution.

It's part of an overall strategy that is critically important for Ontario. As the resolution reads, "...the government of Ontario should immediately implement the Ontario Liberal clean air plan that would: ensure all gasoline sold in Ontario contains at least 5% clean-burning ethanol by 2007 and 10% by 2010." Those are pretty high standards and objectives. It's one of, I think, the keys in the McGuinty clean air plan. It's very important to do, not just so we can start to reduce the smog, dirt and pollution that all of us are breathing day after day, and not just in our metropolitan areas. It also is a very important economic strategy for farm communities right around this province and indeed beyond, because it creates a new industry that allows us to transform what we grow into the gasoline that we use to get around in this province.

I think it's so appropriate that this resolution be put forward by the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, because there is no one in this Legislature who has spoken more passionately for the interests of farmers right across Ontario, not just in his own area of eastern Ontario.

This initiative will be very important for farmers. This initiative will be very important for all of us who believe that we have a responsibility to clean up our environment. I want to congratulate my colleague for bringing the resolution to this House.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr Cleary: First of all, I'd like to thank the members from Timmins-James Bay, Northumberland, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Simcoe North, St Catharines and Vaughan-King-Aurora. I know that many of them are very supportive. I think it's time that all parties work together and do what's good for the residents of Ontario.

I would also like to thank Liam McCreery from the Ontario Soybean Growers for his input into this, and Mike Buis from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. They know what's good for the residents of Ontario.

I know that this is about more than just clean air and ethanol. It's also about jobs in Ontario.

I don't know how any member of the Legislature could vote against what we're proposing. I know that the select committee on alternative fuels did great work, and a lot of good things can come out of that.

As I said earlier, we have to work together, because we're talking about people's health. There are three

things that people want in this province: fresh drinking water, clean air and quality-inspected food.

Most members of the Ontario Legislature come here with the goal that they want to make Ontario a better place to live. They may have many different ideas, but I think we all have to work toward the same goal.

I would hope we would get some support for this resolution, because I've been involved in trying to get an ethanol plant going in our part of Ontario for many, many years, and many people have invested their money. It's time that all levels of government come together and support the program.

1100

HYDRO DEREGULATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My resolution reads as follows:

That this House deplores the escalating costs of hydro to residents in Hamilton and across the province. That the Ontario Legislative Assembly condemns the Eves government's deregulation and privatization of Ontario Hydro; and that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should return to a system of power that is publicly owned and regulated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes.

Mr Christopherson: First of all, I want to thank my legislative assistant, Linda Mitchell, who worked overtime and made a lot of extra efforts to make sure all the material from my constituents was available. Your efforts are much appreciated.

This is about an economic attack on the people of Hamilton and every other community across the province. This is an attack that lies right on the doorstep of this government. You've got no one else to blame, nowhere else to point. You can't tell us, "Everything's going to be fine; don't worry about it. Go to sleep. Everything will work out fine in the long run." People are hurting. People are scared. The people who are frightened the most are in many cases the disabled, seniors, individuals on a fixed income, low-income individuals, people barely struggling as it is to provide the necessities of life for their kids. Along comes your deregulation and ultimately privatization of hydro, and suddenly everybody is wondering how they're going to get through the winter and how they are possibly going to pay their bills.

I've got a number of cases, and I hope to get the majority of them on the floor.

First of all, Angela Fiorentino, a senior on a fixed income. Her bill is \$330. She made a partial payment, but then she got a notice saying that if she didn't pay the balance, they were going to cut her off. Further to that, they told her that if she was cut off, she's got to find \$400 over and above the amount already owed before they'll reconnect. How is she supposed to do that? When members of the government get up today, I don't want to hear you stand up and give us government rhetoric. I want you to tell my constituents how they're supposed to

get through the winter. They are already behind because their bills are doubled. In many cases, people on disability haven't received an increase from you. Anybody on minimum wage hasn't received an increase in almost eight years. You kept telling us that's not important. I want every one of the government members who stands up today to look into the cameras and tell my constituents just what they're supposed to do this winter. Angela Fiorentino receives \$850 a month. I want you to stand in your place and tell Angela how she's supposed to live, with \$330 for hydro. And don't tell her the rebate's coming sometime next year, because her hydro is on the brink of being cut off now.

Lest you think it's just NDP types and our followers, let me read an editorial from the Hamilton Spectator written by Howard Elliott on Friday, October 11 of this year.

"We could write an editorial a day for the next month, each one a full blown rant, and still just scratch the surface of the outrage Hamiltonians are feeling around hydro.

"They're writing letters to the editor, calling and e-mailing by the dozen. They're outraged, howling for blood. Some are fearful, some can't pay their hydro bills for the first time in their lives. They describe enormous increases, some saying they're sacrificing other basic necessities to pay for this basic essential. They are, literally and figuratively, shaking their fists and telling anyone who'll listen they're mad as hell.

"It is absolutely no exaggeration to suggest this debacle could be the thing that sinks the Conservative government. And make no mistake, it's the Tories who should bear the lion's share of the blame."

Mr Elliott goes on to say, "In the long run, maybe this whole idea needs rethinking. Given that electricity is a necessity of life, and that the people who need it have few viable alternatives, why should the electricity market be governed solely by free-market, supply-and-demand rules and philosophy?

"We don't treat health care that way, and adequate, affordable electricity is as basic and vital."

Jon Lehti has written my office. John said, "We're being gouged to death in this unregulated environment. Anything essential to the taxpayers' health and welfare should be regulated. You have, by your inaction, thrown us to the wolves, the profitmongers. I for one will be voting very differently next election."

This is from Sandra Meloche.

"Dear Mr Eves:

"I cannot believe that in a democratic society here in Canada that government would allow this to happen to its constituents. I am on a fixed income of \$825 a month (CPP). Could you please explain to me how I can pay rent and buy food and pay my huge hydro bills. Thank you Mr Eves. I am sure that due to you and your fellows, there will be a lot of old, sick and handicapped people sitting in the cold and the dark this year."

Just as an aside, I want to say how disturbed I am by the number of my constituents who are afraid to let their

names be used because they are afraid of their own government. That has never happened before, and it's not a coincidence.

Antoniette DiMarino: her total bill is \$802. The hydro is around \$650. She said the total bill is more than her mortgage.

You said this was going to be good for my constituents in Hamilton. You said this was going to be good for the people of Ontario. Where? Where's the evidence? Because all the evidence I've got is the opposite. You're hurting people. They are scared. As if we aren't scared enough in this society; the way things are going right now, you have to add this burden. People don't even feel safe and secure in their own home, because they don't know how they are going to pay their bills; they don't know how they are going to buy their food. They are worried their hydro is going to be cut off, and if it's cut off, they don't have the money to get it reconnected.

That's fine if you don't want to look at me now, but you're going to have to stand up in your turn in this House, and I want you to answer to those constituents. It's your government, your policies. You supported them, every one of you. You have all got to answer to the Hamiltonians who are hurting, and to every other person in Ontario.

It's not just individuals, as if that weren't bad enough. Dofasco is a good example of a major industry in Hamilton that provides jobs and economic investment in our community. They are very successful, and they are successful because they watch every dime. They study around the world and they see where they can do new techniques and new procedures to ensure the future of the company. Do you know how much their costs are going to go up? Fifty million dollars.

1110

In the past, the government members have said, "Well, you know, individuals and businesses are just going to have to learn to plan their production better so they can take advantage of off-peak hours." Listen to what Dofasco says about that idea. This is Gord Forstner, a spokesperson for Dofasco: "It couldn't be done. We didn't know where the market was, and therefore it was impossible for us to tailor our operations to save money. But our ability to turn operations on and off with changes in electricity rates, even if we wanted to do it, was non-existent."

You're hurting people, you're hurting business and you're hurting our economy. I want you to stand in your place today, look in that camera right there and tell my constituents what they're supposed to do. And don't you dare blame anybody other than yourselves. There are people who think they're going to go hungry this winter to pay your hydro bills, and they deserve a lot better than that from their government. So stand up and defend what is probably the indefensible.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join the debate on ballot item 64. Certainly no one in this House—we all pay our electricity bills and everything—wants to be faced with dealing

with the costs of a situation that is difficult for some people to meet. Nobody wants to put a person in a situation like that. We all share that.

All in this House know well about the mismanagement at Ontario Hydro that led to debt and associated liabilities that reached \$38 billion by 1999. The same mismanagement led to customers being hit with some of the largest increases in electricity prices in our history. For example, between 1983 and 1993, wholesale electricity prices increased by 94%, an annual average rate of 6.9%. The price impacts of an "at any cost passed through the monopoly" system were largely to blame, and the monopoly structure and centralized decision-making of Ontario Hydro made such increases inevitable.

Our electricity system, which for so long had been a competitive advantage, was at risk of becoming a competitive disadvantage that would drive jobs and investment away from Ontario. We could not accept that. We could not allow Ontario to go on forever suffering from the Hydro hangover. So we set about to cure it.

The cure is a competitive market in the generation and sale of electricity within a strong regulatory framework, which this government introduced on May 1 of this year. In a competitive market, prices vary according to supply and demand. It's quite normal, in a competitive wholesale electricity market, to see variations in hourly prices due to supply and demand. For example, demand is lower at night than in the day, so prices are lower at night. Demand is also lower in the spring and fall, when temperatures are moderate, so prices are lower. Wholesale prices in May averaged three cents per kilowatt hour, and in June they averaged 3.3 cents per kilowatt hour.

I know that concerns have been expressed recently over electricity prices in the summer. I know that some have cited high prices as proof that the competitive electricity net market just doesn't work. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This past summer was the hottest in nearly 50 years, with above-average temperatures continuing well into September. That means air conditioners were running a lot more, and that put a lot of demand on the system. The increased demand led to higher prices. That's how the market, any market, works.

Under the old Ontario Hydro monopoly, the true cost of electricity would have been hidden from the consumer, only to reappear later as increased debt on Ontario Hydro's balance sheet. That is how Ontario Hydro operated, and that is why they left a \$38-billion legacy of debt.

Given the heat waves of the past summer, the electricity market performed well, as expected. Our supply held. We had access to imported power, proving the advantage of interconnection with the United States, and we certainly did not have the rolling blackouts that some predicted.

In fact, we have been importing and exporting power in this province for many years. It's certainly not something new, and it works to our advantage. It gives us a safety net during sharp spikes in demand. As we pre-

dicted, the onset of cooler autumn weather is leading to a decrease in demand and a corresponding drop in prices, the weighted average price so far for October being four cents per kilowatt hour.

There are a couple of things to remember about electricity prices. First, last summer was unusually hot, and demand was unusually high. In circumstances like this, consumers can take a number of measures to use power more efficiently, which will decrease their bills and also relieve pressure on the system. Second, the market power mitigation agreement will protect consumers from the full market price impact. The agreement will rebate at least 50% of the price increase above an average of 3.8 cents per kilowatt hour for the year on the generation part of the bill. So there is a rebate program in place.

On the other hand, customers who have signed with retailers already have a fixed price. Though prices will continue to be influenced by supply and demand, as the nuclear units at Pickering A and Bruce A stations come back into service, along with the other new developments, I am confident we will see less volatility in electricity prices.

In the long term, competition and adequate supply are consumers' best protection against unwarranted increases in the price of electricity. Thanks to competition, not only will consumers benefit from lower prices over time, they will also be able to choose to receive their electricity from cleaner, renewable energy sources.

We are already seeing a number of new clean energy projects come on-line. For example, the Ontario Waterpower Association has indicated that more than \$180.9 million is committed and planned for water projects that have been announced over the past two years. In fact, nine water power projects are currently being built or are on the drawing board here in Ontario.

TransAlta has begun construction of a 490-megawatt natural-gas-fired plant in Sarnia, which is expected to come on stream in early 2003. Huron Wind, a partnership of OPG and British Energy, is installing five 1.8-megawatt wind generators in Kincardine, which are expected to be operational by the end of this year.

Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative and Toronto Hydro Energy Services Inc are erecting a 750-kilowatt wind turbine at the CNE in Toronto, which is expected to be operational by early next year, and Sky Generation is installing a 1.8-megawatt wind turbine at Ferndale in the Bruce Peninsula, which should be operational in November of this year.

These projects will create enough power to supply 340,000 homes, and over time the opening of the market will attract more private investment in Ontario and will lead to the construction of even more new forms of clean electricity generation.

New investment, more consumer choice and protection, a safe and reliable supply of electricity and environmentally friendly energy sources: these are what the competitive electricity market was meant to accomplish. By restructuring the electricity market, the government

has guaranteed that future generations of Ontarians have access to the efficient, reliable supply of electricity and that Ontario remains competitive in an increasingly competitive world.

In closing, I want to point out that the capacity for the electricity market in this province is secure. Experts predict that it is in a stable situation for the next 18 months. The debt is being paid down. People know through their bills exactly what is being paid, and, to the detriment of the federal government, who said yesterday that they are not going to remove the GST from that bill—

Interjection: Unconscionable.

Mr Tascona: —which I agree is unconscionable; that's going to remain on the bill. I can't believe how they could say that's a service or a debt that's being dealt with.

With respect to the rate rebate, that's in place by law. Consumers can expect that where the average annualized rate is greater than 3.8 cents per kilowatt hour, they will get a 50% rebate on the difference on the generation part of the bill.

1120

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'm pleased to respond to the member opposite, but first I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Hamilton West for so passionately representing his constituents on this issue.

I, of course, have received similar calls, and I will go through that in a minute. But first I want to challenge my honourable colleague opposite with some of the things he said about competition. Dofasco came to you before you came on to this endeavour, and Dofasco, a huge company, is not against competition, not against privatization, but told you privately in meetings with your former Premier, "You're not ready. Unless you have the supply, don't venture into the open market. The prices will soar." They warned you. You say that you represent business. Well, here was business telling you that you weren't ready.

I would also like to give one example from my constituency, the Dairy Queen on Fennell Avenue. The hydro bill in 2001 was \$1,200. This is a business. The hydro bill last month was \$3,900. Jane Scala is asking me to ask you how she's supposed to keep her business, how she's supposed to keep her employees, how she's supposed to even think of the future in her business.

I'm trying to talk the language you say you understand, the business language, the jobs language. You failed there. It's bad enough that once again the vulnerable are paying the biggest price. I mean, you don't even listen to that any more; it's almost like you've tuned that out. But this is something that is also hurting the people you think you represent.

My constituent Cynthia Hansen's hydro in October 2001 was \$294. It is now \$414. Cynthia was told by Hamilton Hydro that less total energy was used in 2002 over 2001. That is what my constituents are saying: "We are conserving more now, we are more conscious now,

but our bills are still higher. We're using less energy now and our bills are still higher."

There's another issue that is just now starting to be talked about. People are actually turning off their external house lights. Now that it's getting darker in the winter, they maybe have them on for an hour at the most; some don't have them on at all at night. You have a lot of dark neighbourhoods now. There's a safety issue. That's a huge issue that is just now starting to come because it's just now starting to get dark earlier. People are trying their best to conserve, yet their bills are still out of this world.

I support my colleague's motion because you weren't ready to go on this endeavour. You'd like to blame other governments for the mismanagement of Hydro, but what have you done in the last eight years and what has your solution done? Your solution is not effective.

We on this side of the House are not against competition, particularly in green energy. We need green energy. Privatization is one way to get it, but it has to be with tough regulations. We know that in some areas of the province you wouldn't have the energy if it wasn't for privatization. The NDP, 10 years ago, allowed three private non-utility generators to open in the north: one in Cochrane, one in Iroquois Falls and one in Kirkland Lake. The cogeneration of woodchips and natural gas was needed. They knew that and they allowed that. Their own leader, Howard Hampton, said that TransAlta will be allowed to function in Sarnia, the Alberta company that again is a private company and is a cogenerator with natural gas and steam, a good, clean source of energy.

We're not against privatization, but it has to be with tough regulations and with generous supply so that competition is fair. You know what happened. You didn't have the supply because of your mismanagement; therefore, all's fair in the open market and prices went up.

We're not unreasonable on this side of the House. We know the challenges. But you were driven more by wanting to please your former Premier's rich friends on Bay Street than the needs of the citizens of this province. That's what angers us. You weren't going into this in the spirit of business, which will then give jobs and energy. You were going into this for your former Premier, to please his friends on Bay Street.

What is your response? To sell half of Hydro One now. And I bet after the next election, if we're unfortunate enough to see you again on that side of the House, you'll sell the other half, which is just the same as selling all our highways. You should all be ashamed of yourselves.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I am pleased to stand and support my colleague from Hamilton West, Mr Christopherson, and congratulate him for bringing this forward today in private members' hour.

What was really shocking was to listen to Mr Tascona, who stood up after Mr Christopherson spoke so passionately and intelligently, with facts, information and letters from real people in his own community, and we're all

getting hundreds of those faxes and letters. Our NDP leader is out again today on the Keep our Power Public bus. We are getting hundreds, if not thousands, of responses, the very same responses that Mr Christopherson gave a few examples of today. It is happening all over Ontario.

I heard from a woman in my riding in East York who got a bill recently for \$600. She's in a bungalow in East York. We think there must be a mistake, but we're getting more of those. There are others in Toronto who stayed with Toronto Hydro, who didn't sign up with the others, who right now are getting artificially low bills because for the time being they are sheltered by Toronto Hydro, which is waiting to see if perhaps by some miracle prices will go down and then they'll never see those increases. That's not what's going to happen here. They're going to get a huge shock very soon when their bills come.

What did Mr Tascona do but get up and not mention people once. He didn't talk about the seniors, yes indeed, in his riding and in all of our ridings, or people in social housing who are responsible for paying their own hydro bills and who can't afford to pay them any more, with the city of Toronto saying it can't afford to retrofit the buildings or to pay those bills for them. What are they going to do? What are you going to do with people on minimum wage, who, by the way, have not seen an increase in minimum wage since this government came to power in 1995? What are they going to do, Mr Tascona? Somebody over there address the real issue that Mr Christopherson brought up today: the fact that we are literally going to have people freezing in the dark if you don't do something about this.

Our leader, Mr Hampton, stood up the other day and questioned the Minister of Energy about a real person, a real woman, who's in a situation where she is going to have her hydro cut off. She can't pay it incrementally; she's got to pay it all at once. She's going to have it cut off. He has introduced or will be introducing a private member's bill that makes it very clear that this government will not allow—that we, the legislators, including you guys over there who did this, who privatized the system, will at least commit to passing a bill that will disallow OPG, for heaven's sake, from cutting off people's power in the middle of winter.

It only gets worse. People's bills are out of control. They can't afford to pay them. Industry is being hurt. And what do you do but stand there with the same old, tired lines about how previous governments screwed it up and how you came in on your white horses, knights in shining armour to save us from the mistakes of previous governments. You're the guys who brought in Darlington, by the way. The costs went way over budget and I think ended up costing \$19 billion.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): We did Darlington?

Ms Churley: Yes, you did it. Right now, with the rates we're paying—people should know this—only about half of our bills go toward the actual power genera-

tion. The other costs go to transmission, distribution and debt service.

Mr Sampson: And GST.

Ms Churley: Yes, but we'll leave that alone for a moment. You're the guys who are responsible, but you're still trying to make excuses over there. You did this. It's not somebody else's fault. You're right about the GST. They shouldn't be charged for it. We'll go after the federal Liberal government on that. But we're here today talking about a very flawed system. We're here today saying, "Bring public power back."

1130

This is not working. In the US we are seeing more and more states deciding to pull back, to reverse their decision to privatize or not go ahead, because they're seeing what's happening there. The examples are there. This is not just scaremongering. This is really happening to people. We need answers.

They also talk about the fact that we had to privatize the system to bring in green power. We acknowledged that there was problem under the previous system. In fact, we have a plan to fix the previous public system so we can fix that and make sure conservation, real conservation, and energy efficiency programs are brought in, which we had under our government, which you guys got rid of. You don't need to do what you are doing to bring in green power. You brag about it. What have you brought in so far? I understand that only about 0.7% of the market is green power. With all your rhetoric around the fact that deregulation and privatization is going to bring in more power, you haven't brought in the right kinds of incentives and regulations to bring in the green power. It's just a sop to those who are trying to bring green power on the grid.

The NDP's plan for accountable public power includes supports for renewable portfolio standards and special funding for conservation through an assistance benefit charge, as the green power generators proposed. They just held a press conference this morning, with all kinds of ideas. Green power and conservation must come first and can be and will be, if our plan is adopted and brought into the system. I want to bring it back again.

I'm going to listen very, very carefully to the next Tory who gets up. What I want to hear you talk about is real people, the real people Mr Christopherson was talking about this morning, the real people who are not going to be able to pay their bills. What are they going to do, and what are you going to do about it?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I am pleased to rise and speak to ballot item number 64, the resolution presented by the member from Hamilton West. It's interesting that the member from Toronto-Danforth said she wants us to speak about real people. I would ask the members opposite to look above them at the school children looking down at the proceedings today. They're real people.

You're proposing in this resolution a short-term solution to a long-term problem. We have—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: Now hear me out. You had your opportunity and I didn't interrupt; now hear me out. All right?

We have a debt. The Hydro debt is \$38 billion. We have an asset of \$20 billion, leaving a net stranded debt, for which there is no asset, of \$18 billion. That's the old math: \$18 billion. That was as a result of the collective decisions of a number of governments over the last 15 to 20 years. I admit that the Bill Davis government was part of that, but you people are unwilling to admit that the David Peterson government was part of it and the Bob Rae government was part of it. You want to leave those children a debt of \$18 billion which they are going to have to pay and for which there will be no asset. You are advocating a short-term solution, I say to the members opposite.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, come to order.

Mr Wettlaufer: Years of mismanagement by Ontario Hydro and years of poor decisions and indecision by previous Ontario governments meant this government had to take action to change the way our electricity system works. We had to make sure that the system would work long into the future.

Our first priority is to ensure that Ontario's electricity customers are protected. We have endeavoured to put electricity customers first, from designing the new wholesale and retail markets to safeguarding our future electricity supply, thereby ensuring that safe, reliable power will continue to be supplied to consumers at competitive cost in the long term.

I say to the members opposite, compare the prices of hydro in Ontario to other jurisdictions around the world. We are competitive. We are among the lowest in Canada. I'm not without feeling on this. I know there are businesses and people in your ridings and in my riding who are being confronted with rising costs. I have rising costs too, but I do not advocate a short-term solution, as you do.

It's interesting that the NDP is advocating another short-term solution, as they did for five years when they were in government, but look at what they did to the debt of the province.

Ms Churley: What are you going to do for these people?

Mr Wettlaufer: You're advocating a short-term solution again. That's all you've ever done. You advocated a short-term solution to everything in your five years of government, and look at what happened to the debt of this province. The debt doubled. Say that to the people, say that to the children of this province, that you don't give a darn about them. You think you have a monopoly on feeling for the people. All you have is a monopoly on short-term solutions.

We moved to a competitive market because the old monopoly system wasn't working. We could continue to use taxpayers' dollars to subsidize hydro, but we've decided not to. We cannot continue to party at the

expense of our future, as the members opposite think we can. The only way to protect customers and guarantee future prosperity is to open our wholesale and retail electricity markets to competition.

As we move into the future, we will see benefits, including greater efficiencies, better service and innovation, like allowing consumers who so choose to focus their electricity dollars on green power.

