



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

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de l'Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 16 June 2003

Lundi 16 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise to inform the House and the people of Ontario that our Sudbury Regional Hospital still has not received capital construction money from the Harris-Eves government. So today I inform the Harris-Eves government, Minister of Health Tony Clement, and all the members on the other side that we have launched a northeastern initiative.

I have mailed out a notice of motion today that I would ask 85 groups across northeastern Ontario to pass. This is an approach that I took several years ago with regard to the four-laning of Highway 69. At that time, it forced the government to make a commitment, or at least an announcement.

Today we are employing the same strategy. We want this government to announce funding for the capital construction of the Sudbury Regional Hospital, a construction project that has been stalled for two years because this government chooses to ignore the funding dilemma within the Sudbury Regional Hospital Corp.

I thank Austin Davey, councillor for the city of Greater Sudbury, who will be bringing it to the council table to ask for support. The 85 other groups—be they business, labour, health care or educational sectors—are going to clearly tell this government, “It’s time that you people pay up. It’s time that the Sudbury Regional Hospital gets back on track. It’s time that this hospital is built.”

METIS CANOE TRIP

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): On June 5 I had the opportunity, along with other dignitaries including Lisa Pigeau-Crawford of the Metis Council and a group of northern Ontarians who were on hand, to meet the Metis Nation canoe expedition’s arrival in North Bay.

This canoe trip retraces the 2,000-kilometre historical canoe route employed by the voyageurs from the northwest some 200 years ago and shows the contribution of the Metis people to the early development of Ontario as they paddle through the communities along the way.

The journey began for the 10 voyageurs—including Travis Tessier, who was born in North Bay—on May 19 from the fur trade museum in Lachine national park in Quebec, paddling a 26-foot replica birchbark canoe 10 to 12 hours a day.

During their two-month trek, they will stop along the way at Ottawa, Pembroke, Deep River, Mattawa and North Bay. The North Bay stop has historic significance, as it has long-lasting ties with the fur trade and was part of the route taken by the voyageurs travelling west into the interior at the head of Lake Superior.

North Bay has also serviced trappers who brought furs from the rivers flowing south into Lake Nipissing. Today, North Bay is one of the few remaining hubs of the North American fur trade, which allows aboriginal people to preserve their traditional way of live and the history associated with it.

My congratulations to all the participants and voyageurs for making this voyage unforgettable.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We are always advised by consumer advocates and legal advisers to read the fine print before purchasing a product or service. That is sound advice not to be ignored. It is advice that should apply to Eves government announcements.

With the usual fanfare and blue backdrop, the Eves Conservatives in May 2002, under relentless pressure from the Ontario Liberal caucus and advocates for people with vision problems, finally, two full years after approval from Health Canada, approved funding for Visudyne for the treatment of macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness after the age of 50.

Just as we are advised to read the fine print for commercial products, however, we should also read the regulations put in place subsequent to any big Conservative announcement. It turns out that very restrictive rules on who is eligible for OHIP-paid macular degeneration treatment mean that in reality only a fraction of those individuals suffering from this debilitating condition are assisted in covering this expense.

After two years of foot-dragging and excuse-making, over half of all patients must reach into their own pockets for very expensive treatment or risk losing their eyesight and their independence.

The lesson is clear: when the Eves Conservatives make a promise or long-term announcement, read the fine print. Unfortunately, those afflicted with macular

degeneration may be unable to do so unless they have the money to pay for a medically necessary treatment. Welcome to Ernie Eves's Ontario.

LEWIS PEARSALL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This weekend, I went to a celebration of the life of Lewis Pearsall, who died on Wednesday, April 30, 2003. Lewis Pearsall was a very dear friend of mine, but more importantly, he was a dear friend to the Riverdale community. We've all lost an activist and friend.

We were shocked when he died, even though he was 82 years old. He showed us all that getting older means getting better and better. I can't tell you in such a short time all the activities Lewis participated in, in the community. He was particularly fond of the Ralph Thornton Centre and put many of his efforts in there.

Just let me tell a few others: his involvement ranged from his participation in the original Toronto Community Ventures, which I started back in the early 1990s—that evolved into the Greater Riverdale Economic Action Together—the alternative curriculum for excluded students; he also helped create the Riverdale Community Development Corp and the Riverdale Community Business Centre, a process that took him over eight years. But Lewis never gave up.

Lewis was a handsome man with a wife whom he dearly loved, and five children. I want to take this opportunity to wish all of them well and extend my sympathies to my dear friend Cecile and their five children, Philip, Marc, Russell, LeeBari and Arlene.

Lewis, we miss you, but we know you're with us somewhere looking down.

1340

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise in the House to support Durham riding constituents regarding the bid for the ITER fusion research facility. ITER is the international thermonuclear experimental reactor.

ITER is an \$18-billion international research project that will examine the next generation of clean, safe, sustainable energy. If Canada were successful in the ITER bid, we would have the opportunity to play a leadership role in the world's largest new international research project.

Consider some of the ITER advantages: thousands of person-years of employment, \$9.4 billion in direct foreign investment, a brain gain of some 250 international scientists, and expansion in key areas of technology and education.

I'm proud to say that the OPG Darlington site in Durham has proven itself to be an ideal location for this research centre. ITER has the full support of business and labour leaders, educators, elected officials and the general public. Just a few of the members' names would be

Mayor John Mutton of the municipality of Clarington, regional chair Roger Anderson, Gary Polonsky, president of Durham College, as well as Bill Harford, president of the Durham Region Labour Council. All Durham MPPs are on record as being in support of ITER. However, ITER is a project with benefits spanning beyond Durham region to Ontario and Canada. It's the next generation of energy technology.

The province of Ontario has had the foresight to agree to a \$300-million investment. However, we need the federal government to show the same level of commitment. Canada has an excellent chance of winning this bid if the federal government shows more support for ITER. On behalf of the citizens of Durham riding, I am asking the federal government to make an important investment in our future and the future of our children. I am calling on the province of Ontario and our fellow colleagues federally to work together in developing the winning bid to bring ITER to Canada.

KINGSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): It was aggravating this weekend when I read this headline in the Kingston Whig Standard: "We are Being Ignored Says [Kingston General Hospital] Director Who Quit."

The article states that the board chair, Ian Wilson, has grown cynical about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and its seeming indifference to the phenomenal local effort that has been made to get restructuring off the ground. In a letter written to the Minister of Health two months ago, Wilson described the board's grave concern about the complete absence of movement on hospital restructuring and the damage to patient care, hospital finances and morale the delay has caused.