For the first time, Ontario's 4.1 million residential electricity customers have a choice as to how they want to buy their power. They can decide to do nothing and their local utility will continue to supply them with power at a variable or spot-market rate, or they can purchase their electricity at a fixed rate.

It's interesting. In my riding the local supplier is Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro. They had a surplus and they elected to use that surplus by putting it into general municipal revenues. They now no longer have a surplus—they could level off the prices they charge. That's their choice. That's a business decision by the municipal government. That's fine; I have no problem with that. I'm just saying that in our case, in my riding, the price increases would have been ameliorated somewhat by another decision by the municipal government. They elected not to do that. I suppose there are other municipalities or local utilities that have done likewise. So why don't you take a look at those local utilities or municipalities that made decisions in that regard 18 months or two years ago?

No matter what choice consumers make, their local utility will continue to deliver electricity and bill customers for transmission and distribution. They'll still be responsible for the safety and reliability of local distribution. The transmission and distribution of electricity is regulated by the OEB. We put into place very tough regulations for the OEB to regulate the local supply and local distribution of electricity. My time is running out so I can't get into that, unfortunately. I wish I could. If the opposite members would allow me to, I would.

1140

Mr Sampson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you would want to know that watching from the galleries today are students from West Lynde Public School in Whitby and from St Philip school in the great state of Mississauga.

The Acting Speaker: I'm very pleased to have these students as our guests.

The Speaker recognizes the member for Davenport.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'm delighted to participate in this debate. I want to point out a number of items. First, I think it's important to realize that the documents that were released by the US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission—all of you have a copy—show that a so-called free market in electricity generation is intrinsically flawed and susceptible to price fixing, artificial shortages and widespread abuse.

Both opposition parties were warning this government of what would happen when you opened the market in May. I remember the Minister of Energy getting up and

saying, "Oh, look, you know, early summer, the prices"—it was 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour—"are going down. We can take credit because we opened the market." But now, when the prices are going sky high, where are they? Where is the government? Where are the backbenchers standing up and saying, "We want to take credit for it, or do we take the blame?"

What has happened is that all of us know, all of Ontario knows, you've made a mess of a deregulated market. You opened up the process. What happens when there are brownouts, especially about Toronto? What are you going to do about Yvette Brown who has got a bill that's already doubled? She's on a fixed income.

We have literally hundreds of examples here on both sides—you get the calls as well—and I want you to look them in the eye and say, "You know what? The prices will be coming down soon." Because the prices will not come down soon. I'll make one prediction: everyone today who gets up to try to justify what you've done, to justify it in terms of saying, "The opposition is simply doing it because it's a short-term solution, but the Conservatives are thinking ahead about our children's future; we're thinking about a long-term solution and we have to bite the dust in the meantime"—we have example after example where people are going to freeze this winter, example after example where small businesses are going to have to suffer through it; their prices have doubled too.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain was indicating, and so was the member from Hamilton West, that Dofasco's bill is going to be increased by \$50 million in one year. It's simple; that kind of math adds up. The government always says, "Let's add up the numbers and see what the numbers say." The numbers are clear. How could it be mistaken when a senior citizen on a fixed income is going to have their hydro bill doubled? Is that a mistake? Is that temporary?

Just wait until Toronto Hydro releases its bills. We know that some of these bills are capped and some are floating. When the caps come off there will be hundreds of thousands calling us and the place will be lighting up, saying, "What are you doing?" My prediction will be the following, and mark it well: this government will backtrack rapidly—rapido—and it will say, "I think we made a mistake." Today they proudly say, "We think of long-term solutions." Tomorrow, or not too long from today, they're going to have to bite themselves and say, "We made a mistake. We're either going to go back to the old system of controlling regulation or we're going to give big discounts in terms of paying money back to the consumers."

Do you know what the prediction is? You're going to go back. You're going to eat your own words today, because you're proud of what you've done and you shouldn't be because you're hurting people.

It is very clear that years of mismanagement—are we almost getting to the point?

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: We're at the point right now. Mr Speaker, I have two more predictions but I'll quit right

now because there are many more speakers who want to talk on the subject.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I would like, first of all, to commend my colleague from Hamilton West for the excellent job he has done in bringing this matter down to real people. Very often we talk about policies in this Legislature but we all too seldom talk about real people. I'd like to talk a little bit about what's happening, or what isn't happening, in the city of Toronto, where I have lived almost my entire life.

People, my neighbours, are wondering what the hydro debate is about because they have not felt that debate. They have not seen the costs in their bills. They do not even understand what their bills say. They haven't seen the kind of rises we have seen outside of Toronto and in many of the communities around Ontario. They have been shielded. But their day of reckoning is coming, and all too soon, because Toronto Hydro is banking on the fact that prices will potentially go down in the fall and stay down all winter. I think it's a mug's game and probably a very foolish prognostication.

Before coming to this Legislature, as many of you know, I was on the city of Toronto council, but before that I was the mayor of East York. Part of my duties there was to sit on the hydro commission of East York and to meet, quite often, with the hydro commissioners across the municipalities of what were then the six municipalities of Toronto, and the hydro commissioners from outside of that area. I will tell you without a doubt, the big months for hydro usage inside the now city of Toronto, or Metropolitan Toronto, or the GTA, are not the summer months, as the members opposite keep telling you about the summertime, the hottest summer on record. The big months of usage are December and January. When December and January come and the usage goes way back up again, we are going to be paying. Those are the same months that the hydro dams are not able to put out the amounts of water that they can in the spring, fall and summer months, because many of our lakes and rivers are frozen, the flow is not the same, and we have to rely on other forms of energy, especially coal.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: No, it doesn't freeze up, but many places do in northern Ontario. If the member opposite would ever travel that far north he'd know it's pretty cold.

We know, and I will make that prediction too, that come this December and this January, the spikes are going to be there, the usage is going to be there. Just stop to think about it, members opposite and those who are perhaps watching on television: why are those months the heaviest? It's quite clear it's the highest usage then because of the lights, and we go into daylight savings this coming weekend. The lights are a huge factor, because at 4 o'clock when you're driving home you'll see that the streetlights are on, the house lights are on, and you don't have that in the summertime. There are Christmas lights, of course, for all those people who celebrate the holiday by lighting up their homes, and there are tens of thousands of people who will do it in spite of the cost. You

have the problem of heating: many places are electrically heated, or use electricity as part of the heating process, or space heaters. You have cooking: people do a lot more of that in the wintertime. You have entertainment, computers, televisions; you have people at home using that electricity. So what the members opposite are thinking, that the costs are going to come down this winter, is not going to happen. They are going to come down a little bit, perhaps, for October, and then they're going to start going right back up in the same sort of progression that we saw this summer. That's when the people of Toronto are going to notice it, because come next year when they get their bill, they're going to be in for one big shock.

Public power has been a godsend to this province. I would remind, especially the member who represents Kitchener, who spoke just a few minutes ago, that the first public power in this province went into Berlin, Ontario, which is today Kitchener. When Sir Adam Beck threw the switch, the father of public power threw the switch in Berlin, Ontario, in the place that he now represents, it said, "For the people!" I think the member for Kitchener should remember that it was for the people; not for the corporations, not for the people who were investing in it, not for the people who were going to make profits but for all of us, especially for those people who could not otherwise afford it.

There has been a problem, and even the people of Toronto are noticing it, those who are fortunate enough to have cottage properties outside of the city. When they are getting their cottage bills this year, they are horrendous. People are seeing \$600 and \$700 bills where they're used to see \$100 or \$200. There's no air conditioning there and there's not much use of hydroelectricity. The most disgraceful thing that's happening is the minimum charges that are being put on out there. People who try to conserve electricity and aren't using much of it in their cottages, who used to pay a minimum \$25-per-month charge, are now paying \$100, \$200 or \$300 for electricity they used to get for a minimum charge.

We really have to start doing something to protect consumers. This bill is about protecting consumers. I would advise the members opposite to actually open up their e-mails and open up their letters from their own constituents and they will know that they are very angry. They are looking for a solution today, not 20 years from now.

1150

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It is my intention to support what I consider to be a very good resolution put forward by the member for Hamilton West.

If we were to canvass our constituency office staff and ask them what issue is first and foremost in the minds of individuals in our communities, at least the plurality of the calls, if not the majority of calls, would be related to the huge hydro bills which are now coming in, the cost of electrical power to the people of this province. Some have not yet seen it in its full extent, because they've not seen it being reflected in rent increases. I would see some

very substantial rent increases that will be forthcoming as a result of these huge electrical bills.

I have several people who have been confronted with different problems. Here's a person whose hydro bill went from \$320 to \$704. He has a modest-sized home. Here's another individual who's on ODSP and cannot afford the increase from \$80 to \$189. She contacted the local utility and that only upset her, because she was told if she didn't pay the bill, she would be cut off. Another individual: the bill went from \$197 to \$430. This individual's wife is disabled and requires extra care. Another one: she has lived at this address for almost 30 years and has never had a bill over \$180. Her bill this month was \$366.

Another individual, a senior citizen, very much involved with senior citizens' affairs: his previous bill, approximately \$300; his latest bill, \$561. He might not be able to pay his bill this month. An individual who lives in a semi-detached house, four people in the home, two adults, two children: the hydro bill received, the last one I have a record of: \$559. Another says she cannot afford to pay this month's hydro bill. The bill is for \$221. This person, a widow with two children, says she lives in a small apartment. She has a 12-year-old daughter who is disabled, and she receives money from Ontario Works.

Time after time people are calling. People in businesses are calling to say that hydro rates are jumping. Despite what they were assured by members of the Eves government, their hydro rates are jumping tremendously.

I sat on the alternative fuels committee. One of our recommendations was that the government of Ontario, through publicly owned Ontario Power Generation, proceed with Beck 3, yet another addition to power generation in Niagara Falls. That's clean power. The environmental assessment has already been done, and it's the kind of power we need coming on to the grid. It's important that we retain complete public ownership of the transmission grid. Whether it's ownership by local utilities or by Hydro One, that should be in public hands because that is like a public highway.

We recognize that today there are what we would call some smaller private projects that are already on the grid. In the Niagara Peninsula we have them. There's Great Lakes Power. There are a number of them. However, it is my view—and I think the member for Hamilton has expressed it well—that indeed predominantly in this province, in a very dominant role, public power should be prime in Ontario. Without it and without very strong regulation, which we obviously don't have now, these bills will continue to go through the roof.

If anybody thinks the summer was bad, keep in mind that a cold December, January and February will mean that hydro bills will be increasing tremendously. It is simply unacceptable that this government has allowed this to happen. Despite all of their assurances that their big, massive privatization, their massive deregulation of the market would produce much lower prices, exactly the opposite has been the case. That is why we need a huge public presence in both the generation and the trans-

mission and distribution of hydroelectric power and other electric power in this province.

The government must take action immediately. Rebates will be of some use in the shorter term and must be provided to the people of this province. In the longer term, this government must abandon a policy that has failed and is costing the people of this province amounts of money they never anticipated.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West has the rest of his caucus time plus two minutes to wrap up.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

First of all, thank you to all the members who took the time to respond. I appreciate that. Let me just say to the member for Kitchener Centre that no one is going to argue that there isn't a problem. That's not the issue. Yes, there's a problem. Yes, all three parties can take their share of the blame. You can argue who should have more responsibility. That's not the issue. No one is saying there isn't a problem. What we have a problem with is your solution.

I want to point out that neither you nor the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford addressed the issues of my constituents. You stood up and berated us and berated them and berated everybody else, but neither one of you stood in your place and told my constituents how they're going to get through the cold winter.

I don't know what you're saying to your constituents in the background and I don't know what kind of cabinet promise you must have got to stand up and make that politically suicidal speech, but if you think that somehow that's an adequate response to the pain and suffering that's going on in the community right now, you're sadly mistaken.

It's equally insulting that the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford droned on about macro situations over the last umpteen years. You said you were going to fix the problem. We all acknowledge that there's a problem. What we have a further problem with is your solution. Let me just quote you, by the way. You said, "We've got to stop partying at the expense of our future." I don't think eating, heating and lights are any kind of partying. It's called survival, and it's tough enough to do in this province given everything you've done to the people.

When you brought in deregulation, it was 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. In July it was 6.2, in August it was 6.94, in September it was 8.31. As my colleague has pointed out, the winter months are the worst. We're going to feel the biggest pressure. We've been told there's going to be a supply problem, contrary to what your Minister of Energy said, that "Oh, don't worry, there'll be lots of energy," as if we were some kind of fools over here for even raising the question.

This is going to get a lot worse. I've got people who are scared. They're already behind in their hydro bill.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Don't start heckling me now. You had your chance to answer the people of Ontario and

you didn't do it. You insulted them. They're scared. They're behind in their hydro bill. Their hydro is going to be cut off. They've got to cough up another 400 bucks to get it reconnected. They still owe the money and next month's bill is coming. You didn't say one word about how constituents, ordinary Ontarians, are going to deal with that.

If you do nothing else, please participate: www.publicpower.ca. Put the pressure on them. We can stop them if we stick together.

The Acting Speaker: The time for private members' business has expired.

CLEAN AIR PLAN

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with Mr Cleary's resolution, ballot item number 63.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell, and we will put that off until after the next item of business.

HYDRO DEREGULATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The next order of business is the resolution standing in the name of Mr Christopherson, ballot item number 64.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

CLEAN AIR PLAN

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): All those in favour of Mr Cleary's resolution, ballot item number 63, will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Conway, Sean G.	Martel, Shelley
Bountrogianni, Marie	Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted
Boyer, Claudette	Crozier, Bruce	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Prue, Michael
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sorbara, Greg

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hodgson, Chris	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John

Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gill, Raminder	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 27; the nays are 42.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The doors will be opened for 30 seconds for those who want to exit or enter.

HYDRO DEREGULATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): All those in favour of Mr Christopherson's resolution, ballot item number 64, will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Conway, Sean G.	Martel, Shelley
Bountrogianni, Marie	Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted
Boyer, Claudette	Crozier, Bruce	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Prue, Michael
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sorbara, Greg

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gill, Raminder	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Guzzo, Garry	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 27; the nays are 42.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wanted to introduce Ms Pinell and her grade 5 students from Couchiching Heights Public School in Orillia, along with some mothers.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order, but we are pleased that you are with us today.

It being well after 12, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have with me a press release from the Minister of Citizenship in which he says that Ontario seeks to spread immigration to smaller centres. While we agree with the sentiment essentially, let's see what's wrong with this, first in process, then in substance.

The process is that the minister has the right to come here and to make a statement, appropriately, to the opposition. That's the process. In that case we have a right to respond. What he has done is to simply let us know through a press conference what his new policy is going to be. Is that acceptable to you, Mr Speaker? It cannot be. Thank you very much. It has to be a two-way kind of communication so that policy is not being done at night or on the fly. It has to be of substance.

In terms of the substance itself, let's have a quick look at it. Ontario is accepting roughly 135,000 immigrants from all over the world right here. More than 80,000 of these new immigrants are skilled immigrants. The question arises, of course, what will he do with those who are already here? If he is inviting new immigrants from all over the globe to come and issue temporary work permits so they can be bound to centres outside Toronto, what will he do with those who are already here, the 80,000 and above?

That kind of policy is important to us. He should come here and explain himself. We cannot accept this charade of having the minister introduce new legislation through a press conference.

HIGHWAY 406

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It was back in 1999, over three years ago, that the then Minister of Transportation, one Mr Clement, came down to south Niagara, to Welland, and announced that this government was going to embark on the extension of and four-laning of the 406 down into Port Colborne. To date, over three years later, we haven't seen anything by way of the progress of the plans that we were told were underway. This is of vital interest to Welland and even more so to Port Colborne, which has no access to the 406 as it exists now. This is an industrial manufacturing area. We've already lost significant industries down there in Niagara region, and we need that extension and four-laning if we are going to make those industries that exist viable and permit them to survive and indeed if we are going to attract more.

I hope that my colleague the member for Erie-Lincoln has been adamant with his cabinet colleague the now Minister of Transportation, the member for Erie-Lincoln of course advocating on behalf of his people in Port Colborne and the surrounding area to get this extension and four-laning underway. People down there in south

Niagara would appreciate an announcement promptly from this government and want to see work commence now on the extension and four-laning of 406 through Welland into Port Colborne.

CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS
IN YORK REGION

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): On Sunday evening I was pleased to attend the second annual York Region Newspaper Group Celebration of the Arts. The event showcased the best of York region's rising young performers and artists. In my riding of York North we are fortunate in having a vibrant and thriving arts community. There were many artists and performers recognized and awarded bursaries on Sunday evening. Two residents of my riding were honoured.

Ken Percy of Newmarket is a graduate of the Glenn Gould professional school of the Royal Conservatory of Music. He plans to attend the University of Ottawa where he has been accepted into the guitar master's program. Ken is a versatile performer whose repertoire includes works by Sor, Bach, and extends to the Spanish masters. Ken has received many awards, including the prestigious Royal Conservatory of Music silver medal three times.

Sara Dorman of Newmarket is approaching her final year in the bachelor of fine arts (musical theatre) program at the University of Windsor. She is pursuing a career as a singer, actor and dancer. Sara has a rich performance history which includes church solos, choral work and a nine-month run as part of the choir working with Donny Osmond in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

It is personally rewarding for me, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture, to recognize and support the upcoming artists.

A special thank you as well to the Huron Heights Secondary School jazz band and choir, whose work brought the show to life. I'd also like to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation for its ongoing support of the arts in York region through Artlink.

Once again, congratulations to the York Region Newspaper Group for their leadership in promoting the arts, especially our young visual and performing artists.

DOFASCO INC
AND HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to pay tribute to two great Hamilton employers, Dofasco Inc and the Hamilton Police Service.

Recently, Maclean's magazine released their annual list of the top 100 employers in Canada, and both Dofasco and Hamilton Police Service made the cut. Dofasco was given special kudos for its profit-sharing since 1938, an outstanding accomplishment that has survived many turbulent economic times. Dofasco is also the proud home of a recreation and teaching facility promoting a balanced life for its 7,526 employees. The

Hamilton Police Service and its 1,080 employees were recognized in the top 100. What is remarkable is that they are the only police service in Canada given this recognition as one of the top 100 employers in the country.

This only goes to show what I already know to be true, that Hamiltonians are lucky to have some of the brightest and hardest-working police officers, men and women and civilians, serving our community. I am happy to know that the officers are also given special opportunities—it was mentioned in this report—to lead a well-balanced life, with many incentives like job-sharing and time off for volunteering in the community.

I want today to congratulate John Mayberry, the president and CEO of Dofasco, and police chief Ken Robertson of the Hamilton Police Service. Both individuals have done a great deal to help our community. We are very proud in Hamilton to have an employer such as Dofasco. Their slogan, “Our product is steel, our strength is people,” very clearly applies again. Congratulations to Dofasco and again to Chief Robertson and an outstanding, first-class police force of men and women and civilians who serve and protect our community. Maclean’s has given them that recognition.

BROCK UNIVERSITY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I rise today to talk to you about Niagara’s own Brock University. The Globe and Mail released a special report, University Report Card, yesterday with the rankings of universities across the country that were drawn from University Report Card responses by nearly 21,000 students.

I was impressed, but not surprised, to see that Brock University in Niagara ranked sixth in overall results. Brock scored ninth in quality of education, just one behind the University of Toronto.

Not surprisingly, Brock came in at number 5 for buildings and facilities. Brock has been the recipient of significant SuperBuild funding from this government. Over \$15 million was provided to Brock to help with the construction of its new academic complex. Brock also received approximately \$2.4 million out of the 2001-02 SuperBuild facilities renewal program to help modernize and upgrade existing facilities. In fact, at that point in time, students voted in a referendum to increase their own fees to contribute to those facilities, a wonderful move and vote of confidence on their part.

Brock University continues to be an ideal choice for students across the province. Students surveyed ranked Brock fifth for university atmosphere and second for financial assistance.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Brock University, its staff and students, on their great performance in this survey. I’m proud to represent a region with such a prestigious and recognized university. The rest of Canada is waking up to the university sector’s greatest secret: Brock University is one of Canada’s finest institutions.

MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA WEST

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):

Like most members of this House, I know relatively little about the fine state of Oklahoma, except for the musical, of course. Did you know that Oklahoma produced the bank robber Pretty Boy Floyd? I bet you even he could teach John Snobelen a thing or two about the fast getaway. Did you know it was the birthplace of Geronimo, and that Oklahoma’s favourite son is Chuck Norris, the karate-kicking star of *Missing in Action*?

But Oklahoma is for cowboys, from Tom Mix to Will Rogers. One Oklahoma cowboy said, “The best place for me is on the back of a horse looking at the backside of a bunch of cattle. To me, it just doesn’t get any better than that.” The only problem is that the same Oklahoma cowboy was elected and is paid to be an MPP here in Ontario.

John Snobelen wants to be a cowboy. That’s his right. We all have dreams. I want to join the Village People. Regrettably, I don’t have a trade and I can’t sing, but I am willing to put in a good word for John Snobelen. But he cannot serve his constituents in Mississauga from the back of a horse in Oklahoma. John Snobelen must resign, because Mississauga deserves to have someone who will put them first and the backside of the cattle second.

1340

OLIVER GAFFNEY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to tell my fellow members about a very distinguished individual from my riding of Perth-Middlesex.

During this the 50th season of the Stratford Festival, it is only fitting that the city of Stratford’s senior citizen of the year be Oliver Gaffney. Mr Gaffney was involved in the creation of the Stratford Festival in 1953 and his company, Gaffney Construction, built the original amphitheatre and stage. He is also a past president of the Stratford Festival Foundation.

While Mr Gaffney says he is most proud of the role he played in the beginning of the now world-famous Stratford Festival, he has given his time to a great number of other local causes and organizations. Mr Gaffney’s community involvement also includes having been a district governor of the Rotary Club of Stratford, past president of the board of the children’s aid society, member of the board of directors of Stratford General Hospital, and chair of the YMCA building committee.

It is citizens like Oliver Gaffney who make Stratford a great place to live and work. I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr Gaffney for his tireless work on behalf of the citizens of his community and congratulate him for being named Stratford’s senior citizen of the year.

GOVERNMENT’S AGENDA

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I just wanted to take a moment to review the government’s

legislative agenda for the first few weeks of this session. I'd remind members that on September 18, Ernie Eves, Ontario's Premier, said he would be bringing forward a busy legislative and policy agenda when the Ontario Legislature resumed on September 23. Well, he promised it. Let's see what we've done.

It's been five weeks, 32 days, since we came back to this Legislature. We have had eight ministerial statements and six new government bills. And get ready for this. How many do you think have been passed?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): None.

Mr Duncan: None. Not one government bill passed.

The current government House leader must have the greatest record when it comes to time allocation. This government has to time-allocate bills that all three parties in the Legislature support. What kind of record is that?

Where is the Safe Drinking Water Act? Have we seen that? No.

The investor security legislation: have we seen that? No. All we've seen on that file is an attempt by the government to make it more difficult to gain access to information on all of that.

This government is not dealing with the problems. It's not dealing with health care and education. Move aside. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are ready to do just that.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Mr Speaker, I'm delivering this statement on behalf of the member from Durham, Mr John O'Toole.

I rise today to congratulate the school communities of Clarke High School and the Pines Senior Public School who have successfully advocated for community safety zones on Highway 35/115 in Durham riding.

By way of background, traffic for these schools exits and enters on to Highway 35/115. This is a very busy divided highway. As the traffic flows increased, there were concerns over the safety of school buses and cars accessing the highway. That led to a number of suggestions, including the introduction of community safety zones. I am pleased to report that early this month they held the official opening of the community safety zone. Drivers may face increased police presence. Those who exceed the 90-kilometre-per-hour speed limit face double the usual fines. Most importantly, the safety zones help alert traffic to the presence of the schools.

I think it is important to say this is a co-operative effort between the school council, the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ministry of Transportation and the municipality of Clarington.

There are many, many people to thank for their initiative and for their co-operation in making the community safety zones a reality. They worked very hard to get it. We will continue to work on other road access issues for

these schools because there is more to be done. However, I am pleased to report that progress has been made.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK AND FIREFIGHTER RECOGNITION DAY ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA SEMAINE DE PRÉVENTION DES INCENDIES ET LE JOUR DE RECONNAISSANCE DES POMPIERS

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to proclaim Fire Prevention Week and Firefighter Recognition Day / Projet de loi 194, Loi proclamant la Semaine de prévention des incendies et le Jour de reconnaissance des pompiers.

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

Mr Bob Wood (London West): This bill officially proclaims in Ontario Fire Prevention Week and Firefighter Recognition Day, to be observed at the times in October of each year that they are now observed. This bill is intended as a companion to the firefighters memorial bill now before the Legislature, and I may, at the appropriate time, move the provisions of this bill as amendments to the firefighters memorial bill.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot lists for private members' public business:

Mr Ruprecht and Mr Kwinter exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Ruprecht assumes ballot item 68 and Mr Kwinter assumes ballot item number 65; and

Mr Kennedy and Mrs McLeod exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Kennedy assumes ballot item 71 and Mrs McLeod assumes ballot item 67; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 65.

The Speaker: Mr Stockwell moves—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Minister of Energy. I've got in my hand a Toronto Hydro bill, the "gobbledegook" that you referred to during estimates committee. I know you weren't able to read an energy bill then, but you probably have memorized every line item by now, so maybe you can explain to the people of Ontario what the last item is on every Toronto Hydro bill and many other bills like it. It's called a PPVA. What the heck is a PPVA, a purchase power variant account balance?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): In two or three, maybe four, municipalities in the province the public utilities in those communities are billing on a fixed rate. In the city of Toronto I believe it continues to be billed, after market opening, at 4.3 cents. Whenever hydro is lower than that, they would accrue a credit, for example in the months of May and June, and whenever hydroelectricity is more expensive than that, such as the three months previous, they would accrue a liability.

The overwhelming majority—some 90%, 95%—of public utilities in the province of Ontario were able to go to the spot market when the market opened on May 1.

Mr Bryant: These utilities, and Toronto Hydro is one of them, basically are saying to their customers that not only do they get zapped every month with skyrocketing hydro bills, but they also get whacked with a big bill at the end of it, a hydro bonus bill. You don't just get a monthly bill. People get a hydro bonus bill that will add up month after month—it could be hundreds, it could be over \$1,000—and they're going to have to pay this bonus bill at some point down the road.

People on a fixed income aren't going to be able to afford this bonus bill when it finally arrives at their doorstep. How could you have bungled this one, Minister, and now that you know, how are you going to fix it?

1350

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite can't have his cake and eat it too. For example, in the city of Toronto, his constituency, the rate of the commodity hasn't changed since market opening. It has remained constant at 4.3 cents. The member opposite is wrong in his assertion that people would be hit twice for a differentiated price on a commodity. In the overwhelming majority, local distribution companies were able to go to the variable price on the commodity. The one in his constituency was not able to do that.

If the member opposite wanted to speak with representatives of Toronto Hydro today, he would find that

this minister has been quite co-operative in working with them on this challenge.

Mr Bryant: The real injustice here is not just the bonus bill, it is that—and get a load of this—every month people are charged interest on their bonus bill.

Interjections.

Mr Bryant: Yes. That's like sending somebody a Visa bill and not letting them pay off the whole amount and then charging them interest every month for the amount outstanding. People are calling into our constituency offices and saying, "This is outrageous. I want to pay the bill now. I don't want to be charged interest down the line."

This grossly unfair mandatory loansharking by the government of Ontario is outrageous and they want to blame it on Toronto Hydro, but try again. You set up the system. You set up the market. You're the government of Ontario. Now that you know, what are you going to do to fix it?

Hon Mr Baird: That is an argument which is so far away from the facts in this case, it's to the point of being absolutely ridiculous. The entire basis for the member opposite's question is entirely false. Eighty-nine or 90 local distribution companies in Ontario were prepared when the market was opening. In the case of his utility, the local utility was not ready.

I would encourage the member opposite to speak to Toronto Hydro and ask if John Baird and this government have been prepared to stand with them and work with them, and they would say we have. We've been working very hard with Toronto Hydro to ensure that this issue was dealt with to the benefit of all consumers in Ontario.

GLOBAL WARMING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Pollution Probe released a report today which has some very disturbing predictions about the consequences of global warming and climate change for the greater Toronto area and the Niagara region.

Among the provisions of the report, which was prepared by a number of credible, well-respected leading scientists, physicians and policy-makers, were the following:

"There will be an increased exposure to West Nile virus"—and you've seen that already—"dengue fever, malaria and Lyme disease as insects carrying these diseases travel north, as our climate warms.

"Up to 450 deaths among the elderly will result from an increasing number of 30-degree-plus days in Toronto and Niagara.

"A 39% increase in the number of oppressive air masses—accompanied by smog episodes, excessive temperatures and high humidity.

"Increased risk of water-borne illnesses, such as E coli, giardia and cryptosporidium."

Minister, in view of the dire consequences predicted in this, are you not deeply disappointed by the attitude of your Premier standing side by side with the Premier of Alberta in opposing the Kyoto accord?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member had me until about the last five seconds there.

I wish to acknowledge the concern, which I think is a legitimate concern, about the impacts of climate change. There are not only economic impacts, there are indeed some very concerning health impacts when climate change does occur.

The honourable member has mentioned dengue fever, malaria and other types of diseases and afflictions which we are not used to in the northern climes but which could become a reality with climate change.

That is why I am proud to be part of the Ernie Eves government, which of course does want to combat climate change, does in fact have a plan to combat climate change, and looks to the leadership of the federal government as well to be part of the solution.

Mr Bradley: I recognize that it's the Minister of Health who has to accept the consequences of what happens with global warming and climate change. You've already had a difficult time, a very challenging time, dealing with West Nile disease and what to do about that and some of the ramifications of it.

I'm very concerned when I hear the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Medical Association, the Society of Medical Officers of Health of Alberta, and Dr David Swann, who was fired by the environment minister of Alberta's campaign manager or riding president as a person who is in charge of health.

So I ask the Minister of Health, I know you're being agitated by or advised by the Minister of the Environment, but are you not concerned when you see Ralph Klein and Ernie Eves standing side by side, essentially saying the same thing about some very, very important consequences for Canada if we do not proceed with the ratification of the Kyoto accord? I ask you as Minister of Health, and respect you for that.

Hon Mr Clement: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think it was an interesting question, but it still is a question that needs some vetting.

I say to the member opposite with respect to the Kyoto accord, do you have any idea what our megaton reduction targets are? Do you have any idea what the credits are that the federal government is applying to the megaton reduction targets? Do you have any idea of the job losses that could potentially take place? Do you have any guarantees—

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Do you have any idea how many people are going to die, Chris?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, do you have any guarantees that

there will actually be greenhouse gas emission reductions under the Kyoto accord?

Well, of course you don't, because nobody is giving those guarantees. You have no idea (a) if there are cost implications, (b) what our megaton reduction is, and (c) most importantly, if you're truly an environmentalist, you haven't got a guarantee that one single reduction under the Kyoto Protocol will take place in greenhouse gas emissions. Yet all you want to do is sign and buy this pig in a poke at this time.

Mr Bradley: I want to go back to the Minister of Health, who, as I say, has to live with the consequences of the government policy of inaction on the part of the government, of denial on the part of the government, of siding with those who are interested in protecting the interests of the oil industry and the oil patch. Unfortunately, you're the one who has to accept the consequences as Minister of Health, and I know you have some strong views on this particular issue.

Could the minister tell us what advice he is giving his colleagues in the cabinet as the health minister of the province of Ontario, after receiving a report like this and other reports, about what specific action should be taken to reduce the probability of global warming and to contribute to the solving of the problem of climate change when we get into areas such as the funding of transit, which seems to have been abandoned, the shutting down of Ontario coal-fired plants, which is postponed well into the future, the funding of ethanol in gasoline, and the implementation of the provisions of the alternative fuels report?

I'd be very interested in what the Minister of Health, who himself is an environmentalist, has to say about this.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This government has made major changes to the legislation in this province that are of benefit to the environment.

Drive Clean is a perfect example. Since the implementation of Drive Clean and the processing of Drive Clean, we've got the equivalent of 23,000 cars off the road today from when it was introduced.

This is the government that has committed to shut the Lakeview coal-fired plant by 2005.

It is curious. You get a question from an ex-Minister of the Environment who never shut a coal plant in his life. You get the question from a Minister of the Environment who wouldn't implement the Drive Clean program. You get a question from a Minister of the Environment who somehow, after he leaves office, becomes an environmentalist.

The point we need to look at here is that we have to have a clear, definitive plan in the Kyoto Protocol to determine job losses, megaton reduction targets and credits. If the opposition is suggesting they would sign this without those answers, they are being foolhardy and irresponsible to the people who live and pay taxes in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

1400

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Exactly who thought up Drive Clean? It was the NDP.

A question to the Minister of the Environment: The people of Ontario finally have an answer to the question your Premier wouldn't answer directly in the House yesterday. As we thought, he has confirmed that he is Ralph Klein's poodle and a puppet of the big polluters. Mr Klein's so-called solution is no solution at all. It's a plan that will actually increase greenhouse gas emissions.

You keep talking about impacts on jobs and the economy. Let me turn the tables on you. Have you estimated the cost to the agricultural sector to provide a network of irrigation infrastructure through southwestern Ontario? Have you estimated the cost to Ontarians when the availability of fresh water declines sharply in this greenhouse world? Have you estimated the cost to taxpayers to fund massive new flood control measures? Have you done those studies for more ice storms? Tell us, have you done those estimates? How much is it going to cost Ontarians if you don't sign the Kyoto accord?

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is rather interesting, because that's what we've been saying for the past 12 months. No, the federal government haven't done the studies. No, they haven't given us the targets. No, they haven't given us the economic impacts. No, they haven't done one single thing you've asked for, yet you're prepared to sign on and not have any of that information. It's flat-out foolhardy. If you're going to ask for information from us, then you have to demand the information from the people who signed the protocol, the federal government. What you asked for today is exactly what we've been asking for for the last year, but the Liberals won't give it to us.

I'm with you. Go to Ottawa. Get that information. We should have it. We need it.

Ms Churley: It is this minister's responsibility, as Minister of the Environment in this province, and this government's responsibility, to do their homework and have those estimates. You've known for years that this was coming. You've done nothing but avoid it.

I want to bring up this Pollution Probe and Environment Canada-Health Canada report that came out. Now, in addition to killer smog and West Nile virus, it's only a matter of time before Ontarians will face malaria and dengue fever, not to mention heat waves killing an additional 400 elderly people a year. I can see your slogan now: "West Nile and malaria, brought to you by the Ontario Conservatives."

I'm going to ask you now, and it's your responsibility: have you estimated the costs to the Ontario health care system to prevent and treat an onslaught of these deadly diseases in a greenhouse Canada?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The fact of the matter is this: under the Kyoto Protocol, the federal government signed on to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We're in favour of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. All we would like to know from the federal government is how many megatons of reduction they expect Ontario to provide over the next 10 or so years. That's all we're asking: "Could you tell us what the credits and the megaton reduction are so that we can start working on the formulas to determine the costs of the program?"

To be fair, why would anyone sign an agreement when they have no idea what the terms and conditions of that agreement are? Why would anyone do that? Have you got one example in this country of a province that has signed on to the Kyoto Protocol? The answer is no. Simply put, nobody's prepared to sign something that they don't know the terms and conditions of, except two people. Two people are prepared to do that out of all the leaders in this country: Dalton and Howie—and I'm scared when I see those two together.

Ms Churley: What the hell is going on in your government over there when you've seen this coming and you've done nothing? Suddenly he's turning to the federal—

The Speaker: The member—I didn't hear the word, but withdraw that.

Ms Churley: OK, I'll withdraw that.

What are they doing over there? They should have these estimates and a plan worked out.

The minister asked why they should sign on. Let me tell him. He talks about unacceptable job losses in Ontario due to meeting these targets. Well, I want to ask the minister, what about loss of life? That's what we're talking about here. Let me remind you again that the OMA estimates 1,900 Ontarians die prematurely every year because of air pollution.

You point to your efforts to reduce smog. It was the NDP that brought in Drive Clean at first. Leaving that aside—I just had to get it on the record—everybody sees that smog is getting worse and that you haven't done much to stop more people from dying. Now we have a health report that shows even more people are going to die as a result of global warming.

The people of Ontario want answers from you. They don't want any more of this garbage. They want results. They want action. They want Kyoto. Eighty per cent of Ontarians say they want Kyoto. Will you do the right thing today and stand up and say you will sign it?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You didn't implement Drive Clean. Get a grip. You studied it and shelved it. Don't try and take credit for something you didn't do. You didn't let green power on the grid; we did. You had five years. You did nothing for the quality of air in this province for five years. Nothing. You talked. That's all you did. We put strict emission caps on. We're requiring Lakeview to close.

The sad reality is that you don't even understand the Kyoto Protocol. Do you know why? Do you know what you can do in the Kyoto Protocol if you don't meet your targets? You buy credits. You ship Ontario money, which we could use to develop strategies for clean air, out of the province and send it to Russia, China and India, the worst polluters in the world, and not one ounce of greenhouse gases is reduced. Do you think that's a good idea? I don't think shipping Ontario money to India, China and Russia, so they can continue to pollute worse than anybody, and lose jobs, money and prosperity is good public policy.

The only reason you think it's good public policy—you've got nine members, and you'll end up with three if you keep that up.

NURSING HOMES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Associate Minister of Health. Last week I told you that three nursing homes in Durham were using dollars to buy diapers instead of hiring new nurses and personal care workers. You replied, and I'm quoting, "There's nothing else that money can be spent on; it must be spent on hiring additional nurses..." Well, we've confirmed that Rainy Crest in Fort Frances has used its staffing dollars, every cent, to deal with its budget shortfall, and they did that with the knowledge and full consent of your ministry.

Minister, when you hiked rates for seniors in nursing homes, you promised them more nursing and more personal care. Where are the nurses, and where is the additional care?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): This government is indeed committed to ensuring that our residents in each and every one of the long-term-care facilities in this province get the highest quality of care possible. That's why on July 31 of this year we made an announcement to start flowing an unprecedented \$100-million investment into the nursing and personal care envelope in the long-term-care sector.

The following things are included in the nursing and personal care funding envelope: salaries and benefits of registered nurses, salaries and benefits of registered practical nurses and of health care aides as well as those involved in direct nursing care, and in addition the cost of medical and nursing supplies and equipment, education, training—and that includes training for nurses and personal care staff. All these things are necessary to make our nurses and personal care workers able to do the job they were given to do.

Ms Martel: Minister, you don't know what you're talking about. I just told you that Rainy Crest used every single cent—every cent—of those additional dollars to deal with a budget shortfall.

Geraldine Savian of Dryden wrote to us about Rainy Crest. She says that your letter of July 31, which promises four new aides and nurses for every 100-bed facility, such as Rainy Crest, is not happening. Last week at Rainy Crest, one nurse was cut from her mother's area. When she called the Ministry of Health to ask about your letter and your promise to hire more nurses, she was told, and I quote, "that the letter," your letter, "may have misled some. It did not mean that Rainy Crest had to use the money for nursing or personal care. They could use it for deficit spending or where else they feel fit."

1410

Minister, Geraldine's mum is paying \$92 a month more for less care because you're letting staff dollars be used for diapers and deficits instead of more direct care.

When are you going to guarantee that all new staff dollars are used for nurses' aides and better care?

Hon Mr Newman: On July 31 we made a record announcement of \$100 million of additional money in the nursing and personal care envelope in the long-term-care sector. That money is to be spent only on nursing and personal care items that are included within the nursing and personal care envelope. What that could mean for some facilities—an average 100-bed facility—is 3.9 full-time equivalent staff being hired.

But I tell you, this government will not take a lecture on long-term care from the NDP. When that party was in office they did not add one single bed to our long-term-care sector. In fact, between 1988 and 1998 in this province, not one single new bed was added to the long-term-care sector. Since this party was elected, we've embarked upon building 20,000 new long-term-care beds, as well as redeveloping 16,000 beds in our older facilities. That's a commitment to the people of Ontario, not what the NDP did.

CLEAN AIR PLAN

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Today you and your government used your majority to defeat a Liberal resolution calling for cleaner fuels in Ontario: ethanol and biodiesel. You had a clear choice between standing up for the farmers, who you are supposed to represent, or mimicking your Kyoto cabinet colleagues. You failed the farmers of this province. You know that plan will create jobs for Ontario corn producers and soybean growers. You know that both their associations have endorsed our plan, because not only is it good for the environment, it's good for our economy and it's good for our health.

How dare you oppose more jobs and expanded markets for Ontario farmers? How could you stand in your place today and vote against that resolution?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I have to say they have quite some nerve raising this issue in this province. As the speaker opposite knows, we have promoted ethanol in this province. We have done what we can by helping to subsidize an ethanol plant in Chatham-Kent and by putting dollars in a trust fund in the east so that an ethanol plant can be built there. We care about agriculture in the province.

Your plan is flawed; you know it's flawed. We're going to continue to help the farmers in Ontario by continuing to support ethanol, by continuing to work to ensure that the corn and soybeans produced in this province are used for ethanol and biodiesel. It's the Conservatives who are doing the right things when it comes to helping agriculture and helping ethanol and biodiesel.

Mr Peters: I guess the minister is saying right now that the Ontario corn producers are wrong and the Ontario soybean producers are wrong, because they endorsed our proposal. You can explain that one to the corn producers and soybean growers.

Minister, Ontario's farmers watched you and your government vote against creating jobs this morning. They know exactly where you stand on jobs for our grains and oilseed producers: you're against them. You're against cleaner-burning fuel. You're against a made-in-Ontario solution for our farmers and for our environment. You're against creating new competitive markets for our farmers. You're against creating a new industry that we could open up and export to the entire world.

You owe Ontario corn and soybean producers an apology for turning your back on them. I don't even know how you can continue to stand up as a Minister of Agriculture in this province. You owe Ontario families an apology for refusing to protect the air they breathe. Minister, why are you against more jobs and expanded markets for Ontario's farmers?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me tell you what the irony is in the province of Ontario. We just heard the Liberals say, "Sign the Kyoto Protocol." The firm that uses the most ethanol in Ontario is Suncor and they've asked this government not to sign the Kyoto Protocol. They've asked you not to support it. You don't give a darn about farmers in the province of Ontario. Shame on you.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Could we stop the clock for a quick second. While we have a bit of a break, we have in the Speaker's gallery Mr Bill Saunderson, who was the member for Eglinton for the 36th Parliament.

FOSTER FAMILIES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. I'm speaking, of course, of the hard-working, tireless, effective, Honourable Brenda Elliott. This week is National Foster Family Week, a week where we should be thanking those families who open their homes and their hearts to children in need of shelter and love.

I have recently been reading reports that have said that there is a severe shortage of foster parents across the province.

Interjections.

Mr Johnson: This may be awfully funny to some of those across the way, but it's certainly not funny for anybody on this side of the House. In particular, the shortage is so bad in the Windsor area that children are actually living in motels.

I find this quite disturbing. I believe that our children should not be relegated to motels, but should be living in homes with families. What are we doing to address this shortage of foster families?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague for Perth-Middlesex. He usually asks the question about agriculture, his passion, but today I am pleased he is concerned about Ontario's children.

When children are in a very vulnerable state, having been taken from their families to provide care, it's very important to us that they are placed in a caring environment, preferably that of a family. There is a shortage of foster homes across Ontario, and it has been very concerning to us that, from time to time, motels have been used to house some of the older children.

We are very pleased that the Caring Society, particularly in the Windsor area, has done what they can to take care of those children while they wait for a foster family. I also want to share with my colleagues in the Legislature that as a result of this information being made public in Windsor, there has been a great response in the community. People have been opening up their hearts and homes, and I want to say, on behalf of all my colleagues here, thank you to those individuals.

Being a foster family has great challenges; it also has tremendous joy. This is a very important task that families take upon themselves across this province. I'd like to take this opportunity, in National Foster Week, to say thank you to all those families who provide these loving spaces when children really need—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Johnson: Minister, thanks ever so much for that. I agree we need to thank those families for their assistance, and it seems to me that Foster Family Week is the perfect time to do this. So I'll take this opportunity to thank the foster families in my riding of Perth-Middlesex.

I also think it's a good time to tell people what this government is doing to support foster care in Ontario. It's a good time to give people, particularly in Perth-Middlesex, the good news of what we'll want to do. Would you share some of that information, not only with me and for members in my constituency of Perth-Middlesex, but with the other members of the House as well?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would like to say to members of this Legislature that they can tell their constituents, and to anyone listening, if they're interested in becoming a foster family, the best way to go about that is to contact their local children's aid society for information.

As a government, we have undertaken a number of initiatives. We have increased the funding to children's aid societies by 139% over the last three years. We've partnered with the Children's Aid Foundation of Toronto to launch a provincial strategy for foster care recruitment. This foundation will match government funding of \$100,000 a year over the next three years to recruit new foster families and to provide public education about foster care. Six hundred thousand dollars will be spent on the initiative of encouraging more foster homes to be available. As well, for those who have decided to become foster parents, we have established a standardized training program. We've also increased the rate of care from \$14 to \$25.71 a day.

Again, to all those who choose to become foster families, may I say thank you for all the children who have received homes.

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PICKERING NUCLEAR
GENERATING STATION

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Energy. As all members will know, hydro issues and electricity prices are becoming a very serious concern to just about every homeowner and business person in the province. There are few items that I can think of that will have a more significant impact on electricity prices for Ontario consumers over the next few years than the every important and controversial refurbishment of the four units of Pickering A nuclear generating station.

Minister, can you tell the Legislature and the electricity consumers of Ontario today: to the best of your knowledge, when do you expect and when can we expect those four units at Pickering A to be back on-line and available to electricity consumers in Ontario? What is your latest information as to the all-dollars-in cost of that Pickering A refurbishment?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The first unit, which is unit four of Pickering A, we expect to be on-line next year. The expected cost will be 3.7 cents a kilowatt.

Mr Conway: That was my information until recently, but very recently I have been told by very reliable sources that we can expect only one of the four units at Pickering A to be available in the calendar year 2003. The remaining three units at Pickering A—and remember, these units are 515 megawatts per unit—are not likely to be available to the electricity system in Ontario until at least 2004 and perhaps, in some cases, as late as 2005. If that is true, and it comes from a very reliable source, it will have dramatic and negative implications for all electricity consumers in Ontario.

Minister, will you make this commitment today on behalf of your government? Will you cause, at the earliest opportunity, hearings to be held either here at the Legislature or at the Ontario Energy Board so we can find out precisely what's going on at Pickering A, when precisely these reactors are going to be back on-line and at what cost? What I am hearing is deeply troubling and is going to send these already high electricity bills into the stratosphere, with enormous political pain for every single one of us in this room.