Peter Leslie, professor emeritus at Queen's and member of the board of Kingston General Hospital, has also resigned. He cites that the board is more and more frustrated with the province's "ad hoc" system of hospital financing. He states that his resignation and his decision to explain himself publicly are intended to "rouse the ministry from its torpor." In his letter, Leslie also notes that Kingston General Hospital has been forced to consider cutting essential services to ensure its solvency, but refuses to imperil the status of KGH as a teaching hospital or risk closing the medical school.

It is absolutely unacceptable that this Tory government continues to ignore its responsibility to work with the local board to ensure quality services remain intact. Minister, stop ignoring KGH. Answer their letters. Pay what you promised. Their patients and their community deserve your support, not your neglect.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): One of the biggest accomplishments for the residents of Kitchener Centre has been the improvement in our health care community. Over the last eight years, our govern-

ment has taken the necessary steps to ensure that my constituents have access to the highest-quality health care in Ontario. St Mary's General Hospital is one of the best medical centres in the region. The successful campaign to save St Mary's General Hospital has given Kitchener the ability to deal with the needs of our community, including a growing and aging population.

Record investments in health care have given our hospitals the necessary tools to care for their patients. On June 6, our government announced \$420,112 in new funding for St Mary's hospital. This money will be used for a new cardiac technology called drug-eluting stents for cardiac patients. These drugs have been reported to improve outcomes in coronary angioplasty. Our government is funding the use of this new technology for cardiac patients who are at a high risk of suffering narrowing of the arteries after an angioplasty procedure. This technology could improve the quality of life for these patients, as the chances of a repeat procedure may be reduced.

In addition to the new cardiac care unit at St Mary's hospital, this new funding shows our government's continued commitment to improving accessibility to health care by enabling hospitals to deliver services closer to home. The residents of Kitchener Centre will benefit greatly from this new funding.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Last week, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound said that Liberals don't care about families. Excuse me; he hasn't been paying attention.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals care about the growing number of families who have to rely on food banks.

Liberals care about children who suffer medical problems because of your weakening of environmental protection.

Liberals care about families with autistic children who are ignored after they turn six.

Liberals care about children who have to rely on school breakfast clubs for their first meal of the day.

Liberals care about families who despair about the lack of special education services for their children.

Liberals care about families on ODSP who must live \$8,000 below the poverty level.

Liberals cry for the lack of affordable housing, with 55,000 on the waiting list in Toronto alone.

Liberals share the worry of families who can no longer afford post-secondary education for their child.

Liberals are appalled by your government's support for school user fees, which means that children can no longer afford to play on the playground after school.

Liberals are deeply concerned for the families who cannot afford their electricity or gas bills. Liberals worry about families whose jobs are at risk because their employers can't afford your electricity bills.

Liberals wonder why you continue to block Rick Bartolucci's bill to allow the transfer of information between children's aid societies.

Liberals believe it is wrong that families have to worry that their water is safe.

Liberals care deeply about the many families whose total annual income is less than your House leader spent in Europe in one week.

To the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, your government's words say one thing, but your actions speak loudly of your neglect of families.

TOURISM IN NIAGARA

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Unlike the member opposite, who just got up and said how much he cares about all these problems, the people on this side of the floor actually have solutions to these problems and actually address a lot of these problems.

Interjections.

Mr Maves: It's unusual for statements to be heckled when they haven't even let me say what I'm speaking about.

On Friday, Tim Hudak, the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, and the member from Erie-Lincoln and myself convened a tourism summit in Niagara to deal with the difficult year we're having in tourism throughout Canada and Ontario. Everyone who would be constructive was invited to this tourism summit.

There's a perfect storm happening right now. There are the difficulties with 9/11, there are difficulties with SARS, there are difficulties with the Iraq war and, of course, the very unfortunate statements made by the federal Liberals about our good American cousins, which have teamed together to cause difficult problems in tourism this year.

We got together with about 45 different people in the tourism industry, leaders from Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Port Colborne, Fort Erie and St Catharines, throughout the entire region.

Kudos go to all of those people who want to come together to take advantage of the province's \$128-million tourism recovery program and come up with a unified Niagara strategy to help tourism rebound in Niagara and get Niagara citizens back to work.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'INDEMNISATION DES VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to amend the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act / Projet de loi 98, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The bill amends the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act to permit the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations requiring annual cost-of-living adjustments to awards made under this act.

There has not been a change in real compensation to victims of crime since 1986. This bill would provide, first of all, for regulatory power. Later today I will be tabling a resolution to increase the amount for victims on a one-time basis, because I can't do that through private bills.

It's time the government takes victims of crime seriously on these issues.

1350

DAY NURSERIES
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003
MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES GARDERIES

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to allow up to seven children to be cared for in rural areas without requiring a licence under the Act / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin d'autoriser, dans les régions rurales, la garde de sept enfants au plus sans devoir obtenir un permis prévu par la Loi.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The purpose of the bill is to exempt day nurseries and private home daycare agencies that receive or provide care for no more than seven children from the licence requirements of the act, if the nurseries or agencies are located in rural areas or in a town or village with a population of fewer than 3,500.

VISITORS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that you and all members in the House would like to welcome, in the members' gallery visiting here today, Maryann Nargi of Chatham and Marnie Sutherland-Stein of Leamington.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I too have a point of order, Mr Speaker, although you may rule it out of order. I want to introduce Joe Witalis and his partner Sheila Foster. Joe lives in my riding and is here every single day for question period. I also want to introduce his mother, Anna Witalis, who is 84 years old. She took a train up from New York. She's a good

example to all of us. Look at her. Welcome. Thank you for coming today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our friends.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I too have two very special guests with me here today: Danielle and Cameron Healy from King township. Cameron is a student at St Andrew's College and Danielle is a student at Country Day School. They're here spending the day with an MPP to see what it's like. No doubt one of these days they'll be here themselves. Please welcome my guests today.

The Speaker: We welcome our people. The member for Durham was up first.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is also my pleasure and privilege to introduce Richard Pentney, who is a member of the Smart Systems for Health Agency's board of directors. He's seated in the members' gallery. Richard is from Sudbury. It was my opportunity as PA to meet with him earlier today to discuss with him the great job of the delivery of health. I thank Richard for his work on the Smart Systems board.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce Timothy Lewis, who is beside me here; the page's parents, who are in the west gallery, Jamie and Jane Lewis; his grandparents, Beth and Orm McGirr from Sundridge from my riding; and friend Kyle Wood, who are here today visiting.