Hon Mr Baird: I share the concern that the member opposite expresses with respect to the return of the four units at Pickering A. To underline the importance I place on this issue, on my very first full day on the job I took the opportunity to visit Pickering A to see first hand some of the issues they're dealing with.

This is the largest project of its kind in North America. In many respects it's like performing brain surgery in a spacesuit. It's important work but not particularly efficient. Ontario Power Generation reports regularly to the Independent Market Operator as to the availability of electricity supplies, as they properly should.

SMALL BUSINESS
ENTERPRISE CENTRES

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I wish to ask a question to the Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. This government has demonstrated a strong commitment to small business and entrepreneurship. One of the cornerstones of this commitment is the funding of the province's small business enterprise centres. Could you take a moment to tell the members of the House and the people of Ontario some of the important functions and features of these centres?

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I thank the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for this important question. We know that 92% of the businesses in this province have between one and 49 employees and therefore qualify as small businesses. Our government knows that they're absolutely vital to the economic growth of our economy. Ontario's small business enterprise centres are there to help small businesses. We have 41 locations which provide information, one-on-one counselling, workshops, seminars, on-line training and access to the latest technology for research and planning.

Last year we spent \$3 million on these centres. Our plan in 2002-03 is to add two further centres. We'll have between 15 and 20 Bridges to Better Business events and we will continue the young entrepreneurs strategy.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Minister. You talked about the young entrepreneurs strategy. I feel that this program is of great benefit to the young people of our province. I know that the strategy includes a number of individual programs aimed at mentoring and providing financial support to enterprising young people. Could you detail some of the components of this new initiative for the members of the House and the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Turnbull: As you've said, it does instill entrepreneurial spirit. Some of the highlights of encouraging entrepreneurship are My Company, which provides business training for young people and low-interest loans of up to \$15,000, and another program called the Summer Company, which provides mentoring and hands-on training with awards of up to \$3,000.

We're continuing to implement our young entrepreneurs strategy and through this, ensuring that our future young entrepreneurs have the training they need to face the market in the future.

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR POLICY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Deputy Premier. Women and men who work in corporate agribusiness in this province are being denied some very basic and fundamental democratic rights by your government.

The Dunmore Supreme Court of Canada decision contained this observation among others: "It cannot be argued that Ontario agriculture has unique characteristics

which are incompatible with legislated collective bargaining." But your party and the Liberal Party are supporting legislation that will do exactly that. How can you and the Liberals justify denying these workers their charter rights, fundamental democratic collective bargaining rights, and how can you justify defying the Supreme Court of Canada?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to refer that to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Let me say very clearly that we have worked very hard, we have consulted with the public, we have talked to both the union and the employer representatives, we have talked with lawyers across the province to ensure that we comply with the requests of the Supreme Court. We have also tried very hard to make sure that we confirm in legislation the rights of the agricultural community to be able to assemble, to be able to make representations to their employees. We believe that we have complied with the requests of the Supreme Court decision and we continue to try and find a balance that ensures that we have farming in the province of Ontario and that we maintain and preserve the rights of the agricultural community.

Mr Kormos: I'm concerned about the rights of workers in corporate agribusiness to collectively bargain around issues like workplace safety and their own health and safety.

Highline Mushrooms down toward Windsor way has over 200 employees in that factory. They shipped 30 million pounds of mushrooms last year. There's a fleet of 12 refrigerated trucks. But you, Minister, say that these workers aren't entitled to form a union and to collectively bargain. I put to you that the women and men at Highline Mushrooms and other agribusinesses like that have to have the right to protect themselves. What makes the Highline Mushroom plant and its employees any different from a grocery store or a food processor?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say a couple of things about that.

First off, this legislation allows people to come together and assemble where there is more than one agricultural worker. They can assemble and that assembly can be in the form of a union representing them. We are just very clear that the legislation does not allow for collective bargaining. So we have allowed the opportunity, if the agricultural community decides that it wants to be represented by a union. That is completely within the bounds of the legislation.

The second thing I have to say is that we have been very careful to ensure that the employees in the agricultural community are protected. For the first time in the history of the province the Conservatives are suggesting that we allow these members the right to come together, to associate, to make representations to their employees, to look for ways that they may be able to work on issues that are of common concern.

We believe we've enshrined in this legislation those rights and we think they're important rights.

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TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Mr Minister, over the last seven years your government has starved public transit and you have made Ontario the only place in the world where the operation of public transit is funded solely by property tax and the fare box. Unlike your government, the Ontario Liberals and Dalton McGuinty have a clean air plan, which sets aside two cents a litre of the existing gas tax for funding public transit. In every other jurisdiction, they invest in public transit because they understand that more transit means cleaner air, less gridlock and less smog. So far, Mr Minister, all we've heard from you and Premier Eves is that you've got some cockamamie scheme to privatize public transit. It doesn't work anywhere else in the world, but you're going to try that. So I ask you, what are you going to do to make sure our fares don't increase in Toronto and that you clean up our air and get rid of smog and congestion? Minister of gridlock, what are you going to do?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): Since 1995, we've put \$1.2 billion into public transit in this province—that's no money? In terms of two cents per litre of gasoline, that equates to about \$300 million per year. Actually, we are doing more than two cents per litre in terms of public transit in this province. Last Thursday, I delivered a cheque to Mel Lastman for \$62 million for transit renewal. We are going to give them another \$14 million under the GTIP program as soon as they give us the details of their particular application. Finally, the feds have come to the table and they are going to match us—first time ever. We're at the table, let's get the feds at the table and let's ask the TTC to do an efficient job.

Mr Colle: You know, it is quite obvious that the minister refuses to recognize that the TTC gets more out of the fare box to run its operation, 81%, than any other jurisdiction in the world, so I think it's not doing a bad job. It could be better, but it's not doing a bad job.

The second thing is, how come Ontario, of all the provinces, of all the states, is the only one that doesn't fund the day-to-day operation of transit? Where you are saying you've got to fund transit on the backs of property taxpayers and the fare box alone, how are you ever going to get rid of smog, congestion, pollution and make our cities work? Look at what's happening in Brampton. Look at what's happening in Etobicoke. You can't move because all you are doing is feeding gridlock by your inaction.

Mr Minister, tell us how you are going to clean the air, get rid of gridlock and feed public transit and stop starving it. How are you going to do it?

Hon Mr Sterling: How are we going to do it? We are doing it. The member should also be aware that the TTC doesn't get the most out of the fare box—

Mr Colle: Who else does?

Hon Mr Sterling: Ottawa. Ottawa gets 85 cents of every dollar out of their transit system. Now he changes his story; that they don't have a subway there. No, they have a very efficient transportation system in terms of buses. The council of the TTC, in terms of the Sheppard subway line, decided not to implement a lot levy for the commercial and industrial businesses that benefited along that line. They made that decision in 1999. Now they are short of money. So what do they do? They come crawling to the province. They think that every time they make a decision which I would call irresponsible they can come to us and ask for the dough. Well, I'm sorry, that's not on.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. We are all aware that Halloween falls on October 31. Unfortunately, Halloween came early to Brampton this year in the form of this past Saturday when we had just a little under 1,000 protestors, most of whom don't even live in Brampton, who descended on our fair city and ruined a glorious autumn day by offering Bramptonians tricks instead of treats. This group, led by Sid Ryan, CUPE, the CAW and the guys in the Ontario Health Coalition, an umbrella group of the militant Council of Canadians, attempted to trick my constituents into believing that the new campus of the Osler hospital, to be built by 2005, is a bad idea since this government is using a public-private partnership to build this facility. The protestors tied up traffic for hours—thank you, Mr Colle, for the gridlock question—dismayed Bramptonians, and are not providing constructive ideas or initiatives. Minister, please explain not only to my constituents but to all Ontarians what the truth is behind a public-private sector partnership.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. As a fellow Bramptonian, I was also aware of the demonstration on Saturday. For me, it was more like a bad April Fool's Day joke rather than just a Halloween parade. But it will afford us the opportunity to set the record straight.

Quite simply, a P3 approach means a new hospital sooner for the people of Brampton. This process allows the public sector and hospitals to do what they do best: provide quality care to patients. The other side of the partnership lets the private sector do what it does best: construct and maintain buildings quickly and efficiently.

Let me be perfectly clear: all services at the new William Osler hospital will be covered by OHIP. It will be just like visiting your family physician or a walk-in clinic. The buildings may be operated privately, but the services you receive are publicly funded. That's our commitment to the people of Ontario and the people of Brampton.

Mr Spina: There are always rumours floating around Queen's Park about the unbelievable commitments being made by the Leader of the Opposition, particularly, and

other opposition members. Unfortunately, these promises make no mention of how their funding for all these fantastic projects that they are promising will be realized. So far the opposition has offered Ontarians no insight as to their plans on health care innovation.

Minister, we've had some significant accomplishments since 1995. How will they move us forward into the future, and what is your vision, and our vision, for health care in this province?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member is quite correct. From the opposition benches, we have heard absolutely nothing in terms of innovation, in terms of meeting the demands for accessibility and sustainability of our health care into the future; no new ideas coming from the Liberal benches.

On this side of the House, we are focused on accessibility and sustainability in our health care system. In fact, the Ontario government has been leading the way when it comes to innovation of our health care systems. We are leading the way when it comes to moving away from fee-for-service to a new form of primary care reform through our family health networks. We've been leading the way in terms of our Telehealth service, a million calls a year so far in terms of accessing the nurse-advice line.

We are leading the way when it comes to alternative funding arrangements to retain our physicians, our specialists in our teaching hospitals in particular. We are leading the way when it comes to nursing and physician recruitment. And we're leading the way when it comes to making sure we have preventive medicine through our food program.

We're leading the way, but we need the federal government as our partner. So far they have not come up to the plate.

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): My question is to the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. As a former Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology, I'm proud to be in support of the Kyoto accord. I support Kyoto not just because it will make Ontario a better place to live but because I know it will bring better jobs to Ontario. By getting out in front in Kyoto, we can foster innovation, develop new technologies and then sell them to the world.

Many in the business world support Kyoto. Last week, David Crane, a respected voice in the business community wrote, "If Eves thought seriously about Ontario's economic future, he would recognize that addressing the challenge of climate change, through the development and adoption of new technologies and improved energy efficiency, would actually make Ontario better off."

He concludes by saying, "If Eves continues to resist Kyoto ... then Ontario will lose out on what could be a great opportunity for a stronger economy and a cleaner environment."

Minister, don't you agree that from a business perspective it's always better to lead than it is to follow and play catch-up?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Absolutely. It's absolutely imperative that we lead, and we are leading in Ontario. We're leading the Canadian economy. We have turned around the Ontario economy in the course of the past seven years, creating almost a million new jobs, about half of those created by small business in the province of Ontario, businesses that employ less than 50 people. Our automotive sector is extremely strong, with new plants opening. The CAMI plant is going to produce the Chevy Equinox, a 50% partnership between Suzuki and General Motors. So we're doing well in those areas.

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What's key, as I'm sure the member opposite knows, being knowledgeable in trade and investment, is that we not put our business people in Ontario and our business people in Canada at a competitive disadvantage to our competitors elsewhere in the world. He knows that. I know that. We have to be protective of our entrepreneurs in Ontario so they can compete on a level playing field with others around the world.

Mr Kwinter: Today, Dalton McGuinty is visiting Interface Flooring in Belleville. They are the largest manufacturer of modular carpet in the world. They employ 7,000 people in 110 countries.

Interface are environmental leaders. They reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 65%. Next year, they will use nothing but green power. These measures saved the company over \$12 million in costs, and at the same time, production grew by 250%.

The problem is that in Ernie Eves's Ontario, companies like this are the exception and not the rule. You believe that because leaders are getting out in front of the Kyoto requirements, the rest should not have to do so. Not only is that reckless environmental policy, it's bad economic policy.

Why are you playing to the lowest common denominator instead of encouraging the innovation and investment that will make us world leaders?

Hon Mr Flaherty: With the greatest respect to the member opposite, I don't share his negative view of business in Ontario. Our businesses in Ontario have been in the forefront of reducing emissions, of reducing greenhouse gases. Our obligation, it seems to me, is to work with the businesses of Ontario, to work with them to protect jobs in Ontario and grow those businesses, not to attack business, not to be negative about business and the people who work in those businesses, but to compliment them. Look, for example, at the automotive sector, at what Toyota has done, what General Motors is doing, what the Ford Motor Co is doing, what Honda is doing, what DaimlerChrysler is doing, all reducing emissions, all planning for the future so that we work together, build the industry, reduce the emissions and have a made-in-Ontario, made-in-Canada solution, not a negative attitude that hurts business, hurts jobs in Ontario.

ONTARIO MEDAL FOR GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. Minister, last week the Ontario Medals for Good Citizenship were presented to individuals who have made remarkable long-term contributions to improving the quality of life in Ontario and in their communities. In fact, Dr Stafford Dobbin, from my riding of Niagara Falls, received the good citizenship medal as a devoted physician and long-time crusader for preventive medicine.

Dr Dobbin has worked tirelessly in my community to promote heart health, to develop citizen training in CPR, to create an emergency department at GNGH and to give countless hours of volunteer service to the Lions Club.

I call on the minister to stand in his place and tell us how many more Ontarians received Ontario Medals for Good Citizenship last week.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member for the question. I also congratulate the member for Niagara Falls, who takes every opportunity possible to acknowledge outstanding citizens from his community.

My colleague is correct in pointing out that Ontario has benefited from many individuals who have selflessly dedicated time and talent to efforts in their communities.

Civic responsibility is a cornerstone to building strong and caring communities. We value all Ontarians who make their community a better place through acts of good citizenship.

Last Thursday, the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable James Bartleman, and I had the honour to present 12 deserving individuals with the Medal for Good Citizenship.

It's a good time to recognize the people who have contributed to this province and to be positive about the good people of this great province.

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I'd like to ask a question of citizenship as well. Like the hard-working member from Niagara Falls, each year across Ontario, volunteers give millions of hours to thousands of organizations. I know Premier Eves and this government are committed to recognizing and thanking these volunteers for making outstanding contributions to our communities and to our province.

In fact, at the North Bay Volunteer Service Awards this past Tuesday evening, 99 recipients from my riding of Nipissing were recognized for their continuous years of commitment and dedicated service our the community, and I want to personally thank them for that.

Minister, can you share with us the details of this award and how it recognizes local volunteers, our heroes, not just in my riding but across the province?

Hon Mr DeFaria: I thank the member for Nipissing. This member spoke highly of the 99 volunteers from his region, some of whom are his neighbours and his friends. He's a grassroots member who knows his people.

Thousands of volunteers give millions of hours to thousands of organizations. In fact, Ontario's volunteers contribute the equivalent of 205,000 full-time jobs, estimated at more than \$6 billion each year, in volunteer work.

This year more than 7,000 volunteers will receive the Trillium pin and a personalized certificate at one of the 28 ceremonies taking place across Ontario.

I have been to Sarnia, I have been to Mississauga, and during the recess, I'll be to Kenora, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie and Timmins to personally recognize thousands of northern Ontarians that volunteer.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Angela Fiorentino is a poor senior citizen living in my riding. Her income is \$850 a month and her hydro bill is \$330. She is a desperate individual, Minister. In addition to her financial situation, she also has a heart condition, asthma and diabetes. As a result of your hydro deregulation policy, Angela Fiorentino must now choose between paying her hydro bill or buying food.

Minister, I want to know what you are going to do to help Angela Fiorentino. And don't, Minister, hand it off to the Minister of Energy. This is not an energy question. This is about the plight of seniors in my riding as a result of the policies of your government. You're responsible for seniors and I want you to stand up right now and tell my senior citizens what they're supposed to do in terms of making this horrific choice.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): As minister responsible for seniors, I can assure you that I have met with seniors groups across this province and we have been working with seniors groups. The issue of cost of living affects all Ontarians and we will ensure that our seniors will be able to do well in this province.

We have introduced programs. For example, as programs that will assist seniors, we have introduced elder abuse programs; we have invested into drug benefit programs in Ontario. We have done the programs that our seniors require here, and the issue of hydro is an issue that affects all Ontarians, of course, and if my friend wishes to ask that question, he can ask that question of the Minister of Energy.

VISITOR

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The renowned photographer, world-famous George Onuska, is here from the wonderful city of Oakville. I'd like to introduce Mr George Onuska in the visitors' gallery.

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PETITIONS

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Toronto, demand that the government immediately stop the process of privatizing our electricity transmission system, the network of steel towers, transformers and wooden poles which transmit power from generating plants to our homes, and, further, postpone the electricity deregulation process until the Ontario public is given proof that privatization will not result in price increases, and place a moratorium on any further retailing of electricity until the Ontario Energy Board comes up with a standard contract to be used by all retailers; and

"That a standard contract spell out in clear terms that residential users are waiving their rights to future rebates in exchange for fixed rates over a specified period of time."

Since I am in agreement with this petition, I am very delighted to sign it as well.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity bills have skyrocketed under the Harris-Eves government's flawed electricity plan; and

"Whereas some consumers have signed higher fixed-rate contracts with retailers, without adequate consumer protection; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has failed to address electricity supply shortages in Ontario, forcing the purchase of American power at a premium prices, driving up prices still further; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government appointed a board of directors for Hydro One that has been paying themselves extravagant salaries, compensation packages and severances for senior executives; and

"Whereas Hydro One bought 90 municipal utilities, serving about 240,000 people across Ontario, at premium prices and with borrowed funds. These purchases with borrowed funds have increased Ontario's debt burden; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has added additional fees and taxes to local electricity distribution companies. These charges have also been passed along to consumers;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris-Eves government take immediate action to ensure that Ontarians have fair and reasonable prices for the necessary commodity of electricity in Ontario and that the Harris-Eves government and its leader Ernie Eves call a general election on the instability

of the energy market so that Ontarians may have a voice on this issue.”

I'm pleased to add my signature to the petition and give it to my friend Hin-Hey here for delivery to the table.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a quick moment. The government House leader has the House business for next week.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

Monday afternoon we will resume debate on Bill 179. On Monday evening we will continue debate on Bill 180.

Tuesday afternoon's business is still to be determined. Tuesday evening we'll continue debate on Bill 187.

Wednesday afternoon we will debate Bill 187 again. Wednesday evening's business is still to be determined.

Thursday morning we've got a power-packed private members' business. We will discuss ballot item number 65 standing in the name of Mr Kwinter and of course ballot item number 66 standing in the name of Mr Cordiano. Thursday afternoon we will continue debate on Bill 180. Thursday evening next week our business is still to be determined.

SERVICES DE SANTÉ POUR ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): J'ai une pétition ici avec plus de 600 noms, ce qui porte à plus de 150 000 le nombre de noms de personnes qui sont d'accord avec le but de cette pétition.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario est en train de fermer le service de chirurgie cardiaque à l'intention des enfants fonctionnant actuellement à l'Hôpital pour les enfants de l'est de l'Ontario;

« Attendu que la fermeture de ce programme restreindrait l'accès des enfants de l'est de l'Ontario à cette chirurgie, qui sauve des vies;

« Attendu que l'HEEO traite chaque année 140 enfants gravement malades à proximité de leur foyer;

« Attendu que la centralisation des services de chirurgie cardiaque pour les enfants à Toronto obligerait les patients et leurs parents à s'éloigner de 400 à 600 kilomètres de leur foyer à un moment difficile;

« Attendu qu'il y a une liste d'attente pour les chirurgies cardiaques à Toronto mais pas à l'HEEO;

« Attendu qu'une partie du personnel de ce programme de l'HEEO parle français et que, de ce fait, la population francophone a accès à des conseils médicaux de qualité supérieure en français;

« Attendu que la population de l'est de l'Ontario exige des soins de santé de qualité et accessibles pour ses enfants,

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'annuler immédiatement la décision du gouvernement d'abolir ce programme, qui sauve des vies, et de veiller à ce que chaque enfant de l'est de l'Ontario continue d'avoir pleinement accès à des soins de santé de qualité supérieure. »

J'y ajoute ma signature.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Twice in one day, Speaker. My staff will be happy with me.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

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

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels.”

I'm pleased to add my signature to that and give it to Lauren to bring to the table.

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO SAVINGS OFFICE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office was created in 1922 by united farmers and labour as a unique banking facility that allowed Ontarians to invest in their province; and

“Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office enjoys a strong popularity among Ontario residents, with over 100,000 accounts and over \$2.8 billion on deposit; and

“Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office offers customers attractive interest rates, generous chequing privileges and personalized efficient service, and every dollar deposited is guaranteed by the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas POSO has 23 branches serving 17 communities across Ontario, including Hamilton, Windsor, Ottawa and small communities in northern Ontario not served by other banks or trust companies. Places like Pickle Lake, Armstrong, Killarney, Gogama and Virginiatown; and

“Whereas the Tory government announced in its latest budget that it will put the Province of Ontario Savings Office on the auction block, even though it is a consistent revenue generator, and even though this revenue could help Ontario’s crumbling infrastructure after years of Tory neglect;

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

“To save the people’s bank, the Province of Ontario Savings Office, so that it can continue its historic role of providing excellent banking services to families in communities across Ontario; so that people in small towns will not be forced to go farther afield for banking services and forced to go to private, for-profit banks.”

On behalf of constituents in my community who care about this issue, I add my name to the petition.

1500

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I’d like to add my name to that petition as well, to support the provincial savings office, but unfortunately I can’t do that right now.

I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the ... government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the increase in the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government’s own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario’s long-term-care residents to those in other provinces; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

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

“We demand that the Premier reduce this 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels.”

Since I agree with this petition, I’m putting my name to it, and I’m presenting it to Andrew.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$213 a month, instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care; and

“Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the cost of long-term care on to the backs of the frail elderly and their families; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident; and

“Whereas the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government’s own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse—less than half the time given to residents in Saskatchewan; and

“Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

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

“Join the Ontario New Democratic Party in demanding the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents of long-term-care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of three and a half hours per day, and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents of long-term-care facilities.”

On behalf of my constituents and my NDP colleagues, I add my name to this petition.

VISITOR

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to introduce to the House—and I have much pleasure and honour in so doing—Deokie Shergool in the west gallery here. Deokie is the mother of our page Nazir from York West. I wish to congratulate them. I hope your stay here at Queen's Park will be an enjoyable one.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member and welcome our guest.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES
PROTECTION ACT, 2002LOI DE 2002 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES EMPLOYÉS AGRICOLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 2002, on the motion for second reading of Bill 187, An Act to protect the rights of agricultural employees / Projet de loi 187, Loi visant à protéger les droits des employés agricoles.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I believe the member for Niagara Centre had the floor.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you kindly, Speaker. This is the balance of what we call the leadoff. We're still at the point now just barely commencing the second day of second reading.

This legislation is all about this government circumventing the ruling of the Supreme Court to Canada in the decision of Dunmore, and far more fundamentally, let's understand what this government did. This government repealed, as one of its first orders of business after it was elected in 1995, Bill 7. This government repealed the NDP framework that would permit employees, workers, working women and men, in corporate agribusiness to organize into trade unions and collectively bargain. The Liberal Party was outspoken, articulate and very precise about its support for the repeal of the right of agricultural workers to form trade unions and to collectively bargain. They've been equally precise now around Bill 187. They've been very clear that they in the Liberal Party will be supporting the government in its ongoing denial of the right of agricultural workers to join a trade union and collectively bargain.

Let's put this into context, because there has been much ado, and much has been said in the earlier leadoff speeches from the government and the official opposition, about the family farm. Let's understand which workplace organized after the New Democratic Party recognized the right of, yes, even agricultural workers to form unions and collectively bargain. It was an operation called Highline Mushrooms down in Leamington, Ontario, down out Windsor way.

I'll tell you a little bit about Highline Mushrooms, and this is from the Highline Mushrooms very own Web site. It's the largest independent grower of mushrooms in eastern Canada. Last year through the course of this year, it has an annual production of some 30 million pounds of mushrooms. It is the largest independent grower of mushrooms in eastern Canada and the most advanced technically: computer-controlled chambers for the preparation of compost; some 12 large refrigerated tractor-trailer trucks for the delivery of these mushrooms. And with some 200 employees, listen, this is not the family farm.

Thomas Dunmore: his name might be familiar because, of course, he's the Thomas Dunmore who was named in the litigation that went to the Supreme Court of Canada, which ultimately ruled on the Conservative repeal, supported by the Liberals, of the right of agricultural workers to organize and collectively bargain. Thomas Dunmore, who had been an electrician at Highline for some years, said, "I've seen guys with broken legs. It's heavy industry. It's not a nice job at all." Of course, the union certification bid was dashed with the repeal by Bill 7 of the NDP legislation according agricultural workers the right to unionize and collectively bargain. But Dunmore indicates that safety at the farm had begun to improve as the union took shape.

He also noted that there was a large number of workers at that factory farm for whom English wasn't a first language. There were a lot of workers for whom Vietnamese was their first language. Dunmore indicates that that inability to speak English or speak it well left them powerless.

Dunmore was very candid. He said that there's no need to unionize small, family-run farms, but large operations should have to adhere to the standards set for heavy industry. "They call it a farm, and it's absolutely not a farm," Dunmore says, speaking of Highline Mushrooms. "It's like a construction site. They call them tractors, but they're running excavators."

As I'm compelled to wrap up, I've got to make it perfectly clear: farming, agricultural work, is amongst the most dangerous in this province, in this country—the exposure to pesticides, amongst other things, the utilization of heavy machinery and other types of dangerous and heavy equipment—and it's also the lowest-paying of jobs in this province, in this country.

It is fundamental to a democratic society that workers have the right to unionize and collectively bargain. There are folks out there who don't like unions; fair enough. This government doesn't like unions, I understand that. But now I see the Liberal opposition party aiding and abetting this government in its attack on working women and men, as this government denies working women and men in our agribusiness, tens of thousands of them in this province, the right to unionize and collectively bargain.

1510

Oh, please, let's not for a minute start talking about issues of strike, because the 1994 NDP legislation very carefully, after extreme, significant and thorough con-

sultation, including with the agri-industry, replaced the right to strike with compulsory arbitration, recognizing, yes, the disastrous impact that a strike could have on an agricultural production process.

It isn't about the right to strike; it's about the right for workers to collectively bargain their health and safety. It's about the right for workers to collectively bargain for some job security. It's about the right of workers, electricians like Thomas Dunmore at Highline Mushrooms, to collectively bargain some modest increase in their wages when the profits are there to justify it. It's about treating all workers alike.

New Democrats don't believe in two classes of workers. We don't believe some workers are better than others. If you're a working woman or man in this province, you've got the right to unionize, you've got the right to collectively bargain, be it you work in an industry or be it that you work on an agri-farm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The member from Niagara Centre made mention of farming being one of the more dangerous occupations that one could have in the province of Ontario, and I agree with that. For that reason we have, for example, the Farm Safety Association in this province. I have a great deal of faith in, and have been involved with, the Farm Safety Association. I spent several years as president of our local Norfolk Farm Safety Association, and these organizations are supported by the Ontario government. Our province takes the issue of farm injuries and fatalities very seriously.

Earlier, in his presentation on Tuesday, the member for Niagara Centre spoke at great length about chicken catchers in debating the Agricultural Employees Protection Act, describing chicken catchers with scarred-up wrists and hands; red, running eyes; and open sores on their faces and around their noses and mouths. He made reference to chickens urinating in one's face and chickens scurrying and attempting to elude the chicken catcher. I do question some of this description. I am a former chicken catcher. I'm proud of that. I know a number of young people who work as chicken catchers. The member made reference to chickens urinating in one's face, and I would leave it up to a biologist to determine whether that's accurate or not.

With respect to the safety issue, he made some suggestions that chicken catchers should wear gloves, safety boots. We all believe in safety. I just question the utility of some of that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Kormos: This happens oh, so often, where a Tory backbencher or even a Tory frontbencher will stand up and say, "Oh, the real world can't be like that because, heck, I've never seen it." I have no doubt that Mr Barrett has caught a chicken or two in his lifetime, but I tell you this: I know the chicken catchers who work in the Niagara region, I know the conditions under which they

work, I know the diseases that they're susceptible to, and I resent the suggestion that somehow these same hard-working usually young men, but women as well, would in any way exaggerate the injuries they've suffered as a result of chickens defecating and urinating on them while the chickens are being caught, as a result of the mites and the dander that are raised as the chickens are flapping and rushing to avoid being caught, as a result of the cuts and scratches that often become infected around the wrists and the hands in the course of catching and then crating those chickens. The falls and the injury levels in poorly lit barns, unventilated, as they're clouded by the dust and the feathers generated when tens of thousands of chickens are evading capture are legion among these workers.

These are workers who usually earn less than \$12,000 to \$15,000 a year who work incredibly hard doing it, who expose themselves to great health risks and physical risk in the course of doing those jobs.

I tell you this government wants to deny them, along with collaboration from the Liberal Party of Ontario, the right to organize and to use the right to collectively bargain, not so much around wages but, most importantly, around health and safety.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'm pleased to take part in this debate. It's an interesting one. I think it represents a significant advance in facilitating employee and employer relationships in Ontario, particularly as we move into new ground in the agricultural community of Ontario. At issue of course is freedom of association as guaranteed in Ontario under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We also have to recognize the very unique characteristics of Ontario's agricultural industry and the very important contribution that industry makes to our quality of life here in Ontario.

It wasn't very many years ago, probably about 100 or 102 years ago, not very long in the history of mankind, that about 60% of the Canadian population lived and worked on farms. It may have been a little bit more than 60%, but back in about 1900 it took that many people to grow the food that fed the country.

We also exported food in those days. We exported food to Great Britain. Much of agriculture in Ontario was based on the exporting of that product to Great Britain. As we come up through the years, with the advancement of technology with machine harvesting and hydraulics on farms making possible larger and larger equipment in the fields, we saw higher productivity, with productivity gains that were probably unmatched by most other industries in the world. With those productivity gains, now in today's world, in today's agriculture in Ontario, we have about 1.5% of our population in Ontario—of course the population is much higher than it was in 1900—as opposed to 60%, 65% or 70% of the population in 1900, on the farm productively raising crops.

We raise astronomically higher percentages of crops from those fields we farm than we did in 1900. In 1900 a yield of wheat might have run in the 20 or 25 bushels per

acre category. Today it is not uncommon to have yields of wheat in excess of 100 bushels to the acre.

A field of tomatoes, back in the mid-1960s, may have run to 13 to 15 tonnes of tomatoes coming off that field and going into the processing plants of the Campbell Soups and the H.J. Heinz companies of Ontario and being turned into tomato soup or canned tomatoes or tomato ketchup. That 13 or 15 tonnes per acre would have been hand-harvested by farm labour. That yield, as recently as 1987, 1988, 1989, was 18 tonnes to the acre, a respectable yield. Today it is in excess of 35 tonnes per acre. It has about doubled over the last 12 years. That tremendous productivity leads to the lowering of the cost of food to the point where probably about 10% of an average household income goes to purchase food. That's one of the lowest percentages in the world, and one that I think the agriculture and food processing industries in Ontario can be very proud of achieving.

1520

A lot of that is due to the scientific research that has taken place in our industry and to the advancement in technology of mechanical harvesting techniques. And certainly the farmers in Ontario and their partners, the workers, are part and parcel of that excellence. I think we could match our Ontario farmers and their employees against farmers anywhere in the world for productivity, for skill in the trades, for using the most advanced techniques and for producing crops of a safe, high-quality nature that Ontarians can indeed be proud of.

This bill, I think, will allow the relationship between a farmer and his employees to be enhanced, whether those employees work on a part-time basis on a poultry farm or on a fruit and vegetable farm where it's a seasonal job or in a more full-time operation such as a mushroom farm. This bill would extend legislative protection to agricultural workers to ensure that their rights to form and join associations can be exercised in a very meaningful way.

Before we introduced this proposed legislation, we talked to the people it would most affect. We talked to members of the agricultural industry and to representatives of organized labour. We heard from Ontario's agricultural employers the value they put on the relationship they have with their employees. They think that relationship is a pretty good one, and I would agree with them. I think that relationship is excellent, and has to be because of the nature of the business they work in.

If you are a farmer, Mr Speaker, by and large in most field crop locations you're talking about harvesting a crop once a year. It isn't something that comes along next month and then the week or the month after. You're talking about harvesting one crop; you get one payday a year. It isn't a monthly payday; it isn't a weekly payday. You harvest that crop once a year.

If you've been producing a peach crop, for instance, you probably start producing that crop in the fall of the preceding year. You nurture that crop and look after it and raise it, making sure it has as many nutrients as it needs; protecting it from pests and from those things that

could come along and destroy it; hoping you get away from the spring frosts, which are often so devastating to the peach industry; getting through the spring and early summer prior to harvest; hoping you get enough rain and irrigating when necessary.

Eventually you bring that crop to the point of harvest, and you're going to harvest that crop once a year. If your relationships with the people who are going to deliver that crop aren't good, you're indeed in a very difficult industry. You're in an industry you probably shouldn't be in. You're jeopardizing your very livelihood by not having a positive relationship with the most important people who stand between you and success in harvesting that crop.

I think that farmers in Ontario do have a good relationship with the agricultural workers they employ. They have that relationship based on necessity. A lot of crops we produce in Ontario have a very short window of opportunity for harvest; for instance, the corn crop in Ontario, not so much in September but certainly in August, when the bulk of the corn crop comes off, whether it's going to food processing plants—Green Giant plants, where they produce frozen and canned corn—or whether it goes to the fresh market, where we're familiar with going out and buying a cob of corn. That corn, when it sits in the field on a hot day in August could have an 18-hour window of harvestability in order to ensure peak quality. If you can imagine, just 18 hours is the perfect time to pick that crop and get it to market or take it to a processing plant to have it turned into frozen or canned product. That's a very short window.

If you don't have a good relationship with the people who are going to complete that task for you, you have placed yourself in a very vulnerable position. So your partnership with farm labour is extremely important in today's agricultural industry. I think that has to be recognized in the way farmers deal with farm labour and the way farm labour deals with their employers. I think there's a very positive relationship on both sides of that fence in order to get that job done, which is so critical to both parties.

I think that agriculture has done a wonderful job, a good job, in the past of maintaining that relationship and seeing that the workplace is as safe as humanly possible, making sure the needs of the workers are met, recognizing that it is physical labour and a tough job. Often the farmer and worker are out there doing the same job, working side by side, making sure the crop either gets properly protected or harvested, depending on what job is being done on the farm at that particular time.

We've heard that Ontario's agricultural production must not be vulnerable to the risk of potentially devastating labour disruptions. I guess that's what I've just explained, that that relationship has to be very, very carefully nurtured in order to ensure that the crop gets harvested and utilized to the best of our ability.

When we drafted this bill, we remembered what we heard in the consultations we had with the agriculture industry and also with organized labour. The proposed

legislation we have before us today respects individual and constitutional rights of agricultural employees, while having regard for the unique characteristics of agriculture. I think the key to this piece of legislation is to ensure that that unique need of agriculture and the unique needs of agricultural labour are looked after. This is not a traditional employee-employer relationship. The relationship in this case is a very close one.

The proposed legislation would enable agricultural employees to exercise their rights to form and join an employees' association, to participate in lawful activities of that association, to assemble when and where necessary and to make representations to an employer through that employees' association, and the proposed legislation would ensure that they could do this free from interference, coercion or discrimination.

I should emphasize that the proposed legislation contains no restrictions on the composition of an employees' association, other than that the association be comprised of agricultural employees. Employees' associations could be comprised of agricultural employees from any number of farms or operations, and they could be organized on any basis that the employees want. They could be a branch of another organization, including a branch or local of a union. A union or other organization could assist employees in forming an employees' association, whether the association was formed as a branch or local of the union or other organization or as a separate association.

So I think they have a broad prospectus of what they are able to do in order to meet their unique needs in what is a unique industry that has had a very proud history in this province. Basically, this province was built on the agricultural and forest industries, and it's a very proud tradition. I think this bill will mature the relationship between agricultural workers and agricultural operators to ensure that that proud history in Ontario is continued and enhanced in the future.

1530

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Most fascinating comments by the member across. He failed to get into the gist of what this bill does, which is quite frankly not to deal with the mess that this government caused when they cancelled legislation that was put in place by the NDP government that gave farm workers the ability to organize under a collective agreement to negotiate things like wages, working conditions, health and safety rules—something that his government has cancelled.

As we all know, we're here today debating this bill because this government, on being elected in 1995, scrapped the NDP legislation that gave farm workers the right to organize. They have, since then, gone to court and the courts have said, "Hey, they're workers like anybody else and they have the right to organize under a collective agreement if that's what they choose to do." The court has ordered that legislation be drafted in Ontario in order to give those workers the rights that you, as a Conservative government, have taken away.

Now you're here putting a bill in place that says they can't unionize, they can't join an actual union but they're allowed to have an association. In other words, "It's OK; you guys can talk union but don't do anything seriously about doing it."

My problem with you is, what part about democracy don't you like? Democracy is about giving people rights and it's about saying, "If workers think it is just and right to join a union, that's their choice." What gives you the God-given right to decide that a group of workers in this province don't have the right to organize under a union? Sure, you hide under trying to protect the family farm, but this ain't about the family going to organize grandpa or dad, because we, as children on the farm—that's not what the issue is all about.

This is about the big agricorps. There are many agricorp businesses out there where workers decide that's maybe what they want to do. I say again, what gives you the God-given right to take away democratic rights from individuals to prevent them from organizing under a union? I just say to you, shame on you; you don't like democracy.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome my cousin and her husband from Brookfield, Wisconsin, Patsy and Charlie Reitz, and their daughter, Krista.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order, but we welcome you regardless.

Mr Barrett: I thought the presentation by the member for Halton was a very balanced presentation, quite appropriately so, and very carefully presented. The member for Halton knows a thing or two about food production, he knows a thing or two about food processing, and he knows a thing or two about the marketing and retailing of food in Ontario.

Mr Chudleigh: And chickens.

Mr Barrett: He knows a thing or two about chickens. We've certainly been discussing chickens this afternoon, and chicken catching, as we did last Tuesday.

The compelling proposal from the member from Halton is that this legislation is balanced; it recognizes that Ontario's farming and farmers and farm workers and agricultural production all contribute to a very key component of the quality of life that we all enjoy in this province. But he stresses that this business, and it is a biological business, must not be vulnerable to the risk of potentially devastating labour disruptions, planting and harvesting with respect to crops—very crucial times of year, as the member indicates; it only comes around once a year. You plant normally once a year. You harvest once a year. You have a very narrow window. You are dealing with weather. You're dealing with Mother Nature.

I appreciate the fact we had a balanced presentation that outlines the protection of the rights of employees while, at the same time, recognizing the very unique and age-old characteristics of this particular line of work.

Mr Kormos: You see, you've missed the point. This bill doesn't accord workers any rights; ergo, there are no rights to protect.

I hearken back to this government's Victims' Bill of Rights, I suppose. What the bill very specifically does is persist in denying workers—like the workers at Highline Mushrooms, some 200 of them in what is more aptly described as a factory than a farm—the right to collectively bargain around issues like health and safety. The NDP legislation you repealed had no room in it for work stoppages because the right to strike was exchanged for compulsory arbitration. This chimera of interference with either planting crops or harvesting crops is at the very least tiresome.

Look, the workers at Heinz processing down south-western Ontario way, who have to deal with tonnes and tonnes of highly perishable tomatoes, for instance, delivered and needing processing within hours, have the right to unionize, and indeed have, and to collectively bargain, and indeed they do. The workers at corporate agricultural operations like Highline Mushrooms don't, and the workers at Highline Mushrooms in Leamington, some 200 of them in what is more aptly a factory rather than a farm, surely deserve the same rights as the workers at Heinz processing.

Every worker in this province deserves the right to collectively bargain so as to protect themselves and their futures. Anything less is less than democracy.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Halton has two minutes to respond.

Mr Chudleigh: I appreciate the comments of the members opposite and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who again pointed out that a farmer and his partners on the farm, his labour, get one paycheque a year by and large and that makes it imperative that that relationship be very strong. If it could be strengthened with an association, that would be a very good thing.

Both the members opposite referred to the legislation they brought in. Like most of the legislation the NDP brought in from 1990 to 1995, it was excessive. They tend to be a philosophical party and they tend to go to excess. They always overdo it. They overdid their labour bills. The biggest job increase in Buffalo's history was during the five years you were in power because your labour laws were excessive. We had the largest job losses in Ontario's history from 1990 to 1995 because your labour laws were excessive.

We had the largest deficits in Ontario's history, doubling our provincial debt because your fiscal policies were excessive. We had the largest debt increase in Ontario's history because your financial understanding of what makes the world go round was certainly excessively negative. So taking direction from a party which has all but destroyed Ontario as a working entity, driving it to being the economic caboose of this country—I'm sorry; I just cannot take your comments all that seriously.

But I did appreciate the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant and his very level comments.

1540

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's certainly my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 187, An Act to

protect the rights of agricultural employees. This is very important legislation in that it brings into this forum a very important part of the fabric of Ontario; that is, the men, women and children who make up our agricultural community, our farm community that I'm sure you, Mr Speaker, are encountering on a daily basis.

I guess those of us who live in the city—I think too many of us—sometimes take for granted and feel that automatically our food comes to the table, our milk comes to the table, that somehow, mysteriously, it just shows up at the grocery store, and we never stop to reflect enough on where it comes from. I think it would certainly do us a world of good if we paid more respect and attention to the agricultural community, which is working long hours and putting in all kinds of sweat equity, their life's savings into providing us with everything from our meat products, our fresh fruits and vegetables, and making them come to our table so easily. If you look at the prices of these products, if you compare the price of fresh produce or vegetables in Ontario to any jurisdiction, I think you'll see we get a pretty good deal. Sad to say, not enough of that money goes into the pocket of that family farm.

I remember the old reference to a box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. If you look at the box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes, it's amazing. Look at the prices, \$2.49 for a box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes, and I think out of that box five cents might go back, if lucky, to that farmer who produced the corn for those corn flakes. So who got the other \$2.40-odd? There are so many middlemen and companies that have to basically package and deliver. I think, in fact, most of the money goes into advertising of Kellogg's Corn Flakes, trying to get you to eat Kellogg's Corn Flakes rather than Wheaties or all these other packaged cereals.

This bill that the government has put forward is something that the government is grappling with, and I think it's an attempt by them to ensure that the family farm, especially, is able to maintain a longevity and an operation that is not a threat to their livelihood and not disruptive to their traditional way of conducting their family business. That is why our party supports this bill. We feel that you have to try to do the best you can sometimes. We don't purport on this side to have the answer to all the problems. Not everything is stark black and white on these issues, but in this case here, one of the reasons I support this bill is because I do feel that we sometimes forget how fragile this part of Ontario is and how critical it is in terms of ensuring that we, as people who don't dwell in rural areas, have the fruit and nutrition we need, the food we need to feed our families and do our work here in the city.

As I said, it's sometimes most difficult for us in the cities to appreciate the value of these farms and what they produce and what they do. It is not often enough that we stop to reflect on their concerns. I think this bill is an opportunity for us to look at the dynamics, and there are different economic dynamics on a family farm or in an agricultural situation, as you would know, Mr Speaker,

than there are in running a business in the city that is producing sometimes something you can't even see. They're marketing companies or they're producing some kind of service. But this is a very hands-on business.

Sometimes the word "business" is even difficult, because a lot of these operations are really run because of the love of the land that many of these people have. It belonged to their fathers, their grandfathers, their great-grandfathers, great-grandmothers, and they want to pass that on. They think they owe something to them who cleared the fields, who put their lives, really, into this piece of land so it would be growing fruit or vegetables.

In fact, last night I talked to someone who has a farm with billy goats on it, selling goat milk. They become very attached because, again, it's more than just a job; it is basically part of the very fabric of their being. And that is why, as I said, it's not a perfect bill, because in some cases, as you know, and we've seen them in the province and throughout the world—I know my friend Jean-Marc Lalonde here from the Cumberland area will tell you about the problems they have with the massive factory farms and what they do. Those are a challenge. How do you control those operations, and how are they different from a family farm, and where is the line drawn? Those are complex issues that not only deal with labour issues, as this bill does, but also in terms of their impact on other property owners in the area and people who are downstream from a factory farm, and what the consequences of that are.

I would hope that in the future somehow we can address, as lawmakers, the challenge of men and women who are employed in these so-called industrial or factory farms. There may be 100, 200 people working there. There's always the case of the mushroom operation. So do they have enough protections if people work in that situation? Should they be treated differently than someone who works in a factory just across the border in a suburban area? They're certainly not attached to the land, and it's not a family-type operation.

You may be employing hundreds of people, so are there needs to protect the workers more in that kind of large-scale agricultural operation? Those are quite common, I know, and certainly the explosion of the greenhouse operations throughout Chatham-Kent—and the member from Windsor-Essex will tell you about it in the Leamington area. There are all kinds of different approaches to agriculture, and there are different impacts on workers. I think that's an area that certainly needs further examination, and it's something that we hope we can do something about in the very near future.

I guess the genesis of this bill arises from a constitutional challenge, and the government, I guess, is trying to respond to that. I hope they have done their research, because too many times we've seen this government rush ahead with things without looking at the legal and constitutional implications of some of the things they've passed in a hurry. They are claiming that this meets the constitutional tests, and those constitutional tests are very rigorous ones. This government's attempt to try to deal with

that constitutional hot potato, basically, is not one that I underestimate, because it is sometimes too easy to say, "Well, here's the quick solution." I certainly think that the government and its learned researchers and lawyers have tried to answer that and to ensure that this is within the Canadian charter and meets the rigorous requirements as set forth by the Supreme Court.

1550

That's why I think it's important for those of us in this assembly to look at different aspects of this bill and ensure that we ask the questions now, in terms of whether it does meet the Supreme Court decision and its requirements, so that if there are necessary amendments, we put those forward. I know our caucus is looking at the bill in detail to make sure that there aren't any encumbrances there that could get us back in here with another piece of legislation that is basically in need of more refinement etc. Hopefully we can help in doing that.

The other aspect of this—I'm not sure of the regulatory conditions and the regulations that will be required. That will be an important part of this bill, and I hope those are done with great care and with great interest. I think this has to be done not in the spirit that it was originally done. When Mike Harris came to power, he sort of rubbed his hands in glee that he was going to basically repeal everything that all other governments had done before him. It wasn't just the NDP legislation that he was going to repeal; as you know, he was going to repeal everything Roberts or Davis did. I hope that isn't the rationale, that you're not doing it for ideologically driven reasons; that you're doing it because you want to make good legislation that protects citizens who are depending on us to come up with some reasoned answers. You never come up with good legislation when you do it in a rush, as Premier Harris did, for the wrong reasons.