The Speaker: We welcome the parents. You have a fine son. He's doing a wonderful job with us here today.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 20

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of a very serious incident over the weekend—four teenagers seriously injured as a result of road racing—we have before the House Bill 20, the Road Safety Act, 2003. In light of these circumstances, I would ask unanimous consent for second and third reading of this bill immediately, so that we can get on and have this important legislation in place in the province of Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We ask that it be referred to House leaders, which is the normal process. We weren't given any notice of this. There are a couple of items that I think would merit discussion at that point as well.

Hon Mr Klees: I'm pleased to refer this matter to the House leaders for discussion. It's such an important issue. I would ask, in that case, that the House leaders convene to discuss this possibility.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I appreciate that. Do you still want—

Interjection.

The Speaker: That's fine. OK. We hope the House leaders will be able to negotiate that, and we wish them luck in that endeavour.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last October, Cam Jackson was fired as minister because of his expenses. The Premier promised at that time a review of those expenses. In November, the Premier's office stated that the review was still not complete. Can you tell me, Minister, if the Premier's review of Cam Jackson's expense is complete? If so, what were the results of that review?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I don't have any information about the question that's just been asked by the deputy leader, but I will certainly inquire and I will inform the House.

Ms Pupatello: Deputy Premier, I would like to add items for your perusal and perhaps you can get back to the House.

As you know, Cam Jackson was fired after it was discovered that he billed taxpayers more than \$100,000. Months before Jackson was fired, he attempted to repay \$7,600 of those expenses and say the matter was closed.

I have in my hands Cam Jackson's riding association filing. They show that Jackson didn't pay back those expenses himself; he got his riding association to pick up the tab instead. His riding association paid for expenses that had clearly been marked 'Personal,' as such, when he repaid them to the Legislature. They had so little to do with his work, in fact, that he lost his job for expensing them. Did the Premier's review cover the fact that Cam Jackson billed expenses to his riding association that were clearly personal?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I said to the member opposite after the first question, I will take the question under advisement and we will prepare a response.

Ms Pupatello: Deputy Premier, I think you can see where we're getting here. If you do work on government business, then the ministry should cover those expenses. If you do work for your party, then your party covers those expenses. But if you go out to entertain yourself, you should be paying for it yourself. Cam Jackson clearly didn't do that. While sitting as a cabinet minister in Ernie Eves's government from August to October last year, Cam Jackson was sending his donors the bills for his personal expenses. Political donations, some from the groups and industries that he oversaw as Minister of Tourism, were being used to fluff up his personal lifestyle.

Minister, is this why we give tax credits for political donations, so that cabinet ministers can live this type of lifestyle? That's a serious question. We're looking forward to your opinion.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just like to share with the member opposite that I've been informed that the Premier's office has done a review, and my understanding is that they are presently in discussion with Mr Jackson on this particular subject.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader with respect to this review by the Premier's office. Is the Premier's office aware of your European trip of last summer? Are they aware of the various sources that paid for the participants' expenses on that trip? Did they provide approvals for this practice?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The question is before the Integrity Commissioner. I would wait for the report from the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr Bryant: The Integrity Commissioner is not looking at what the Premier's office knew or did not know. My question is about what you did, and I'm asking for an answer in this House. I don't think it's appropriate to use the Integrity Commissioner's deliberations as a shield to providing the answers. The question is, either you provided and disclosed to the Premier's office all the facts as to who paid for what on this trip and received approval, or you did not disclose all these facts to the Premier's office and withheld them for approval. Which one is it?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think I'll wait for the Integrity Commissioner's report to comment any further on this issue.

1400

Mr Bryant: I say to the minister, you offered last Tuesday to release to the public the letter that you sent to the Integrity Commissioner that triggered his current deliberations. That was six days ago. I would have thought it would take about 60 minutes, not six days, to get your hands on that letter and disclose it to the public.

Why have you still not released a letter that you promised six days ago, and will you release the letter that you wrote to the Integrity Commissioner by the end of question period today?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think, before I get into any undertakings, I'd like to see the report from the Integrity Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Reports in the Globe and Mail indicate that your special assistant, one John Koutoulakis, and his wife accompanied you on your now infamous, taxpayer-funded, five-star tour of Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow. I'm wondering what services Mr Koutoulakis provided that were so vital that you felt compelled to take him and his wife with you at considerable public expense?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I referred that issue to the Integrity Commissioner. I'll wait for his response.

Mr Hampton: I'm not sure that that particular issue was referred to the Integrity Commissioner.

I'll try again. I understand that Mr Koutoulakis has had quite a career trajectory. A few short years ago, I understand, he was selling cars. When you became Minister of Labour, you appointed your friend Mr Koutoulakis to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals

Tribunal. That's an important job. It hears the appeals of injured workers whose lives are on hold.

Of the 23 appeal cases that Mr Koutoulakis heard, he didn't give a decision on 18. He heard the case and then never, ever bothered to give a decision. On five, he gave a decision that was four months late. One injured worker was forced to go on social assistance because Mr Koutoulakis didn't think it was important to give a decision in his case. So I ask you, Minister, why is the public paying for this man's visit to the Champs Élysées?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm pleased with Mr Koutoulakis's work. I've referred all the appropriate documents to the Integrity Commissioner and I await his response.

Mr Hampton: Minister, this is an ankle bracelet; your government advocates that it be used. I'm advocating that maybe we should put one on you so the public can keep track of your junkets and how much public money you're spending. We took a second look at your expense problems of last December. You remember: two of your staffers racked up \$3,300 in other expenses at a very trendy \$600-a-night, ultra-luxury Manhattan hotel. And what name turns up there? Koutoulakis.

This is all public money. It's not a travel slush fund for you and your friends. How do you justify these repeated junkets by you and your friends at public expense?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The Integrity Commissioner reviewed those expenses and he approved them all.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Deputy Premier. All across the province of Ontario, you are hearing from drivers who are concerned about skyrocketing auto insurance premiums. Just today, a young man who requires a car to go to work wrote to me saying that private insurance companies in Ontario are telling him they need to charge \$7,000 a year to give him basic coverage on an eight-year-old vehicle. He says he doesn't understand how he's supposed to come up with that money when he barely makes that amount.

It's common knowledge that auto insurance premiums are exploding because of the dramatic decline in income that insurance companies have experienced because of their losses on the stock market. Deputy Premier, do you think it's all right that this young man and millions of other Ontarians like him are paying through the nose because insurance companies lost money on the stock market?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I will refer that to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I certainly share the honourable member's concern for this particular auto insurance consumer. Obviously, I'm not privy to the personal circumstances of this consumer, so I can't comment on what may or may not have occurred in this circumstance.

I know the honourable member's government was certainly concerned about this. They had proposed public auto insurance; they did not do that. What we're looking at—and we've been working with stakeholders—is to put in place some plans and some regulation changes that will help the companies and consumers to make sure we have auto insurance in this province.