Hopefully, this is a more reasoned approach that looks at the consequences of being too reckless in this attempt to deal with this problem originally, and hopefully this one has been more thoughtful, more reasoned, more researched by the bureaucrats in the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Agriculture. We just can't afford to basically continue to do these kinds of major revisions to labour laws without proper and due process. I hope this will meet that test so we're not back here again and that there are, again, some remedies here in this bill.

The other thing that is very related to this legislation is the future viability of the family farm. As you know, the whole of southern Ontario is under a great deal of pressure, because of urban sprawl, to eat up valuable farmland. In southern Ontario, we have some prime farmland that is second to none, whether you go to the Niagara Peninsula or the tender fruit belt, or whether you go into your community where they're known for their dairy herds—if I'm not mistaken—dairy products, mixed farming. To me, these are like a great resource, a great wealth for this province. In other words, they're not making any more of these prime farmlands; they're not going to be able to reproduce them in the future.

I hope that our young pages sitting here realize that, that once a farm becomes part of a subdivision, as sadly too many have become in recent years—I know in the greater Toronto area over the next 10 years it's estimated we're going to lose 250,000 acres of prime, grade-A farmland. Some of the best farmland in Canada will be lost to the building of subdivisions. Those acres that we lose are a loss to all Ontario, because not only do we lose the tranquility of the farm property that is like a lung or that sometimes acts like a filter for the impact of urban smog and so forth, but we also lose the future productive capacity of that acreage. Right now, we feel we can import all our products from California, Mexico or wherever it is, but there may come a time when we're going to have to be much more dependent on homegrown products.

We were discussing at the Thanksgiving table the lack of appreciation of Canadian fruits and vegetables. We seem to rely on orange juice imported from the United States all the time. What's wrong with drinking good old Canadian apple cider? We don't see our squashes, our pumpkins, our Canadian zucchinis, all these wonderful products that are high in vitamins and nutrients, at the kitchen table any more. We see nothing but imported fruits and vegetables from other countries. We're getting so hooked on those imported products that our children—I don't know when the last time was that one of these pages ate a squash or a good Canadian cabbage.

We have so many affordable homegrown products produced from our farms that we don't appreciate enough. If we don't invest in and protect these farms, these resources are not going to be there for our children's children. That's what I see happening.

Try to get young people or anybody to eat beets—there's another fabulous root vegetable. Carrots and beets are wonderful products that are grown here. We don't market those wholesome products enough. Instead, we are too much into imported fast foods, too much into imported vegetables from offshore.

Perhaps we should start a campaign of educating—

Mr Bisson: Why don't you mention turnips?

Mr Colle: Yes, turnips is another product. That's one of the things you don't see on the table enough. A turnip is one of the healthiest vegetables you can eat. As I said, at Thanksgiving, that's what we had. We basically had an array of turnips, squash, cabbage, coleslaw, a good old Canadian turkey, and it was wonderful.

Sometimes people sneer at that and they think, "Well, that's not important. What's grown here in Ontario on the family farm, the products, who cares about the fact we're losing so many different kinds and qualities of apples?"

We used to grow hundreds of different kinds of wonderful apples in Ontario. Now we're done to very few kinds of apples. What this means is that we will lose this wonderful resource unless we appreciate it more.

I think that as lawmakers we have to also do what we can to say, "This is important." I know some members across there don't think, when we're talking about turnips or Ontario squash—I think that explains why we have to

pay attention to what the farmers are doing in trying to make a living. This is all part of it. If we don't appreciate what they produce, how are we going to appreciate them? That's what I'm trying to say; that's all.

I'm not from an agricultural area, but I will try and do my best to make people in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence appreciate the fact that we have the quality of life we have because we have affordable, good, wholesome, healthy, natural food available to us as a result of the sweat and investment of our farmers who are willing to make these sacrifices. We should appreciate them more. Today I've been given the opportunity to say that, and I'm not ashamed to say that and I will say it to anybody, whether I'm in Toronto or in the Legislature. More of us should be speaking about appreciation of Ontario in this Legislature.

1600

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bisson: I've been here a long time and that's the first time I've heard somebody get up and give a speech about how somebody should eat their vegetables.

The issue here is that neither the Tories nor the Liberals want to give workers in the agricultural sector the ability to organize. That, to me, is really a sad reflection of where we've come to in this province.

The Liberals and the Tories are trying to say, "It's all about organizing the family farm." It's not about organizing the family farm. Do you think Monsieur and Madame Lefebvre and their three children are going to go out and organize because dad didn't come home one night and didn't give somebody a paycheque or didn't let them ride the combine or whatever it might be? Rubbish.

This is about the big agricorps. This is about the big mushroom plants. This is about all those agricultural businesses that are owned by big multinationals, by and large, and those workers don't have the right to organize. What kind of democracy is this?

How can you stand there and preach to people to eat their vegetables and you're not going to allow workers to organize, one of the democratic rights we're given in this society? It's up to workers to decide if they want to organize. Why should we as legislators take that right away from them? Shame on you. Don't come in here as a Liberal and preach to me about who should be eating their vegetables. You should be talking about workers and their right to democracy.

The last time I checked, Canada, and Ontario, was a democratic nation and one of the basic, fundamental rights of democracy is the right to organize. You might think it's a pain in the ass, but that's what democracy is about; it's to give people the rights and the vehicles they need to make sure they can participate in democracy.

Shame on the Liberal Party for not even having the guts to vote on this at first reading, and shame on the Tories for trying to take away the rights of workers—a pox on both your houses.

The Acting Speaker: I just caution not to get carried away in the passion of the moment with language that is not appropriate.

Mr Barrett: I appreciate that the member from Eglinton-Lawrence had some good things to say about eating one's vegetables and had some good things to say about the food industry and the agriculture industry in Ontario.

As the NDP member opposite has clearly pointed out, the Liberals did not support this bill on first reading and that is of concern. We may see something different on second reading. I can't speculate. I can't speculate with respect to their support on third reading. I question why they would not support it on first reading. It's a piece of legislation that will protect—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: At least I know where you guys are coming from.

Mr Barrett: We know where the NDP is coming from and I appreciate that. When I'm knocking on doors I can explain that if I am talking to a union man or a union woman.

I question why the Liberals didn't support it on first reading. I consider this balanced legislation that recognizes and protects the rights of agricultural employees to associate, ever bearing in mind the importance of recognizing the very unique characteristics of farming.

I try to explain to Liberals that it protects the rights of workers. It protects their right to form an association. It protects their right to join an association. It protects their right to participate in lawful activities. It protects their right to assemble or to make representations to their employer. It protects their right to discuss terms and conditions of employment with an employer, and in this case they can do this through an employees' association.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): As the member said in his comments, the public should recognize that the Liberals abstained on first reading. The reason was, and the public should recognize this, that we had no idea what was in the bill. The bill was presented and tabled and we'd never even seen the bill. The public should understand that. We'd never even seen the bill. The government members say, "Why didn't you simply make a vote?" We thought it might be a good idea, as my colleague said, to actually read the bill. I'm sorry the Conservative members don't like my colleague complimenting the agricultural community on the quality of its product. I'm sorry they found that offensive. I didn't find it offensive.

I represent an urban area, Speaker, but you know my family comes from your constituency—Birr. I'm like a lot of other people in Ontario who live in an urban area but whose roots are agricultural. That's our background. So I'm proud that my colleague was complimentary of the agricultural community, took the opportunity to point out the quality of the product, and did a little bit of selling of Ontario agriculture. The Conservatives may find that funny, or something, but I compliment him.

He outlined very clearly the parts of the bill we support—and we'll vote in favour of the bill—and our concerns. We see in this bill some good things; we have some concerns. We've said, "Listen, we form the govern-

ment, we'll deal with them," and it's our hope that we will.

I take my hat off to my colleague, who spent a substantial part of his speech complimenting our agricultural community on what they do, outlining the things in the bill we support and the things in the bill that we have difficulties with.

The Acting Speaker: I just had to help anybody who didn't know where Birr was. It's halfway between Arva and Elginfield.

Mr Kormos: This bill perpetuates a working-class apartheid, and I find it extremely disturbing that New Democrats are standing alone in fighting this bill, when this bill perpetuates that apartheid among workers here in the province of Ontario. We acknowledge, of course we do, and we should celebrate the hard-fought struggle of working women and men over the course of decades and generations, where they won the right to organize into trade unions and to collectively bargain.

In 1994 the New Democratic Party of Ontario finally extended that same right to an excluded class of workers—agricultural workers; workers like Thomas Dunmore in the mushroom factory industry. It's not the family farm. It's high-tech heavy machinery, 200 employees, who had, until New Democrats formed the government of this province, been denied the right to form a union and to collectively bargain; to bargain around wages, yes, but as important, indeed more important, for agricultural workers, to bargain around issues like occupational health and safety. Agricultural work is probably the single most dangerous occupation in this province, in this country.

By God, I say it's for fair-minded, just-minded people in this Legislature to stand and fight an apartheid that's being imposed by this government's legislation in their effort to circumvent the Supreme Court of Canada ruling. I look to other members of this assembly, both in government and in the official opposition, to stand up and speak against this apartheid.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to respond.

Mr Colle: I was very, you might say, set back by the trivialization by my colleague from the NDP of my attempt to say I appreciate what the farmers of Ontario do for us and what they produce. I tried in my best way to say that we don't appreciate them enough, and that maybe as Ontarians we should appreciate them more. Whether it's eating Ontario products or advertising them, I think we should do more of that as legislators, and I hope we do that. That's what I was trying to say, and this bill is part of that kind of acknowledgement that we have to do more.

It is a unique situation. The farm, as we know it, is a very fragile place. As I said, it's more than just a place where people work; it is part of their life and it's part of an extension of their family heritage. So it takes some special consideration. That's what we're saying here on this side.

The NDP member can preach, but I think that when you want to talk about double standards and hypocrisy, if you look at what the NDP did to the social contract—

The Acting Speaker: No, we don't use that term in here.

Mr Colle: No. But he is preaching to us, when they ripped apart the most contracts in the history of this province, and he has the nerve to stand up and say that they are the sole protectors of the working men and women. Well, let them say that to the people who had their contracts ripped up by this government when they were in power. That is the litmus test that a lot of workers put on the NDP. When you were there, you forced the social contract and you broke all the principles and promises you made, so let's not preach to other people. Let's just stand up and say what we stand for, what we work for and what we think is important. That's what I tried to do.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak on this proposed bill, The Agricultural Employees Protection Act. Certainly it was well bungled back in the early 90s when the government of the day, the socialist government, brought forward some of their employment legislation. They had no concern for farmers, no concern for agricultural products. It didn't matter to them whether the tomatoes rotted in the field, or whether the corn was left to be frozen into the middle of the winter, or whether the cows got milked at six in the morning or six at night. It was of no concern to them just as long as they got their legislation in place and continued with their philosophical approach.

I think we did the right thing by getting rid of that of draconian legislation that had been brought in. Then it would appear that there was an issue with the courts as it related to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we are recognizing that. We believe that we are introducing some balanced legislation that's going to facilitate the employee-employer relationship.

We recognize the quality of life on the farm and the issues and the problems that occur there, but one of the things that I really sincerely hope doesn't happen for the agricultural workers when they do form some unions is to find themselves with some staff, or some of their elected people, in this special group, this club of \$100,000 per year of salaries that are being made by union leaders. I think it's a shame that in one year this club increased from 260 to 299 union leaders. Look at our teachers paying \$1,000 or so a year for the union dues so that they can end up taking salaries of \$100,000-plus—299 of them in the province of Ontario that are making that kind of money, taking it from the people, as the NDP would say, whom they are protecting. They are there to protect the working men and women. I don't see that this is a way of going about protecting the men and women in the province of Ontario, when 299 of those leaders are making in excess of \$100,000. I don't think they have the

best interests of those working men and women at their hearts. For example, CUPE's managing director, Gordon Johnson, was the top earner, with \$210,000 per year in the year 2002. CUPE national president, Judy Darcy, earned just over \$125,000. This is the kind of money that these leaders are making.

Then you look at the teachers. "Second on the list was OSSTF administrative director Kenneth McLaren at just over \$176,500. Its president, Earl Manners, earned just over \$118,000."

I'm concerned that agricultural employees may end up caught in this kind of scenario. I think it's a genuine concern when you see what is going on. They may sign on with one of these organizations as a branch or whatever. I think they need to understand—and thank heavens we have in place the legislation that does expose these kind of salaries.

It goes on. The annual salary disclosures: "Of the 299 salaries over \$100,000, eight were over \$150,000.

"Canadian Auto Workers president Buzz Hargrove's salary and benefits totalled nearly \$142,200."

I want to share with you that this is all from a very credible source called the Toronto Star. This was in the Toronto Star on October 24 of this year. The headline is "299 Union Officials' Salaries Top \$100,000."

The "compensation for Robert Brown of the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association dropped to about \$136,800 in 2001 from \$162,000 the year before." That was very, very thoughtful. Maybe because it was being put out in the newspaper because of our legislation, he decided to take a little less salary.

"Ontario Nurses' Association president Barb Wahl's salary was about \$120,000, while Toronto Police Association president Craig Bromell earned about \$115,500."

I just thought to have that on the record would be of interest to those in the socialist party, who brought in some of the legislation back in the early 1990s, and that they'd want to appreciate some of the things that are happening in the unions which they say are there protecting the working men and women. I just thought that the working men and women should know. If they're happy with that, I'm happy. That's the way it is.

Our government, as usual, has consulted extensively on this particular piece of legislation. We've talked to organized labour and we've talked with various representatives in the agriculture industry, and we've heard that Ontario agricultural employers value the relationship with their employees. They believe it is a good one, and presently they are working well together. We've heard that it's important to treat all agricultural employees in a consistent manner, but hopefully it's not consistent with these kinds of excessive salaries for their leaders. We've also heard that agricultural production must not be vulnerable to risks of potentially devastating labour disruptions. That certainly can happen when strikes or lockouts occur.

When this legislation was being drawn up, our government remembered some of these issues, some of these things that were being brought forward, and has imple-

mented them into the proposed legislation before us that we're addressing here today.

The proposed legislation would enable agricultural employees to exercise their rights to form and to join an employees' association. They could participate in the lawful activities of that association and have the right to assemble, which is a real right of every Canadian. They'd have the right to make representation to an employer through an employees' association. The proposed legislation would ensure that they could do all of this free from any interference, coercion or discrimination. That's basically our right as a Canadian. There would literally be no restrictions other than that the association would be comprised of agricultural employees.

The associations could, of course, be comprised of agricultural employees from any number of farms. They could be organized on any basis that the employees want. They could be the branch of another organization, including a branch or local or union. But I'd certainly caution them to be careful which other union they might want to be a branch or local of, because they might find themselves in a union where the leadership and the hired staff are making rather significant salaries, maybe more than I think they should be making, when they're there to protect the working men and women of this province. So I would send out a cautionary note that if they decide to organize or assemble on the family farm, they have a look at the salaries of the senior people in the unions here in Ontario and really think twice about which union they would associate with or have a local with, because it's their hard-earned dollars that go to the union dues that end up paying these salaries.

1620

I want to make it very, very clear that, while an agricultural employee may join an association that's a union, the proposed legislation does not extend collective bargaining to agricultural workers. Also worth noting is that while the proposed legislation is not about workplace health and safety and is directed at agricultural employees' rights of association, it would enhance the ability of employees and employers to communicate about terms and conditions of employment, including any concerns about workplace health and safety.

This bill is about protection. Should an individual or an association believe their rights have been contravened, they will be able to go to the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal, the authority to hear those complaints or those alleged contraventions of the act and to ensure remedial orders are in fact taken.

This proposed legislation would also protect a farm's most valuable assets: the land, the livestock and the crops. I think that was what really incensed the agricultural community when back in roughly 1993 or 1994 this other legislation came forth. They were very concerned what would happen to their crops that were ripe. There are only three days for a crop. That's the day before it's ripe, the day it's ripe and the day after. There's only really that one day it's prime and it's ideal to get out there and harvest it. If you're in the middle of a labour

dispute, that's not going to happen. When it comes to livestock, they have to be fed on a regular basis, not just when there's no labour disruption. A lot of working of the land depends on weather and temperature. You just don't have a choice of whether it's going to rain or not going to rain. Again, the protection of these valuable assets for a farmer is pretty important.

The tribunal would take into consideration human health and safety, normal agricultural practices, animal health and safety and plant health, planting and harvesting, biosecurity needs, privacy or property rights. These considerations are to ensure that normal agricultural operations are not unduly interfered with.

The proposed legislation would protect the rights of Ontario agricultural employees. The proposed legislation would also recognize the unique characteristics of Ontario agricultural operations, and the proposed legislation is carefully and appropriately balanced. At least I believe it is, although some on the other side of the floor would not agree with this.

But I do plead with the farmers, with the agricultural workers and employees that if this legislation is passed and they have the opportunity to assemble and form a union, they have a look at the union they would be connected with. Maybe it would be best if they had their own union of agricultural employees rather than joining in with some of these others that have these exorbitant salaries over \$100,000. I don't think they need some of the 299 union officials who make in excess of \$100,000 a year, but if they do, they should very carefully select which one of those unions they would want to have representing them.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I listened to the debate this afternoon, not only the member who just spoke but other members.

Essentially what we have before us is a bill which we support because, ultimately, there is no alternative. The fact remains that the family farm is something we on this side of the House do not want to endanger. This bill is far from ideal. It doesn't go far enough as far as we're concerned, but we're prepared to support this bill because it does, as I say, continue to protect the family farm in the immediate term.

I think that's an important thing to do in our province. It is part of our heritage, the family farm. We have a long rural tradition in this province, an important one, and I believe it must continue into the future. We have to continue to recognize that the family farm is not only a notion, not only something that we harken back to as a sort of idyllic kind of place, but it is and continues to be an essential feature of our productive capacity in terms of agriculture.

Listening to what the member had to say, I believe that he did raise a number of points that made a lot of sense. But I also think that with regard to the debate that has taken place around labour and the history around

labour legislation, a lot of partisanship has entered into this debate. That's fair. This is the place to have partisanship, there's no doubt about it, but we have our differences of opinion on this side of the House with respect to labour legislation and we believe that this government hasn't recognized all the essential features that need to be recognized.

Mr Bisson: Just a couple of points to Mr Galt. First of all, he talks about how in 1993-94, when we brought this legislation forward as the NDP government, we were going to affect the ability of farmers to get crops out of the field because all those newly organized workers would be out organizing and signing union cards, and they'd all go out on strike when the farmers were pulling their crops out of the field. It just goes to show, first of all, the utter disgust they have for workers who organize, which was the other part of his speech, but also how little he knew about the legislation.

Under our legislation, yes, we gave people the right to organize, but we didn't give them the right to strike in the way that you explained. What we said was that if there is a dispute in negotiations and you're unable to resolve it at the bargaining table, in fact the 1994 legislation would allow for an arbitrated settlement. What do you have against an arbitrated settlement? Are you saying that somehow or other, if two parties are negotiating and an employer hides the numbers or doesn't want to share in the profits that he makes from his business, you shouldn't go off to arbitration to find a settlement? What part of fairness don't you like? Or do you propose that we should always pay workers the lowest possible wage ever because most of those profits should stay in the employer's pockets? I think that's what you're saying. It shows not only your disgust for workers and their right to organize but how little you know about the legislation.

I also thought the comments he made on how he took pride that workers have quit unions, that union membership is down and the reason for that was their legislation that posts how much money union leaders make and the salaries for those over \$100,000, were quite interesting. I thought that was rather interesting because it confirms what I've suspected, that that was the intent of it all the time. It's about undermining unions and the right of workers to organize and to affiliate under unions. We truly know what you guys are all about.

Mr Chudleigh: Northumberland of course is an absolutely marvellous part of the province and a great area for apples, a subject near and dear to my heart. This year Northumberland county was one of the few areas of the province that missed the May 9 frost, and so in the Northumberland area they had a very good apple crop. I think you might call it a bumper crop, would you? That's when the bumper on the pickup drags along the ground because it's so full. That's called a bumper crop. I think they had certainly one of the best crops in Ontario. So in Northumberland, farm labour of course was very busy this year picking apples. Most of that is done on piecework, where agricultural workers make a fair

amount of money, which is where most of the harvest labour work is done.

Northumberland county also grows some strawberries. It's a unique strawberry production that starts mid-June. I believe that they finished picking this week. Perhaps they finished last week, but they were picking right through the summer on day-neutral varieties. It's one of the few areas and the largest area in Ontario that produces day-neutral strawberries. We actually have strawberries in Ontario from June to October, four months. Where it used to be a three-week crop, it is now a four-month crop. Because of the climate next to Lake Ontario in Northumberland county, we are able to produce those strawberries there with some security.

I don't think I've said much about the member's speech, but it is a wonderful place in the province and I appreciate everything he said about this wonderful bill.

1630

Mr Phillips: I want to focus on the member's comments on the union leadership salaries. I'd simply say that those salaries are set by the membership. The leaders have to go before the membership, sometimes annually, sometimes every couple of years. They have to stand for election. They have to defend themselves in a democratic forum. The membership make a decision on what they want to pay their leaders.

I contrast that with Eleanor Clitheroe. Mr Wilson was the Minister of Energy. He said that he met every single week with the chairman of Hydro One, that he knew everything that was going on at Hydro One. He had to have known what Eleanor Clitheroe was making. I raised it here in the legislation in the middle of May with the Premier. I said, "Is this acceptable to you?" He referred it to the Minister of Energy, who never answered the question. I raised the same question the next day and the Premier essentially accused me of making it up. It was only a couple of weeks later, when finally the public weighed in on it, that the government said, "It's either Eleanor or us," and cut Eleanor, fired her essentially, put in a new board that fired her.

The reason I say this is that in my opinion the government and Mr Wilson, the Minister of Energy, knew all along the salary Ms Clitheroe was making, the \$6-million severance pack she had, the \$1-million-a-year pension, knew all along and condoned it, did nothing, until the public outcry forced the Premier to say, "It's her or me," and in those circumstances it was her.

It's difficult to lecture the union leadership when the government has condoned that sort of salary level.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mr Galt: I appreciate the responses by all the members, but particularly by the member from Halton. Some of his observations were very insightful, particularly of Northumberland county. Maybe he's been eating some of the apples in the caucus room and that's why he recognizes the quality of the apples coming from Northumberland. He has a connection there. I think there's a relative in that riding. He also had some property in the

riding once upon a time. It's very kind of him to mention the strawberry production, ever bearing throughout the summer, June through till frost. Of course the frost came in October, a week or so ago, and I expect brought to an end that particular—but we look forward to those strawberries come next spring.

I appreciate some of the comments made by the other members. The member from York South-Weston indicated he's prepared to support this legislation. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt talked about salaries and decisions. Yes, he's absolutely right—provided the rank and file know what those salaries are. By having to reveal salaries over \$100,000, that's now necessary. So I agree with him that if they know what the salaries are and that's who they want to elect, that they're worth that, I think that's just fine. What's important is that the membership realize this.