Mr Hampton: It turns out that this young man is a recent arrival from Montreal. Before he left Montreal, he received a quote of \$2,500 from the public auto insurance company in Quebec—so \$7,000 in Ontario and \$2,500 in Quebec.

Minister, you will know that while insurance rates in Ontario have risen almost 40% since 2001, they've risen by less than 10% in provinces like British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, which have public auto insurance systems.

The changes you're proposing are not going to make up for the amount of money that private insurance companies lost on the stock market. They're still going to insist that that money come from drivers across Ontario.

I think we need a public insurance system in Ontario. Are you prepared to bring one in?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the problem we're finding with auto insurance, not only in Canada but in many other countries around the world, is not because of the stock market. I think we need to be clear here. There are a number of issues that are pressuring auto insurance—the increased cost of repairs, for example. There are a number of pressures that are causing this problem. As I said, we are working with the stakeholders to put in place strategies which will help protect consumers; provide better rights for consumers to make sure there is better access to treatment for consumers; take administrative processes that may be adding to costs, may be running consumers through endless assessments and dispute mechanisms.

The honourable member says, "Bring in public auto insurance." Well, where was he? His government decided not to do it. I would assume they made that decision based on rational policy reasons. For example, one of the reasons those public systems are having lower rates is because they have lower benefits for consumers—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a quick moment, please. Here he comes.

The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: My question is to the government House leader. You said last Tuesday, when asked in a media scrum, that you would release a copy of the letter you wrote to the Integrity Commissioner. Do you deny that you said that?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): No.

Mr Bryant: Then why have you not released the letter for the last six days? Why do you continue to pretend that the Integrity Commissioner is looking into facts that speak to the various calls for your resignation that have been made by various sources, when in fact you know what the scope of the inquiry of the Integrity Commissioner is; it is contained in that letter, and you can clarify to everybody what the Integrity Commissioner is looking at by your release of that letter. You promised you would release it six days ago. I understand that the Stockwellian approach to this involves the release of contradictory facts in a selective fashion, But you're on camera and you're on tape saying that you'd release this letter. Why on earth will you not release it?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm sure all the relevant information will be released when the Integrity Commissioner finishes his investigation.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. There have been a lot of media reports about problems with the federal refugee claimant system. For example, the recent federal auditor's report states that Citizenship and Immigration Canada has lost track of 36,000 failed refugee claimants illegally in Canada. Federal mismanagement of the refugee claimant system not only costs provincial taxpayers money; it also poses a real security risk. What is our government's position with regard to the refugee claimant system?

1410

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank my hard-working colleague for this question. It's a real shame that the federal government has lost track of 36,000 failed refugee claimants in the process. We have publicly called on the federal government to reduce the time it takes to make decisions about refugee claims. We want the federal Liberal government to remove those individuals whose claims have been rejected or withdrawn. We have also called on the federal government to assume all provincial costs that provide services to refugee claimants. It costs the province millions of dollars to support refugee claimants. The province has been funding refugee claimants for legal aid and housing. We say, "No more." The refugee claimant system is a federal responsibility. The federal government should pay for all the costs.

Mr Gill: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. This mismanagement is appalling. Clearly, the federal government has not managed the immigration system effectively or safely. Please inform this House of the other costs that Ontarians incur due to the federal mismanagement of the immigration program.

Hon Mr DeFaria: Another area of concern for our government is the lack of federal enforcement of family sponsorship agreements. When an Ontario resident sponsors a family member, he or she agrees to pay to take care of the sponsored relative's financial needs. How-

ever, some sponsors do not live up to their obligations. As a result, there are thousands of sponsored immigrants in Ontario who have turned to provincial social assistance. This is a burden to Ontario taxpayers. The combined provincial and municipal cost for social assistance for refugee claimants and failed family sponsorship is about \$200 million a year. Again we say that this is unacceptable, and we'll put a stop to it. The federal government must live up to its obligations.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the government House leader. Your propensity to eat, drink, work and play at taxpayers' expenses is now common knowledge. What isn't known yet is the total cost of your ways. We know about the \$3,000 in late-night pub crawls and the \$60,000 European tour, but I want to give you a chance to come clean on yet another one of these excursions. Would you stand before this House and tell us, just how much did you, your family and your staff bill the Toronto Olympic bid for your travels over the last few years?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I don't have any knowledge of what you're speaking of. If you could expand on that, it would be wonderful.

Mr Smitherman: Information has become known to us that in the course of Toronto's bid for the Olympic Games, in your capacity as an Ontario minister you attended several very hot world spots, maybe Sydney, perhaps even Moscow. The fact of another level of government, or in this case an agency, receiving government funding doesn't excuse you from being accountable for those dollars. Given your track record, we think that the public has a right to know.

I'd like to ask you to put on the public record how much you billed the Toronto Olympic bid for staff, personal and family travel that you made to those hot spots. We understand that your in-laws might have been along for at least one of those trips. Can you please tell us if they picked up their own expenses.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's ridiculous. That's an absolutely ridiculous question. Furthermore, I was there with a number of politicians, federally, provincially and municipally. We were all operating under the same terms and conditions of the Toronto Olympic bid. There was no difference for me as to any other elected official that went.

TOURISM

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question today is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation, the Honourable Brian Coburn, MPP for Ottawa-Orléans. You're well aware that convention business in Toronto and around the province has taken quite a hit because of our health challenges. I understand that you were at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre this morning to make

an important announcement. Could you please tell us more about this announcement and how it will strengthen our struggling convention business?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I thank the member from Nipissing. He's absolutely right. I had the pleasure this morning of announcing a \$5-million convention development fund, which is over two years. That is to go toward the convention facilities that we have across Ontario so they can secure and recapture some of the business that we have lost over the last short while, and market and develop plans to grow that business as we go forward into the future.

The primary goal of the fund is to strengthen Ontario's position as a premier destination for major conventions here in Toronto and in Ontario. This will help us maintain jobs in the tourism business, encourage partnerships and private sector initiatives and investment in tourism development.

This is part of the program that the Premier announced a couple of months ago, \$128 million toward tourism recovery in the province. This is one part of that program, along with the other one that we made, from May 1 to the end of September, in terms of no taxes on accommodation and an admissions tax holiday to help the tourism industry.

Mr McDonald: Thank you, Minister Coburn, for your response. This announcement was great news for Toronto and many other cities around the province.

I've read recently and heard from many people who believe that the summer tourism season is over in Ontario. Communities throughout the province are seeing the number of visitors decline, and many doubt that the tourism will be able to recover this summer. As you know, Ontario is a first-class tourism destination. However, it seems that in the eyes of the world we're losing that edge this summer. Minister, could you tell me your thoughts about this tourism season and your response to those who believe that the summer tourism season is over?

Hon Mr Coburn: As far as I'm concerned, the tourism season is far from over for this summer. The Premier has stated quite clearly that we'll do whatever it takes for our province to recover from the unprecedented challenge that we're facing here in Ontario.

Our government has developed, as part of the \$128-million program, a program to rebuild global confidence here in Ontario. We've invested in major events and promotions to attract more visitors to stay in our hotels, eat in our fine restaurants and go to the major festivals that we have around the province.

We're developing marketing campaigns to showcase Ontario to the world. We have devoted funds to tourism partnerships to promote Toronto and the rest of Ontario. We're pleased to partner with Mirvish Productions, for example, and the initiative they've taken. We've had an outstanding response from that initiative and other initiatives that we've had here in Ontario. The most recent one, of course, is the Toronto concert. We've sold out the tickets to that and we look forward—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. The following notice was posted on the Halton autism society Web site: "Johnny's 1st Annual Fund-raiser Garage Sale and Car Wash, Saturday Morning, June 21, 2003," in Burlington.

"Johnny has autism. All fundraising is for Johnny's IBI medically necessary treatment. On May 18, 2003, Johnny had his sixth birthday. As a birthday present, the Ontario government cut funding for his treatment, as they are doing with all children with autism when they turn six. Treatment costs up to \$55,000 a year. We don't have it."

Minister, why are you forcing Ontario families to these lengths just to get medically necessary treatment for their autistic children?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): My colleague from across the way in the third party has asked me in this House before about autism. I have indicated to her and I indicate again that this government is very concerned about the children who are diagnosed with autism. We are a government that is so concerned that we have undertaken one of the most comprehensive programs in North America.

In Ontario before 1999, there was no program—not one cent spent by either the Liberal or the NDP government before it on autism. Our government recognized that this was a serious disorder that was of great concern to the children and their families. We have acted and began, from 1999, with a modest amount of \$5 million put to this program, to now an expansive program that is going to, when it's finally rolled out, be a \$100-million investment in children with autism.

1420

Ms Martel: Minister, Johnny's family is in the gallery today—his mom, dad and grandfather—and like me, they don't believe that garage sales should be used to fund IBI treatment. The government should fund IBI treatment. But they don't know what else to do. IBI treatment is medically necessary and should be funded through OHIP. We don't ask families to fundraise for cancer treatment, and we should not be demanding that they fundraise for IBI treatment for their autistic children.

Minister, tell this family today to cancel the garage sale and cancel the car wash. Tell them you're going to do the right thing and cover IBI treatment through OHIP for every autistic child who needs it.

Hon Mrs Elliott: As I indicated, we have an expansive program in autism. It began from nothing in 1999 to become one of the most comprehensive in the country. We are also one of the only governments that invests heavily in intensive behavioral intervention programs. Why? Because research tells us that is a very key

time to help those children, and that's exactly what we're trying to do.

We know we need to do more, and that is why this government is not only investing intensively in IBI, the early intervention program, but is also in the process of working with the Ministry of Education on their special education autism standards and designing for the first time an out-of-class, out-of-school program to help children with autism receive the help they need, because we know it matters to help them get the best start.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. You oversee the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Ontario Film Review Board and the Ontario Racing Commission, among other responsibilities. Can you tell us if you have ever charged expenses through any of these organizations or through your riding association, for example? If so, for what and how much in total have they paid on your behalf?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): The member has asked a question about information I don't particularly have at hand. But I think the member knows the system we have put in place, where any expenses incurred in ministers' offices are referred to the Integrity Commissioner, who of course is the second-highest jurist in the province of Ontario, to be reviewed to make sure they fit with integrity principles.

Mr Crozier: Minister, quite frankly, that was not the answer I expected. I didn't know that you refer those kinds of expenses to the Integrity Commissioner as a routine. That's news.

The Minister of the Environment has said to us repeatedly that everybody does these kinds of things. Quite frankly, that reflects on each of us in this place, and that's why I wanted to ask you today, because you have a number of boards and commissions under your jurisdiction.

So you're telling me that as a routine—this isn't something that, for example, is a directive from the minister's office or Management Board—if you're going to travel, you first refer this to the Integrity Commissioner. Is that what you're saying everybody does over there?

Hon Mr Hudak: I think the member misconstrues my response. I think the member well knows that for any expenses that are incurred to my ministry budget as a minister of the Crown, under our legislation our procedure is to refer those to the Integrity Commissioner to make sure they fit in with strong integrity principles on an annual basis. In fact, the most recent report came out a few weeks ago. It basically raised no red flags whatsoever. All members of this cabinet were consistent with those integrity principles.

I must say that one thing that did come up a few weeks or months ago was the member's leader, who I think spent some \$17,000 of taxpayers' money to go to image

consultants in Chicago and Washington. The top mud throwers of the Democratic Party were giving advice to the Leader of the Opposition. I don't know if it was for what shoulder pads to wear, how to cut his hair, or how to come across in front of the public. He certainly needed the help. But \$17,000 of taxpayers' money was charged for political purposes. I want to know when Dalton McGuinty and Bruce Crozier are going to pay back that money to the taxpayers of Ontario.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Unlike my Liberal colleagues across the floor, I'm interested in policies and issues that impact the people of Ontario.

My question is for the Minister of Labour. As a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour—in fact, the parliamentary assistant who led a province-wide consultation with labour and employers on health and safety issues, as well as on WSIB reform—I know that our government is committed to ensuring that employers observe their responsibilities when it comes to workers' health and safety. But I know that some employers have been more successful than others in doing so. I understand that you visited an employer recently who is doing extremely well in this regard. Could you please inform the House about this visit and this organization?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for the question. As members of this House are aware, the government is extremely concerned about health and safety, and we've made partners with numerous organizations across this province.

Since 1995, more than one million new jobs have been created in Ontario, and during that period of time, the lost-time injury rate in the province of Ontario has dropped by 30%, which is, in itself, a remarkable achievement. But there are many organizations and many companies that have gone one step further.

Last Monday, I visited Ontario Power Generation's Sir Adam Beck generating station in Niagara Falls. The facility has 240 employees. They have gone 1,045 days without a single lost-time injury, which is an incredible accomplishment. They believe in zero injuries on the job. They're making it happen.

I commend Ontario Power Generation, the workers at the plant, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Society of Energy Professionals for their commitment to health and safety in the plant.

Mr Maves: Thank you for that answer and for your visit to Niagara Falls to the Sir Adam Beck generating station.