I was interested in the member from Timmins-James Bay talking about “silly”—my comments as they related to crops and getting them in—because their bill allowed arbitration and arbitration settlement, but it didn't say “required.” They still, as I understand it and he didn't say differently, couldn't go through the strike, the lockout situation, and with that kind of labour disruption, certainly crops are not going to be harvested.

Thank you very much for the two minutes.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Cordiano: We on this side of the House support this bill, as I said in my comments earlier. We do so because of the importance of the family farm, or let's put it this way: small farming operations that tend to be largely run by families, to this day. As I said earlier, we have an almost ancestral obligation, if you will, to maintain that family farm, to make certain it stays intact. My colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence spoke somewhat passionately about Ontario farms and what they have meant and continue to mean to us to this day. We recognize that the family farm is a cornerstone of agricultural production in this province. We think it's of vital importance, not just from a heritage standpoint but also from an economic standpoint. Agriculture continues to be a very important industry for our province's economy. Many thousands of people are employed in the industry and will continue to be employed in the future.

Every government has recognized agriculture as an important industry, but I say to you that, as we move forward with this legislation, we believe it doesn't go far enough. We're going to support it because it does recognize the importance of the family farm. Let me explain what I mean by that. We need to make a distinction in the future between what is a small farming operation, a family farm, and a large factory style farm employing hundreds of people in the various food production industries.

I for one believe further protection needs to be granted to those workers. There is a need to recognize that there are health and safety issues in those production facilities. They're large-scale, sometimes employing many hundreds of people. There is no difference between that style

of operation and any other industrial operation in the manufacturing of other goods.

I think there is a distinction to be made, and we have suggested we would move legislation that would go further. We would exempt the family farm. We would recognize there's a need to have a cut-off point, and that would be based on the number of employees. That must be established. We would have consultation with various people from the industry and others who are involved in this process, who have a stake in it.

I think it's important that we move on that front, however difficult that may seem, and it may seem difficult to the government to accomplish that, but we live in a complex world. If we are to be global competitors, we have to acknowledge that sometimes the need for arriving at these complex solutions is derived in legislation that recognizes there isn't a black and white, recognizes that there is room for compromise. Having a piece of legislation that would recognize the family farm, or the small farming operation, could be exempted, is absolutely important and we would move on that front upon forming a government.

I come from an urban background. Obviously, I don't have the kind of knowledge of the agricultural community that some of my colleagues do in this Legislature, but let's try to make a connection between small business, for example, and a small farming operation. I think there is a commonality there that we could extend, at least in terms of helping those of us who don't come from an agricultural community to understand the difficulties small farms face, that the family farm faces.

The family farm faces many more difficulties than any other operation in our economy. There are huge hurdles that need to be overcome. Sometimes we take it for granted that people still engage in farming. Many people just eke out a living from the family farm, in fact don't even make a living and have to supplement their incomes on the farm by working off the farm. That's the stark reality we face in modern times.

That makes it awfully difficult for the small farmer, the small family farm operation, to make ends meet. We say that we recognize there is a need—let me put it another way: we should not in any way throw up obstacles to that family farm's getting in the harvest and making certain there isn't a disruption in employment. A disruption in the provision of labour is where we draw the line and say there is that need. Small family farms could not operate if there was a disruption in labour.

1640

That's why we're suggesting that we would go further in legislation that we would bring forward upon forming a government, because there is a need to acknowledge that. At the same time, we feel compelled to protect workers in a setting that is a large-style operation. There are many inherent features of that that can be likened to any kind of production facility in any industry. Workers have the right to be protected and, under the piece of legislation we would bring forward, they would have the right to organize and to have a collective agreement.

Now, we would say as well that we would not allow for significant stoppages of work. Disputes would be settled by mediation, and there would be binding arbitration if required. That is, I think, a feature that would also allow us to move forward legislation that is a little more complex and a little less black and white and would recognize the realities of the workplace, recognize that there is a need for collective bargaining to take place, but also recognize that the agricultural industry is somewhat unique, with features that do not apply to any other industry. I think that's what good legislation is all about: recognizing that there are real needs and that those needs need to be met.

Again, agriculture and food production in this province is world-scale. It's a significant industry, employing many thousands of people. We cannot have disruptions to that industry. It's of vital importance, even more so in the future. As my colleague alluded to earlier, we are losing farmland at a rapid rate. It's being paved over. It's unfortunate that we haven't moved to protect that farmland more greatly than we have, and I think that's regrettable. All governments have failed to do that, in fact. I think what that has led to is a great degree of urban sprawl. We need to deal with those issues. Those are challenges we face in the future. Most municipal areas face similar challenges around the world. This is not a problem that's unique to us, to Toronto or the GTA or any other municipality in and around the Golden Horseshoe. We have most valuable agricultural land in that Golden Horseshoe, which needs to be protected.

Getting back to the Agricultural Employees Protection Act, this is a piece of legislation that is not ideal but that we support because we recognize the long-standing traditional connection to the family farm that this Legislature has continually supported. I'm not suggesting for a moment that my friends in the New Democratic Party do not recognize the importance of the family farm either. I think it would be a shallow argument for me to say that. I think it's fair to acknowledge that they recognize the importance of the family farm. But they would do it differently; they did do it differently. They had their own piece of legislation that was brought in, and this government repealed it. We said we would have done the same thing. In our opinion, it went too far in terms of the family farm. Small farming operations could not have operated as efficiently, they claim, as they could have without that piece of legislation being in the way of that small farming setting.

With respect to my friends in the New Democratic Party, however, they were also a party that, shall I say, were very disruptive in terms of labour legislation. That's an understatement. In fact, their legislation, the social contract, was very draconian. It ripped up collective bargaining agreements across this province. In fact, it was unprecedented. No government or party before ever dared do that. It was a labour party, of all things, that did that. So no one in this place can lecture anyone else around what is going on with respect to labour matters, certainly not the NDP.

This current government, on the other hand, has been very draconian when it comes to the labour movement. They've gone to the other extreme, making it almost impossible for the labour movement to organize workers and to have first contracts and to reach collective bargaining agreements.

So I think there is room somewhere in this province for compromise, to recognize that balance is necessary, that balance is absolutely important when it comes to the workplace, and that's what's missing in Ontario today—balance.

We would go further in terms of legislation dealing with agricultural employees, and we would attempt to strike a better balance. So we support this bill, but with reservations and concerns, which I have attempted to outline here today. I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bisson: Interesting comments. Let me do it in reverse order. First of all, the member talks about how we were draconian with the labour movement when we were in government. I guess giving workers the right to have anti-scab legislation in this province is about as draconian as you get. I guess giving workers the right to control their own pension boards was being draconian. The list goes on. Yes, we did do the social contract, but I will argue, and most workers will argue and most leaders of those unions affected will argue today, far better the social contract than seven years under the Harris Tory government that basically has whacked unions and workers in this province. So I stand proud of our record. I don't try to run away from it whatsoever.

When it comes to the issue of the commonality, he made a point that I thought was interesting. He tried to make an analogy between how family businesses were analogous to the family farm, and I agree with him. But how many small family businesses have been organized by unions out there because people have the right to organize a small family business? Hardly any. I don't know of any in my riding and I don't know any in the dealings that I've had where a small family business, where the family is employed in the small family business, has joined a union. That's our point. Workers are not going to go out and organize the family farm, just as workers don't go out and organize the small family business, where they have the right to organize. This is our argument with this legislation.

Our legislation was about giving all workers a right to organize. Let them decide who the heck they should organize. In most cases, I'd say 99.9%, they're not going to organize the family farm or the small family business.

Then he made another comment, which I'm not going to have a chance to comment on now; I'll wait for my speech, which is coming up next. But I just say to the Liberal Party, you can't suck and blow at the same time. That's what you're doing on this thing. You can't on the one hand stand with workers and say that some of us have the right to organize sometimes and then on the other hand say we don't have the right.

1650

Mr Phillips: I wanted to compliment my colleague and say, as he pointed out, probably the most dramatic thing done to the labour movement was indeed the tearing up of the contracts under the NDP. Those were signed contracts that were supposed to be sacrosanct, according to the NDP. The NDP said, "The times changed and we had to do it. We had no choice." I understand that's the argument, but as my colleague pointed out, that was the fact. If you look historically at it, there's no question. Therefore it's difficult to take them at their word when we have that on the record.

The second thing I'd say, as my colleague pointed out, the member who commented on my member's comments said, "There won't be any organization of the family farm. What are you worried about? It's just not going to happen." If you think that's not an appropriate thing to happen, I gather you're saying the bill should be amended to allow it to happen, but it just simply won't happen. You can't suck and blow. You can't say that the small family farm is not an appropriate environment for a union and then say, "But the bill should be amended to permit that to happen." You can't have it both ways. The NDP can't have it both ways in this matter. You're going to have to make your mind up. If you believe, when you go and knock on the door of a family farm, that they have the right to continue to run their operation the way they want to, you've got to say that, and so far you haven't.

I wanted to compliment my colleague here, who laid out our concern and how specifically we would deal with it. We're voting in favour of the bill, but we would deal with our concerns in the way he outlined.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have with us in the members' gallery two visitors from northwestern Ontario from the Pwi-di-goo-zing Ne-yaa-zhing Advisory Services, which is based in Fort Frances. They are Mr Jim Leonard II, the executive director, and Mr Tom Bruyere, the economic development adviser. I know the House will want to join with me in welcoming them to the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order but we welcome you to our session.

Mr Colle: I just want to thank my colleague from York South-Weston for his very balanced and very thoughtful presentation on this bill. Given that the member for Northumberland mentioned the apples in Northumberland and the member for Halton mentioned the products in his wonderful part of Ontario, I'm surprised he didn't mention the Weston farmers' market, which is at Weston Road and Lawrence, where every year people come to get locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables at the GO station on Weston Road. The farmers from the GTA bring their products there.

His main thing was to say that we on this side are sensitive to the unique position the family farm has in Ontario and the traditions it stands for. That is why we've supported this legislation, because there is a very tenuous state of affairs for a lot of farm families and their farms. The feedback we've got is that the farm community and

their spokespersons support this type of legislation. They feel that they need this for their peace of mind and to operate as they have done. So that's why the member for York South-Weston has said that we have looked at this bill and we think it is the right thing to do and we're willing to support it. We haven't said it's perfect, but it's a step in a direction that we think is fair.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I'm pleased to provide my comments. I'm pleased to see that we have the support of the Liberal Party for the bill we have before us. We certainly weren't expecting the NDP to support this bill, not that they don't care about the family farm, but I do believe that perhaps there is a lack of understanding on the part of that party on just how the family farm functions and how important it is that there is a level playing field for these businesses—in fact the first small businesses that there were—and the importance of protecting the investment these small businesses have.

In my riding of Oak Ridges, I'm pleased to say that in the part of that riding that is rural, the township of Whitchurch-Stouffville, we have everything from cash crops to dairy farms and, talk about strawberry fields, probably some of the best strawberry fields in the entire province.

I grew up in the town of Leamington in Essex county in southwestern Ontario. Throughout the time I went to school, I often spent my summers picking tomatoes. I know what it's like in that particular part of this province and how important it is that we have reasonable labour frameworks within which these small businesses can in fact count on their employees to be on the job at those very critical times in the course of a year when it's time to harvest. It's not like other businesses where you can allow the inventory to just simply sit and wait out a strike of the employees. We have to be understanding of the special needs of the farming community. I believe this bill does that, and I invite all members to support it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York South-Weston has two minutes to respond.

Mr Cordiano: I want to go back to the point made by my colleagues in the New Democratic Party because I think it's important to recognize that if there isn't a problem with exempting the family farm—they say under their legislation workers would not organize to unionize the family farm—then what's the problem with recognizing that in legislation, where you exempt it?

Mr Bisson: Let workers decide.

Mr Cordiano: Why not have that in legislation if there's no fear of that happening? Some of these family farms perhaps have part-time workers who work seasonally. Sometimes the number of employees grows to 10 or 15. It's still, in my opinion, a small business. So we would like to exempt that, because it is a small operation. It doesn't just include members of the family. It may extend beyond that to 10 or 15 employees on a seasonal basis. That is why we in the Liberal Party understand the need for exempting that small family operation, because sometimes it does grow to 10 or 15 employees.

So I say to the NDP I think it's unreasonable that you would suggest that this won't happen, there won't be an organized movement to unionize the family farm. That could happen in fact where there are 10, 15 or 20 employees. We don't believe that should happen under those circumstances. However, if there are 200 employees and it's a factory farm, then certainly they have the right to organize and to have a collective bargaining agreement under certain circumstances. That's what we're saying in our legislation. I think this is very clear. There is no confusion about it. I think it's achievable. It's balanced legislation that we would like to see brought forward in the future, and we'll do it when we form the government.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I've been waiting with anticipation to have an opportunity to speak to this because I wanted to go through about how we got to where we're at and really what's at stake here. Let's just very succinctly try to put forward the case.

In Ontario for a number of years, up until 1994, workers in the agricultural sector working either on family farms or agricorp farms, or large corporation farms as others call them, did not have the right to organize. They were barred, by way of lack of legislation in this province, from the right of every other worker in this province to go out and organize under a trade union.

Surely we must agree in this Legislature that one of the fundamental rights we have in a democracy is the right to associate. If we don't, in this democratic system, in this democracy, have the right to associate as individuals, how truly can this be a democracy?

Prior to 1994, prior to Bob Rae and the NDP, workers in this province who worked in the agricultural sector did not have the right to organize, so we gave them that right. What has happened since then is that the Tories and Liberals, when they were in opposition to the NDP, said, "This is all about organizing the family farm." I'm going to come to that point a little bit later, but my point and what I was trying to say earlier is quite simple. It's not the family farm, by and large, that's going to go out and get organized. The individual family members who work on the farm certainly aren't going to try to organize dad or mom. If they do, dad probably deserves to be organized, right?

1700

But on the other issue, if mom and dad's farm happened to have some workers who are migrant workers—10 or 15 strong—or a number of workers who happened to be seasonal or salaried employees, the reality is that those small organizations aren't going to get organized, by and large, for two reasons. One, quite frankly, is that most of the trade unions don't want to organize small units because they are very expensive to service. But the bigger reason is that historical fact has showed us that small units—and I just use the small business sector, the independents, as an example—the small, independent business sector doesn't get organized even though those workers have the right to organize. So as I look around

my riding and you look around yours, how many small, independent businesses that are either family-owned or small partnerships have been organized by any trade union, even though those workers have the right to organize? Probably very few, if any.

What our legislation basically said was that all workers in the agricultural sector have the right to organize. Specifically, we did it because there are now large, industrial farms, large processing facilities on farms that employ 200 and 1,000 people. We said that because of the health and safety concerns in that sector and because those people traditionally are underpaid, vastly underpaid, and their working conditions are awful, they should have the same right as anybody else to organize. So we passed our legislation and we said, "Yes, those workers should have the right to organize." I'm proud that we did that as the New Democratic Party. Truly, if we believe in democracy, we must give all citizens in our democracy the same rights.

Now, the Conservative government got elected in 1995 and one of the first things they did was strip the right of workers to organize in the agricultural sector by repealing the NDP legislation. So what happened? Under a charter challenge by—I'm trying to remember the gentleman's name. I think it is Dunbar.

Mr Kormos: Thomas Dunmore.

Mr Bisson: Dunmore. Under Thomas Dunmore there was a challenge that eventually became a charter challenge put before the courts. The argument they made was a very simple one. You know what? The Liberals and Tories should listen to this, because this is about fundamental rights given to us under the charter. The argument was that for the Tories to repeal that law violated the freedom of association guaranteed under section 2(d) of the charter. One of the basic rights we have is the right to associate, and that means the right to join a trade union. We as legislators here, not us the NDP, because we voted against your repeal, but you the Tories under Mike Harris took away that right from individuals. So Mr Dunmore eventually ended up at the Supreme Court and argued that his rights had been violated under the charter, that he had lost his right to associate and, further, that the right of equal protection and benefit of the law under section 15 of the charter had been violated. That's because one of the basic things we have in our society of Canada, under our democratic system and the protections we've got under the charter and our Constitution, is basically that we have equal protection and benefit of law. That means that all citizens are of the same class. I don't mean white, black, brown, red or yellow. I mean that we have the same rights and privileges as all other citizens under the law.

Because a right had been granted and they were included as having those rights under the law, what you did created them as a different class of workers. So they went before the Supreme Court of Canada and the Supreme Court said, "We agree with Mr Dunmore that in fact the rights of individuals have been violated under the

charter.” Therefore, they ordered the province of Ontario to redress the issue by introducing legislation.

So what you have done here is to trample on the rights of individuals. If a government is not going to listen to the Supreme Court, who the heck are they going to listen to? We know you’re not listening to members of the opposition. We know the cabinet doesn’t listen to members of the Tory backbench, and we certainly know you don’t listen to the public. But certainly to God, at least you listen to the Supreme Court of Canada, I would think. Wake up over there.

So now we are faced with this challenge. The Tories didn’t want to give workers the right to organize because, as many people have said in this debate over the course of the day—as a matter of fact, Mr Galt got up with pride and talked about how his government’s initiatives are all about decertifying workers from their unions. So we know what your agenda is. It’s in Mr Galt’s own words, and I’ve heard it from other members of this assembly on the Tory side, and some Liberals, I would add.

What we’ve got is that the government said, “We’ve got to scramble. Again we’ve messed it up.” How many times have they come into the Legislature with laws that they have to try to fix because they’ve done it wrong or they’ve repealed somebody’s rights? I won’t go through that, but the list is long. It’s a long litany of things you’ve done.

But now you bring legislation and you say, “OK. We’re not going to give people the right to join a union, because we, the Tories, hate unions.” Imagine that: a worker having the right to join a union and actually negotiate with his employer and get a collective agreement, have an arbitration process, have the right to hear a grievance. “Oh, we don’t want workers having those rights,” say the Conservatives. “We’re going to let them form an association.” Nice word: “association.” So the only rights the worker has, if he or she joins an association, is to go to the employer and say, “Please, Mr Employer, would you listen to my grievance?” “Get the hell out of here.” And there’s nothing you can do.

Yes, you said under the legislation that they can go to your tribunal under Ag and Food, but my God, the tribunal is a joke. There’s no precedent of labour legislation or labour arbitration going before the tribunal at Ag and Food. It doesn’t have the same weight as the Ontario Labour Relations Board. You know as well as I do that it’s stacked with a bunch of Tories. Certainly they’re not going to listen to the grievances of those pesky workers in the agricultural sector.

What you’re in effect doing is saying to workers, “The Supreme Court of Canada says you’ve got the right to have a union. We disagree with the Supreme Court. We’ll say you can join an association, but we won’t give you any rights, once you do join an association, to deal with your grievances.” I say to you, shame.

Then the Tories come in and introduce that legislation in the House. It really was an abysmal day in Ontario. The Conservatives introduced legislation that says, “We treat agricultural workers as a different class of workers.”

You got up with great pride: “Look at us. We’re tough guys. We’re doing it again to the working people. Those agricultural workers, be gone with them.”

Then the Liberals didn’t even have the gall to get up and vote one way or another. When the vote came, we know where the Tories stood. They stood against the workers. We know where the NDP stood. We stood in our place and voted against your legislation at first reading. But what did the Liberals do? The Liberals didn’t even vote. They sat on their hands. Why? They didn’t want to be seen as voting against workers, because they’re trying to suck up to the labour movement.

I’ll tell you, there’s some sucking going on over there sometimes. The labour movement should give their head a shake, and I’ll say it here, for ever associating with these clowns. They’ve never had a record of protecting workers in the province of Ontario. Thank God 90% of the labour movement still understands that. But that 10% that does talk to the Liberals, give your heads a shake. You should be ashamed, as trade unionists. They’ve done nothing but try to screw workers since they’ve been in office, for the time they’ve been there.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I take back the vicious word that the member talks about, but needless to say, they haven’t exactly been worker-friendly. But enough said of that.

They didn’t have the gall to stand up and vote in this House. Instead, they sat on their hands because they wanted to be seen as pro-farmer and at the same time pro-worker. They tried to have it both ways.

I have to laugh, because the other day the leader of the official opposition accused the Premier of walking the fence. I sat back here and said, “Oh, my God. The Liberals accusing Eves of walking the fence? He ain’t walking no fence. I know what side he’s on, and I know what side I’m on. Give them guys in the Liberal Party a saddle, because they’re trying to walk on both sides at the same time, and the last time I checked, that hurts. You need a saddle.” You should be ashamed. The Liberal Party can’t make up their mind one way or another.

Let’s deal with the details of where we’re at. The argument now is, by the Tories and the Liberals—because the Liberals are in bed with the Tories on this one yet again—they’re saying, “This is all about organizing the family farm.”

Let me try to explain it to you if you don’t understand it. Workers in this province have had the right to organize in the industrial and business sectors for many years. There’s nobody that can prevent a union organizer from talking to workers who work in the small business sector, or small employers generally. It could be a welding shop, it could be a retail store, it could be McDonald’s, it could be whatever. And there’s nothing that prevents a worker from talking to a union; they have the right to organize.

1710

I ask you, how many workers in the small business sector, how many workers who work for employers, be it in the industrial sector or retail, that are small in size—you know, five, 10, 15 employees—have joined unions?

The certification rate and the organizing rate in those sectors is almost nil, because in reality smaller businesses, I would agree with the government, tend to run a fairly efficient ship.

If I'm working for an individual employer, I know that person. On a daily basis, I talk to the owner as I walk through the door. If I have a grievance, I deal with my employer. I say, "Hey, Charlie, you know last week when you gave me my paycheque? I was short an hour." "Oh, Jeez. Sorry, Gilles. I'll fix it up for you." There is a certain efficiency of small business when it comes to dealing with workers. It's not that workers always get the best shake, but workers by and large feel, "Well, you know what? Charlie, the boss, doesn't treat me too badly; I don't need to organize." If I don't like it I can go off and go somewhere else because the job is normally lower paid than other jobs, and it's easier to get those kinds of jobs. So those workers, even though they've had the right to organize for years, by and large have not organized.

The same is true in the agricultural sector. If the family farm is threatened about being organized, then who's the one who's going to do the organizing? Is it the sons and the daughters of Mr and Mrs Farmer who are running the family farm? I'm just trying to picture this, right? You take the Lefebvre farm, and all of a sudden Mr and Mrs Lefebvre, who have four children who work on the farm and they've got a couple of employees who happen to be there who do some seasonal work, are under threat of being organized? I don't think so. And if they are under the threat of being organized by their children, maybe dad should get organized. Maybe dad has to have some sort of limits on him when it comes to how he treats his children. But the reality is, that's not the case. There was not a single case in the time the legislation was there where a family farm was organized in that kind of environment.

The bigger agricorp farms, the mushroom plants, the large agricultural businesses that we have today that are not the moms and pops who hire basically workers and migrant workers in big numbers are the ones that are going to get organized, and even that's hard to do. How many migrant workers know their rights under the Canadian system of law? The migrant workers by and large don't know their rights and they're pretty afraid. When UFCW or somebody goes out in the field and tries to organize the agricultural workers, it's a tough go. Have any of you ever worked as a union organizer? I have. Imagine walking up on the family farm, as you call it, or the agricorp farm that has 200 or 300 migrant workers picking strawberries, and I'm out there as a union organizer for UFCW saying, "Sign my union card." They're going to be so afraid of me they're going to be running and hiding under the strawberry bushes, because most of them don't understand their rights. But every now and then people start to understand they do have some rights and they do have some power, and they eventually organize.