We also were happy to announce this past week that Ontario Power Generation is expanding and bringing in 80 employees, engineers and financial staff to Niagara as they redeveloped and really rescued an old Adam Beck building. Now 80 new employees will work out of the Niagara Falls office.

We're proud of the progressive employee-employer relationship that the Power Workers' Union has with OPG in Niagara Falls.

Can you tell me how Ontario Power Generation managed this extraordinary achievement, so that other employers might take heed of their model for workplace health and safety?

Hon Mr Clark: What I have found through my experience as Minister of Labour is that there are companies that have achieved exceptional health and safety records and have consistent approaches to workplace safety. Successful companies have a system of checks and balances. For example, at OPG, attention is to detail. Every employee at OPG has a safety checklist that they have to complete before each and every task. The checklist is particular to the task at hand. What is crucial is not only working through the safety stipulations for that task, but also filling out the list. It makes the employee stop and think about safety. It puts the employee into the safety mindset.

Every day starts with a tailboard meeting. During that meeting, the work group reviews the jobs for the day and the safety procedures that are required and are to be followed.

Successful companies right across this province are doing these types of things. They have joint health and safety committees. They work with the employer. They've changed their cultural attitudes to ensure that workplace injuries become nonexistent in the province of Ontario.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. The forest products industry in this province is in a state of crisis. Thousands of people are being laid off all across the north, with further job losses and mill shutdowns announced on an almost daily basis.

This past Friday, I attended an emergency meeting in Nipigon, attended by all stakeholders, which focused on finding both short- and long-term solutions to this very grim situation.

One of the central points made at this gathering was that the province of Ontario does not seem to remotely acknowledge the gravity of the situation, which is extraordinary, considering the fact that the forest products industry is the second-largest in the province, next to the auto sector. This is not simply about federal issues, so I hope you won't use that as an excuse for your lack of involvement.

My question is this: Minister, do you understand just how serious the situation is, and are you and the Premier prepared to get directly involved to help out the industry during this very perilous time?

1430

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): Absolutely. We actually know how serious this issue is. While the member was in Nipigon at the meeting—I had staff in attendance there—I was in Ottawa dealing with Alberta, Quebec, British Columbia and the feds on forestry issues. We know there are a lot

of factors that are in play here, including the value of the Canadian dollar, which has a substantial impact, the weak market and of course softwood lumber.

We are doing everything we can to make sure that those flows that are affected by the softwood lumber players, to the pulp and paper mills, for example, are continuing to go to keep those workers going and to keep as many people going in northern Ontario as possible during these tough times.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, we need a lot more than that from you. We need more than words; we need some real action related to provincial issues that you can deal with. The fact is that from Thunder Bay to Marathon and White River, from Atikokan and Dubreuilville to Cochrane and Kirkland Lake, communities and people are fighting for their very survival. The issues you could help us with range from wood supply concerns to exploding energy costs to rising insurance rates. But most of all, northerners are expecting to see you and your government on the ground helping us find solutions. These layoffs hit our sawmills first, and they hit them hard. Now the pulp and paper mills like Bowater are announcing massive layoffs as part of the fallout of the lack of fibre and wood chips.

It is my understanding that the Premier will be spending some time in the north later this week. Would that not be a good time to sit down with municipal leaders and industry representatives to offer them direct help? Minister, can you guarantee us today that you and your colleague, northern development minister Wilson, will not only treat this as a top priority for your two ministries but you will see that the Premier deals directly with this issue when he's in the north later this week?

Hon Mr Ouellette: The Premier is well aware of everything. We, for example, within the past week met with Tannis from the Northwest Association of Chambers of Commerce. We met with the mayor of Atikokan to discuss these issues. As well, we've been able to work and assist in a lot of areas such as a salvageable wood program so that blow-down or firewood that's taken where a fire has gone through—we've sped up the process to make sure that that fibre is available.

Not only that, we work with a number of other areas that the forest industry has some concerns with that deal with the guidelines. There's no foxing around in these issues at all. Quite frankly, we're dealing with those issues and we're making sure that the industry is dealt with on a regular basis because we know how important the fibre industry is to the province of Ontario.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. The federal Minister of Immigration, Mr Denis Coderre, is on record as saying that Ontario has not been "engaged" on immigration issues. He has also indicated that Ontario has shown little interest in the selection of economic immigrants. Immigration is important to this province; indeed, it's

vital to its future. Ontario deserves a hand in shaping the policies that bring newcomers here.

Minister, I wonder if you could clarify: what is Ontario's immigration position when it comes to the selection of immigrants?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I wish to thank my colleague, the hard-working member from Scarborough East. Immigration issues have always been a priority for our government. In fact, over the past year I personally met and spoke with Minister Coderre on a number of occasions. I clearly expressed Ontario's concern about the inefficiency of the overseas selection process for economic immigrants. The federal system is just too slow; it's just too inefficient for Ontario's dynamic economy. The average waiting time for an applicant is two years. A faster, improved overseas selection process is imperative. We need to ensure that Ontario's employers receive the kind of skilled immigrants they need—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry to interrupt the minister. You have about 10 seconds. The member for Windsor West, please come to order. The member had about 10 seconds to wrap up. Sorry for the interruption.

Hon Mr DeFaria: The new federal point system for economic immigrants is a barrier to many tradespeople. To remain competitive in attracting skilled workers and business immigrants—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Gilchrist: I thank the minister for his response. All I can say is, having heard the heckling from the folks on the other side, the member for St Catharines and others seem to have forgotten that they voted in favour of the resolution when Mr Tascona brought forth, a resolution that spoke specifically to Ontario standing up and being able to have its own views and take a stand on making sure we get great immigrants coming to Ontario.

Mr Minister, thank you for your response, but what other things has Ontario done and committed to with regard to attracting skilled immigrants to our great province?

Interjections.

Hon Mr DeFaria: I again thank my colleague for the question. Obviously the opposite side realize the impact our government has in the diverse communities of Ontario and the support I have from the immigrant communities.

Our government supports a number of initiatives to help newcomers succeed in the labour market. Our government provides bridge training programs, an academic credential assessment service and partnership with occupational regulatory bodies. The federal government has talked a lot about helping skilled immigrants enter the market, but they have done nothing at all to accomplish that. The province needs skilled immigrants. We know that and we are doing whatever is necessary to accom-

plish that. We need a federal financial commitment to get skilled immigrants here, to help them with training and entering the job market.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, Toronto parents want your promise that no more staff will be cut from the Toronto schools. Jordan Berger, the NDP candidate in Davenport, marched with his community to "Take back the day" after some terrifying incidents involving children. Many parents asked him to bring this message back to you: there has never been a worse time to cut caretakers, vice-principals and education assistants. These people are the eyes and ears in our schools. They keep our children safe.