My point to you is simply this: what's wrong with that? Pray tell, what is wrong with workers having the

right to organize? I accept that the employer has certain rights and privileges as the owner of the business, but you also have to accept that workers should also have some rights and privileges. That's what democracy's about; it's about striking that balance. I say to the government, give your head a shake. This is really not a class act, what you're doing here. It's really undemocratic, in my view.

The other thing I just want to say is that the government has really got to give their head a shake on this, and I've got to repeat it. This is a question of fundamental human rights. Either we accept we live in a democracy, we say we like our democracy, and we allow it to flourish, or we take it apart bit by bit. I tend, as a social democrat—you called me a socialist; I wear that as a badge of honour. If being a socialist means I care that workers should have the right to organize, well, damn it, I'm proud to call myself a socialist. What the heck are you?

I say to you across the floor, this is about basic human rights. It's about the rights given to people under our charter. You know what's going to happen? You are going to have your majority and pass this legislation if you get your way, but we'll be back before the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court will strike down this law again, because it's wrong.

I'm saying to you, get out from underneath your rhetoric. Stop drinking the Kool-Aid in the caucus room. Start using your heads and really think about who the workers are who organized under the NDP legislation. There weren't very many instances where people did organize, but where they did organize, probably there was good reason for it.

The other point I want to make is that you're trying to tell people that under our legislation, when the crop was in the field about to be picked, workers would all go out on strike, that they would use this and would cripple the industry.

First of all, that doesn't happen, by and large. Those are very rare circumstances. But the point is that under the legislation we put in place, we said, "Where there's a dispute and it's unresolved within the season when we're actually harvesting the crop, there would be an arbitration process so we don't disrupt the removal of the crop from the fields." We understood as a government, as we understand now, that there needs to be a mechanism to make sure that happens. We can't cripple the harvest. We understand that. That's why we put in place in the legislation, when we did it, a process of arbitration. Certainly to God you're not against the process that basically says that workers should get a fair hearing when it comes to their grievances.

I only say one other thing, and I think it's very important to say. I may have the years wrong, but within the period, I believe, from 1990 to 1996 in Canada, we had over 1,000 workers who were killed on farms across this country. One of the issues around this whole thing for us as New Democrats is that we know that where workers are organized, there is a better mechanism for health and

safety, because we have a mechanism by way of our unions to organize health and safety committees, train people and get people to understand their rights. When you have an industry that had over 1,000 people killed in a six-year period, certainly to God it must mean to you, as it does to me, that we do have a problem, and that one fatality is too many. One of the things we need to do is to make sure we accord those workers the same rights as other workers in the industrial sector and other sectors of our province that have the right to organize.

I say again in closing, this is all about basic human rights. Certainly to God the Liberals and the Tories can't stand against the right of individuals to basically associate and to join a union.

The last point, in the last 30 seconds I have: I say to the Liberals, shame again. I've talked about this before. You didn't even have the guts to stand up and vote one way or another on this bill because you tried to suck and blow at the same time. I say to the Liberal Party, you should be ashamed. Stand up and be counted. Tell us either you're against the workers or you're with the workers. Let's see how you vote on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I listened very closely to the member for Timmins-James Bay, and I must say it's very clear where he and his party stand in regard to workers. There's no question they have been very clear in their message, I believe, from the day their party came into existence.

I was looking at the Globe today. I just want to read something here that I found interesting. It's "A Call to Farms," and it's very appropriate that I read it in today.

"In a society whose citizens increasingly think that food comes from supermarkets, farmers are forgotten people." I think that's something we all have to remember. "Farmers hold an important key to our society. The next time you drive past a farmer out standing or working in his field, give him a wave, because really, he is your friend." It goes on to state the troubles that farmers have in regard to enduring skyrocketing equipment costs and ruthless and mercenary competition from their counterparts in the United States and Europe.

I believe what we want to do is recognize that what farmers do is very important to the people of Ontario. They contribute. They provide us with the food necessary so that we can become self-sufficient. I believe it's very important that we keep that in mind when we're debating this bill, Bill 187, regarding family farms, because there's no question that we need to protect the family farm.

1720

Mr Colle: I heard the member from Timmins-James Bay basically trying to tell us again that they know best, that socialists, as they call themselves, know best. I think the whole world has seen that the isms of this world do not work because they forget that individuals sometimes have different opinions and new opinions and can think for themselves.

Frankly, on this side of the House, as Liberals we are proud to stand up and say that we look at legislation and

try to see what is best for the people the legislation will affect. We don't have all the answers, the instant answers and the ideological answers the member from Timmins-James Bay has. Sorry. We don't have that. He is so quick to condemn others who disagree with him. On this side of the House, the Liberals who are with Dalton McGuinty think they owe it to the people of Ontario to consider what their concerns are before you pass legislation, to ask people, not just to vote on an ideological bent that serves the ideology rather than the need. Sometimes you have to look at a bill, see what's in it and discuss it before you put up your hand because you're told to put up your hand or because of some ism you believe in.

I think that's where most Ontarians are. They're not with the far right, as our friends across the way there, and they're not with the far left, as my friend from Timmins-James Bay is. They're somewhere where they believe they have a right to be heard.

Mr Kormos: You see, workers do think for themselves. The workers at Highline Mushrooms in Leamington, Ontario, after the New Democratic Party gave them the right, the legislative structure to form a union, exercised that right. Two hundred workers thought for themselves. Highline Mushrooms—production of 30 million pounds this year, high technology, a heavy machinery operation—is not the family farm, it's a factory.

Those workers, who remain at risk in one of the most dangerous occupations in this province, in this country, with incredibly high rates of people being murdered and maimed on the work site, poisoned by the pesticides, at Highline Mushrooms exercised their right to form a union so they could collectively bargain around issues. Probably the single, most important issue was the issue of occupational health and safety. Indeed, Tom Dunmore says that as soon as the union was formed, the company, Highline Mushrooms, started to pay a little better attention to workplace safety.

None of that guff about the family farm. We know about the family farm. That's why the National Farmers Union opposes this Conservative legislation, the one the Liberals are supporting, because the National Farmers Union knows this government has done precious little to protect the family farm from the predatory, big corporate mega-farms, as often as not with their corporate bases in the United States of America, that pose as great or greater a threat to the family farm than the right to organize ever did.

Workers on the family farm aren't about to organize. The family farm, as the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledges, is becoming more and more a romantic memory. The reality is big corporate agribusiness.

Mr Cordiano: I say again to my friends in the New Democratic Party that this is precisely why the family farm needs to be exempted in legislation. We agree that the factory farm should be included in legislation that would protect workers, that would give workers the right to organize and to have a collective bargaining agreement in place. We believe that is the right thing to do. The

200-worker factory farm should be brought under that type of legislation. We agree that should be the case.

However, we also recognize—I have to say this, obviously, and we're having this debate this afternoon—that party is not recognizing the importance of the family farm, the real need for small operations and their unique situation to agriculture, the uniqueness of the family farm where it's seasonal in nature, where the number of employees increases as a result of the seasonal nature of the family farm, getting the harvest in.

We say to you that there is a need for an exemption and that's why you need this balance in the legislation that isn't there, wasn't there under the previous government, won't be there under this piece of legislation. We will support this legislation because it moves toward that end.

However, as I said earlier, when we form the government, we will bring in our own legislation that will bring a proper balance to this very critical area. The family farm needs to be exempted. We need to recognize there are unique features involved with the family farm, and I think that party fails to—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bisson: I want to be somewhat calm in my comments, but I just say to the member from York South-Weston that we know what side of the fence the Tories are on; they're clearly on the side of the fence that doesn't support agricultural workers. We know where the NDP is; they're clearly on the side of the fence that supports agricultural workers and the right to organize. The Liberals are trying to run at that fence with one foot on one side and one on the other. The last time I checked—"Ow." Give your heads a shake and jump on one side of the fence or the other; you can't have it both ways.

You're saying, all of a sudden, that if you're the government, you're going to give a certain class of workers in some agricultural sectors the right to organize. Wow, is that big of you. You don't understand the basic premise of what was in the Supreme Court decision. They're saying that when it comes to law, you can't have two different classes of people. That's what you're purporting to do with the legislation that you say you would pass if you're the government.

I say, workers beware, because we know how you voted both times. When the NDP government gave the right to organize to workers in this province in 1994, Liberals stood with pride and voted against it. When the government brought in legislation that scrapped the workers' right to organize, you got up and voted for that too. We know where you're at. I'm just saying, jump on one side or the other. Run with the Tories, I don't care; if that's what you believe, I'll respect that. But don't tell me you're going to run on both sides at the same time, because the last time I checked, you can't suck and blow at the same time.

To the member from Nipissing, I want to thank him for his comments. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence

said people can choose for themselves. That's exactly the whole point of this legislation. It's about giving the right to workers to choose if they want to join a union, yes or no. Don't come in here and say, "We're the Liberal Party and we're going to give the right to choose. You're trying to dictate." We want workers that decide for themselves. What's wrong with that?"

Thanks to the member from Niagara Centre—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr McDonald: It gives me great pleasure to stand today in the Legislature and join in the debate on Bill 187. I want to say to all the people who are watching at home in my riding of Nipissing how honoured I am to be here tonight representing them. It gives me great pleasure to stand here and speak to the Legislature on what we believe in.

As you sit watching TV, maybe eating your dinner—hopefully it's Ontario-grown vegetables and fruit and beef and milk—we want to support the farmers of Ontario. It's really important that when we go shopping we support the farmers of Ontario because, truly, they're part of us. They're part of what makes our province great. I know that in Nipissing we have initiatives to shop locally. What I'm saying to the people of Nipissing and the people of Ontario is, please support Ontario products because it creates jobs in our great province.

I'm proud to be part of this government that is introducing balanced legislation. It's important that we have the word "balanced" in that statement because that's what life in Ontario is all about. It's about balance; it's about respecting each other's wishes and thoughts and beliefs.

1730

I listened to the member from Timmins-James Bay, and he was very clear where he stood; there is no question. You do respect individuals who take a stance for what they believe in, and stick to it. I too represent a significant advance in facilitating employee-employer relationships. That's key to any business. That's key to farms; that's key to any business that you run. No matter if it's in northern Ontario, southern Ontario, in the province of Ontario, in Canada, the United States, you must have a good relationship with employees and employers, and that makes the workplace all that much better for everyone.

We need to recognize the unique characteristics of Ontario's agricultural industry and its very important contribution to the quality of our life. At issue is the freedom of association, as guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that's key. This bill will extend legislative protections to agricultural workers to ensure that their rights to form and join unions can be exercised in a meaningful way.

Before we introduced this proposed legislation we talked to the people it would affect the most—members of the agricultural industry, representatives of organized labour—and we heard that the Ontario agricultural employers value the relationship they already have with their employees, and that goes back to good relationships

between employees and employers. I think it's crucial to any organization, any business, to the province of Ontario and the country of Canada that we co-operate with one another in the best interests of all, that this province could prosper and create additional employment.

We've heard that it's important to treat all agricultural employees in a consistent manner—there's no question—in a consistent manner that's fair to all. We also heard that Ontario's agricultural production must not be vulnerable to the risk of potential labour disruptions. When you think of family farms and farms in general, they really just get one paycheque a year, and that's when they bring their crop in. That's key: they work 12 months of the year for one paycheque.

You can imagine the average person out there in Ontario if you said to them, "You're going to work all year, you're only getting one paycheque and that's only if you can bring your crops in." I think that's kind of crucial to what this legislation's speaking to. Here are these family farms that are investing huge amounts of money and time and effort into their farms to collect one paycheque, just one paycheque in a year. I think that's a very important fact.

When we drafted this bill, we remembered what we heard. So the proposed legislation before us today does respect individual and constitutional rights of agricultural employees while having regard to the unique characteristics of agriculture.

This proposed legislation would enable agricultural employees to (1) exercise their right to form and join an employees' association; (2) participate in the lawful activities of that association; (3) assemble; and (4) make representations to the employer through the employees' association.

So it is balanced. We talked about balance and I want to go back, because I believe that in the long run, if we operate the province of Ontario in a balanced fashion, if we look after everyone in the province of Ontario, that's fair and enables every individual an opportunity to succeed.

This proposed legislation would ensure that we could do all this free from interference, coercion and discrimination. In other words, the employees and the employer need to be free from interference, coercion and discrimination. I'll go back again: fundamentally, employees and employers have to get along, to co-operate, to work together, because that, in the long run, will provide unbelievable participation in the province of Ontario for individuals to grow, to create prosperity.

I want to emphasize that the proposed legislation contains no restrictions on an employees' association other than that the association has to be comprised of agricultural employees. That's pretty straight stuff. Employee associations can be comprised of agricultural employees from any number of family farms. They can be organized on any basis that the employees want. I think that speaks to balance. It could be a branch of another organization, including a branch or local of a union. A union or other organization could assist employees in forming an em-

ployees' association, whether the association was formed as a branch or a local of the union or other organization or as a separate association.

To be clear, while an agricultural employee may join an association that is a union, the proposed legislation does not extend collective bargaining to agricultural workers.

Also worth noting: while the proposed legislation is not about workplace health and safety—and we've heard it mentioned a few times. This isn't any part of the legislation that's being introduced, because health and safety are key to all businesses, regardless of whether they're farms or not. Above all, we believe that all workplaces should have those conditions of health and safety that protect everyone who might work there, enter the workplace or purchase goods in that workplace. Health and safety are the number one key, and I don't think anybody's arguing that fact. I believe that we all support the fact that all workplaces need to have health and safety as the number one key. This is directed at agricultural employees' rights of association. It would enhance the ability of employees and employers to communicate—that's co-operate, but communication is very important—about terms and conditions of employment, including any concern about workplace health and safety, which is key to any workplace. We all support a safe and healthy workplace; there isn't anyone who will argue against that case. Everybody believes that is the best way to run a business, to run a farm. No question about it; we all support that.

This bill would also provide recourse should an individual or an association believe that their rights have been contravened. It's right there in the legislation. It would give the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal the authority—now that's a long tribunal word—to hear complaints about alleged contraventions of the act and to issue remedial orders. I think that's very clear. Should somebody not agree with what's happening, they can take their complaints or their concerns to this tribunal so that they can be heard and dealt with fairly.

The proposed legislation would also protect a farm's most valuable asset or assets, like land, livestock and crops—you can't not milk cows day after day. These are animals that need care. You just can't ignore them like a box of cereal on a shelf. These are animals that would notice the fact that nobody has walked into the barn for a month. I think this is a key part of this legislation, that it protects animals and livestock; and I think that's not lost on anyone—by recognizing an employer's right to control access to his property—not to prohibit access, mind you, but to control it.

Any person or group could apply to the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal for access to the family farm property where agricultural employees reside for the purpose of encouraging the employees to join a union. When dealing with such applications, the tribunal would take into consideration human health and safety—which I don't hear anybody arguing; I believe everybody supports it, and I firmly do—normal agricultural prac-

tices, animal health and safety, which I just spoke to, and plant health, planting and harvesting, biosecurity needs, and privacy or property rights. These are essential considerations to ensure that normal agricultural operations are not unduly interfered with.

1740

The proposed legislation would protect the rights of Ontario's agricultural employees. I know the member for Timmins-James Bay fundamentally does not agree with this legislation. He has been very clear in his thoughts and has articulated very well where he stands. I respect that. I respect that the NDP platform is very clear. We hear that day in and day out here.

Having said that, on our side, we're concerned about the family farm. We're concerned about the fact that our society sometimes believes food comes from supermarkets. As we move to this economy where we're rushed and always going places, taking kids to hockey or to soccer, all of a sudden supermarkets become where we think food comes from.

Unfortunately for farmers, individuals in our society sometimes don't see how hard they work, the long hours they put in to be able to put their product in those stores so as to collect one paycheque a year. That's very important from our point of view. I think of a family farm where the mother and father and the kids go out and work, and they're depending on that one paycheque to get them through the whole next year for their schooling, their clothes, and to pay the mortgage and credit card bills like the rest of us all have to. I think it's key. We have to at least take that into consideration.

As I said, the proposed legislation would protect the rights of Ontario's agricultural employees. The proposed legislation would also recognize the unique characteristics of Ontario's agricultural operations. This proposed legislation is careful and appropriately balanced.

I have spent a lot of time going over this bill, preparing my notes, listening to the debates we've had in this Legislature, and talking to farmers in my area, the wonderful riding of Nipissing. I heard very clearly that these family farms depend on that one paycheque to get through. I can't imagine anyone wanting to take that one paycheque away from a family that's worked all year, that needs it to send their kids to school, to put clothes on their back and provide food for the table.

I would like to encourage all those who are watching today, when they go shopping next week, to buy products made in Ontario. That will help not only the family farms in Ontario, but the employees who are employed by these family farms. In the end, it's important that we look after the residents of Ontario. That's why we stand here today, that's why we're proud to be MPPs in Ontario, because we stand for the people of Ontario and we want to see what's in their best interests.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to comment on the member's remarks. The Liberal Party position on this is very clear. We are supportive of the family farm. We think the bill is negligent. We think there's a part missing from the

bill. We've said we're supporting this bill because it's either yes or no. In those facilities where there are a significant number of workers in essentially a factory farm, there should be the right to organize.

I must say I'm always intrigued by the NDP, because I know they're going to be knocking on family farm doors and saying, "Don't you worry." What the NDP says is, "We know the family farm won't be organized, so don't worry about it. Make it possible to do it, but it won't happen." You can't have it both ways. You can't suck and blow, as somebody said. You've got to kind of give your head a shake, an expression I've heard often from one of the members.

To the member who spoke, we abstained when this was introduced for first reading. I would just say to the public, and I hope the public recognizes this, that none of the members of the Legislature, apart from the minister—maybe the critics get the bill for about one minute—has seen the bill when it's introduced. So you get into this position where, if you vote in favour on first reading and decide after you look at it that you're against it, people say, "Oh, there you go, changing your mind."

I actually think the Legislature should look at the rules we operate by around here. I have no difficulty in saying that yes, we abstained when the bill was introduced. None of our caucus had seen the bill. Perhaps the critic had seen it for one minute. I think the public understand that things have to happen a little bit differently. They want some thoughtful work around here, not necessarily pure politics.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. I want to make some remarks on the comments made by the member for Nipissing.

The member spent some time talking about the rights the bill provides. He talked about the right to form associations. I want to remind him that we don't need this statute. No one needs this statute, agricultural workers in particular, to form an association. They can do that now. They can do it under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They don't need your statute to give them that. It's a fallacy to tell the public they need this statute to give them that. It's a right they already have.

What we should be talking about here is the right of these folks, agricultural workers, to form trade unions and bargain collectively, because then they would get some real rights to deal with wages and salaries and overtime, and to deal with health and safety. Isn't this a sector of the economy where over 1,000 people are killed every year because there are inadequate health and safety standards? By God, if they had a trade union and had some rights to actually put health and safety in place, some of those people might not have gotten killed, and maybe we can protect some of those workers in the future.

I don't buy the argument that we're here trying to protect the family farm. Please, no one wants to organize a mom-and-pop operation, or mom and pop and some of their relatives. And you know what? When our legis-

lation was enacted, no one did try to organize the family farm. We have had some experience with legislation dealing with agricultural workers having a right to collectively bargain and form a trade union. In the period that legislation was in place, no one tried to organize a family farm. We're talking about mushroom workers, canning workers, 200, 300 or 400 who work in big corporate factories. By God, they should have a right to be organized to protect their interests.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to correct the record. During question period, I may have left the impression that Toronto Hydro was not ready for market opening. Toronto Hydro had a choice of billing approaches that were approved by the regulator, the Ontario Energy Board, and they chose, which was their choice, to adopt a fixed-reference price system and not the spot price past-year system. Toronto Hydro was completely ready for the market opening. I wanted to ensure that was on the record. We have a great relationship with them, and it was important for me to do that.

AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES PROTECTION ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA PROTECTION DES EMPLOYÉS AGRICOLES (continued / suite)

Mr Cordiano: I rise again because it's absolutely critical to reiterate what I said earlier with respect to my friends in the third party and their seeming avoidance of discussing the family farm and the importance it has in our economy. They continue to make the claim that somehow the family farm will not be organized, that if there were legislation in place such as they had when they were in power, the family farm would not be unionized, that it would not lead to that kind of effort by unions.

Be that as it may, the fact is that if there isn't a problem, if there wasn't a problem that this would happen, that this would end up being the case, then why the difficulty in putting it in legislation, which is what we would advocate?

1750

I say again, as a party, we would bring forward additional measures in legislation that would recognize that there has to be an exemption for the family farm. What's wrong with reasonableness? What's wrong with moving forward in a moderate view to recognize the realities that exist in our society? What's wrong with distinguishing between what is the reality and what is some sort of philosophical notion about what society ought to be like?

There's nothing wrong with exempting the family farm. There's nothing wrong with granting that exemption, and it is achievable and it is practical to recognize that in legislation.

I say to my friends in the NDP, when you speak to people on the family farm, make certain you tell them you are against any kind of exemption for them in the future under legislation.

Mr Kormos: Like a few of the other people who have spoken to this, I've been around here and recall the 1994 legislation and the 1992 study papers that led up to it. You will recall that representatives from the agricultural industry rejected the NDP offer to have statutory distinctions between the family farm and agricorp, big factory-style farming, because they wanted to be able to continue to bang the drum of the family farm.

What I find interesting about the comments of my very good colleague who just spoke—well, firstly, I've got to tell you, yes, he's right. We don't get the bill a whole lot of time in advance of first reading, but it's not a very long bill. You're right; we only had it around a couple of minutes before the first reading vote and, by God, I read twice in that two minutes because it's not a long bill. When I saw rights being limited to—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I'm telling you, when I saw rights being limited to being able to associate, to being able to form a club, sort of like the Mickey Mouse Club or any other kind of club, I went, "Boy, this isn't the kind of legislation I want to support. No way." Bingo, I can vote against this sans hésitation, as they say in Timmins-James Bay. No problem whatsoever. It doesn't take a whole lot of time—I read it twice before the first reading vote came around. No problem opposing it.

But fair enough, the Liberals have decided to support it. I understand, it's loud and clear, but then the Liberal rationale saying there should be an exemption for the family farm contradicts their support for the bill because the bill doesn't exempt the family farm from farmers' associations. Clearly, if the Liberals have an agenda, they should be defeating this bill and pursuing their agenda.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nipissing has two minutes to respond.

Mr McDonald: I'd like to thank the members from Scarborough-Agincourt, Nickel Belt, York South-Weston and Niagara Centre for joining in the debate. I must say that the member from Niagara Centre probably has a long career in entertainment when he decides to hang up his hat here in the Legislature because when he gets on his soapbox, he can be very entertaining and very colourful in his comments.

As I said earlier, this legislation's all about balance. It's about employees being treated well. It's about employers being able to bring their crops in and receive that one paycheque. But let's all agree that farmers are our friends. Farmers are the ones who produce safe, healthy products for all of us, create employment in Ontario and help us to be a self-sustaining province.

Let's all admit this: we live in the greatest province in Canada. I think we all agree we do. As I said, we need to work together and look at this situation. I think this is what this debate is all about. It's a very healthy debate. We're very clear where the NDP stands and we're very clear where this side of the House stands. We are on the side of the family farmers who are going to produce the

products we all get to enjoy at a reasonable price that we can all afford.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1756.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
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Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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