Will you promise that your board supervisor will listen to frightened parents and that no more staff will be cut from the Toronto board?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I thank the member for his question. As the member knows, our government has been very concerned about the safety of our children in our schools. That's why, in 2000, my colleague introduced the Safe Schools Act. Despite what the member is saying today, both the NDP and the Liberals did not support, and voted against, that Safe Schools Act, which was introduced to help our children.

Mr Marchese: The Safe Schools Act does not protect children. The question I asked you and that Jordan Berger wanted to ask you is, we need caretakers, vice-principals and education assistants in our schools. Why? Because they are the eyes and ears of school safety. Dr Rozanski has shown you how you can do this. All you need is the will and the desire to do so. You can fire your supervisor and we can have our vice-principals, our caretakers and our education assistants. The people of Davenport are doing their part to keep the kids safe. They want assurances from you that you will do the same.

So the question is, will you listen to these parents who fear their children will be less safe if they have fewer staff such as caretakers and education assistants and vice-principals in the schools, and will you simply promise that no more staff will be cut from our Toronto schools?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It still perplexes me that the member over there can stand in his place despite the fact that he and his party voted against the Safe Schools Act in 2000. That was exactly the reason we introduced it: in order to ensure the safety of our children within the schools. As the member knows, it had a tremendous impact on making sure that persons could not be on school premises without being authorized to do so. In fact, if a person was convicted, there was a fine. We set up this provincial model for a local police-school board protocol in order to ensure there were protocols which protected our children within the school community.

We have developed the procedures and we will continue to do what is needed to ensure our children are safe within the school community.

1440

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to return to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, I understood your answer. I understand that ministry expenses are reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner, but that's not what I asked.

I asked this, and it's very simple: have you or your staff ever charged expenses through the LCBO, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Ontario Film Review Board or the Ontario Racing Commission? If so, for what and how much in total have they paid on your behalf?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I appreciate the question. I guess that's the tone they struck across the floor, unfortunately. I guess that comes from Dalton McGuinty's high-priced advisers over there in Chicago and Washington, DC—\$17,000 to give that kind of advice.

If the member has a particular question, I'd invite him to ask me or talk to me about it, if there's a particular concern he has. My understanding of the agencies he mentioned—not in my recollection. But the best way to deal with this, as the member has, if there's a concern about an expense, is through the Integrity Commissioner, as I've said, and the member he referenced has said in his answers in the House.

Mr Crozier: But, Minister, you said, "not in my recollection." I would have thought that you would know this. What still bothers me—all I need is a definite yes or no—is that these boards and agencies aren't reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner.

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: Well, the Minister of the Environment said that everybody does these things. I'm simply, on my side, trying to ask if any of these organizations, a minister who has a great deal to do with a number of organizations—I'm simply asking, yes or no?

Hon Mr Hudak: Again, if the member has some information he is aware of, let me know, and I'll look into it on behalf of my ministry and staff. My understanding is that it's not the case; we have not done that. But if there is a concern that a minister of the crown has with respect to expenses and an arm's-length agency, I think the best way to deal with it is through the Integrity Commissioner to make sure it passes muster with respect to integrity.

I would respect the member's question a lot more if he had a particular concern—he's down in the mud here—to bring forward to me. I would have a lot more respect for the individual member, before he started throwing accusations across the floor, if he would deal with one thing that is clear and evident: the \$17,000 that his leader, Dalton McGuinty, has expensed to the taxpayers

of Ontario to help pay for political image consultants from the Democratic Party in the United States. I would like to have a value-for-money audit on what exactly he's getting for that \$17,000. I would respect that question a lot more if first he went after the \$17,000 that is clearly on the record on the backs of taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

KIDS' FISHING DAY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is less exciting, but it is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, many Ontarians, including members of my family, have frequently taken time to experience the great features that nature has to offer in the great province of Ontario. One of these activities, of course, is fishing.

I was very pleased to be part of the third annual Kids' Fishing Day on May 31, 2003. Once again, there was a tremendous turnout and a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved. Could you please explain to members of the House what Kids' Fishing Day is and how it benefits Ontario?

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): We appreciate the hard work from the member from Durham in bringing people out. This was an opportunity for those that may not be as fortunate to experience fishing and get out and participate. On this day we had over 1,000 people show up. We had a number of other activities on: Ducks Unlimited had a marsh display to show the great work of the marshes; we had a dog demonstration to show active working dogs; we had fly-tying demonstrations; we had natural heritage, along with nature hikes and a lot of other activities.

It wasn't just that weekend. Prior to that, the first weekend in May, in the Minister of Finance's riding in Uxbridge, we had over 2,100 people show up for the same opportunity. We had participation from the Legion, the Optimist Club, the Masons. As a matter of fact, Canadian Tire even participated in sponsoring the great event. That's over 3,000 people in that short period of time. This is an excellent opportunity for thousands and thousands of recreational hours of fishing in the province of Ontario.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, I personally want to be on record as thanking you, because it's the enthusiasm for this activity that has made this project so successful, and not just in my riding. Certainly when I looked at the faces of the over 500 children that day, many from my riding, the gratitude and the expressions on their faces are a memory you should certainly be proud of. You've left that legacy and arguably given them a greater appreciation for our natural resources in this wonderful province.

I know this is but one of the programs. For those members of this House interested in listening to the ideas you have, what other programs are you undertaking, besides an awareness of fishing? Perhaps you could share those with members of the House.

Hon Mr Ouellette: Actually, there have been a large number of opportunities. The member from Peterborough

had Ducks Unlimited sponsor, with Dan McWilliams, over 5,000 kids participating in an activity up in Peterborough in his riding.

We have Fish'n Canada, with a travelling fish pond going around to various businesses and putting it up to give new opportunities for people who haven't had the chance in the past.

We have classroom hatchery programs, where kids actually participate, right from streams to watching the eggs hatch in aquariums in classrooms, swim up and then get released back into the environment.

We have Healthy Waters, where we're trying to return many streams to cold or cool-water status by planting trees and stopping bank erosion and things like that.

Through the Living Legacy program, we're creating thousands of recreational opportunities. For those who don't know it, on an annual basis with our partners, we release over 10 million fish into the province. That's great news.

With all these opportunities, by the end of next month I expect that tens of thousands of individuals who never had the opportunity to fish before will have that opportunity in Ontario.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This question is for the government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a moment; actually, I wanted to consult about something anyway.

We can start the clock. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: We have a question about your communication with the Integrity Commissioner. Last week, you said you would make that available to the public. You've now changed your story. This is not the first time. You changed your story as to who paid for what for this particular trip, you changed your story as to what was said to a reporter in the Globe and Mail and now you've changed your story as to whether you're going to make information available to the public. Now you won't even answer the questions.

This stock Stockwellian response of taking the Fifth is a true affront to this Legislature. Why will you not answer questions on this issue when you know very well that your credibility and accountability are on the line? Why will you not release this letter that you said you would release last week?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think it's better to give it to the Integrity Commissioner so he can do a full review and determine exactly what will and will not be released.

Mr Bryant: I think it would be better if you did what you said you would do and released the letter to the public. I think it would be better if all members of this House were able to know that when they ask you a question, they're going to get a straight answer, not a selective answer, not a selective accounting of the facts

containing some truth but leaving a little bit out. We need to know the truth here.

You've been spending taxpayers' money, OPG money, the public's money, and the public have a right to know how you spent the people's money. Why will you not release the letter that will make very clear that the inquiry by the Integrity Commissioner is on an extremely narrow question and your credibility and accountability are another matter that must be answered in this House?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think those are the very questions the Integrity Commissioner will be reporting on.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. I listened rather intently to the question that was asked by the member for Nickel Belt. It pertained to particular services for autistic children over the age of six. I understand there are children under the age of six who still do not have service, and I know that significant funds are being channelled into new programs. But I'm wondering why not every child from one to six with autism is getting care.

1450

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague for the thoughtful question. We have had a number of questions here in the House about autism, and all of them have centred around the fact that our government has been working very hard to find ways to meet the need. My colleague has asked about children who are under the age of six.

We started this program, based on the best research advice, to give the attention to children between the ages of one and six. We were told that that's where dollars invested and intensive behaviour intervention would be most effective. We are continually trying to do that. We now have \$33 million devoted to delivering programs for those very young children. The challenge we are having across this nation, as more and more children are being diagnosed with autism, is that we are having a tremendous amount of difficulty in finding qualified individuals to provide the service. I want to assure my colleague that we are going to colleges, we are going to conventions and we are developing marketing activities—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Ms Mushinski: It's interesting that that didn't come out in the questioning earlier. Given that we know there's a great deal of emphasis on early identification for children with autism, it would be interesting if you would tell this House how the programs funded by your ministry compare with other jurisdictions. In other words, what are other jurisdictions doing compared to what your ministry is doing with respect to children under the age of six?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Again, we are having a terrible time in Ontario in trying to find enough qualified trainers. As this disorder is being diagnosed in children, we're needing more and more trainers. It's a very intensive, challenging program. We are going to colleges and we are working with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to try to find ways to bring these people to Ontario to help our children between the ages of zero and six.

Across the country, our province is definitely a leader. For instance, in British Columbia, about \$3.42 million is allotted to IBI programs; in Alberta, about \$6 million; it's just starting in Newfoundland and New Brunswick; in Saskatchewan, \$25,000 per child—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the leader of the federal New Democratic Party, Jack Layton—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: —and I held a press conference with representatives from the hotel and restaurant employees' union to call once again for your government and the federal Liberal government to act now to help laid-off workers. They've had a plan we've told you about several times now that would involve your government's topping up EI payments during the times they are laid off or their hours are cut back while they're upgrading their skills. Minister, I'm asking you again: will you commit to this plan?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The Minister of Municipal Affairs will respond.

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): We're prepared to commit to continue to fight for and support the people of this province. I suspect that the member opposite is aware of the fact that we did come forward last Friday to announce a compensation program for those ordinary Ontarians who committed extraordinary acts to protect their neighbours. We came forward to protect and support those people. There are additional challenges. The member for Windsor, across the way, quite rightly says that the federal government is missing in action in many respects. I'm hopeful that will change. I'm hopeful that before the end of this week we will see action, not words, in the way of dollars emanating from Ottawa. I compliment the member opposite and the leader of the federal NDP for taking a stand this past weekend.

Ms Churley: I noticed when I got up and mentioned Jack Layton, the leader of the NDP, that all the provincial Liberals yelled and heckled. That's because their federal cousins in Ottawa are on an early holiday and not doing a darn thing about this. They just took off to play golf.

Very seriously here, there are 12,000 hospitality workers laid off and 10,000 more on part-time. Minister, you're still here, at least. We're in this House. We have

been calling on you and federal government since March to work with the federal government to bring in this program. Their rent has not been paid. They're facing eviction notices. Gas and hydro have been cut off. These are some of the most vulnerable, lowest-paid workers in Toronto and across this province. They need your help. Will you commit to topping up EI so they can get the full salary during this terrible time for them?

Hon Mr Young: As the member opposite indicates, we haven't seen a lot of action, and more particularly, we haven't seen a lot of words emanating from Ottawa. I am going to be meeting with the defence minister this Thursday. You asked whether or not I would work with the federal government. The answer is yes. We are prepared to work with the federal government. Quite frankly, we've been trying to work with the federal government for an extended period of time. I wrote to the federal defence minister on April 11, I wrote again on May 23, and I wrote again last week. On each occasion, I indicated that we, the Ernie Eves government, would continue to work for the people of this province.

I would point out that our Premier, Premier Eves, came forward at a very early stage to support those in the hospitality industry. In excess of \$130 million was committed by the province of Ontario to support that industry. There is more to be done. I'm prepared to work with you. I'm prepared to work with our colleagues in Ottawa.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Conservative government has spent over \$385 million to fire teachers and education workers in our public school system;

“Whereas there are 26% fewer teacher-librarians and 22% fewer physical education teachers in our schools today than there were in 1997;

“Whereas the Eves government diverted over \$100 million in federal transfers for early childhood development into tax cuts for corporations and slashed all new grants for child care spaces;

“Whereas there are almost 40,000 students with learning difficulties waiting to be assessed by a professional;

“Whereas a study by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto says that ‘teachers are demoralized, student achievement has stalled, and school and school districts report great difficulty in meeting local needs’;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Eves”—Conservative—“government to return peace to our public school system and return \$1.6 billion in essential services that has been removed from the public education system and

used to pay for misguided corporate tax cuts and partisan government advertising campaigns.”

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the citizens of Kent county and Chatham had no direct say in the creation of the municipality of Chatham-Kent in 1997; and

“Whereas the Ontario government, by regulation and legislation, forced the amalgamation in accordance with the Meyboom report against the will of the elected local and county officials; and

“Whereas the municipality has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of improved services at reduced costs;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Immediately rescind the forced amalgamation order and return our local municipal government to the citizens in a two-tier model of government to be approved by referendum by the electorate in the 2003 municipal election.”

This petition is signed by literally hundreds and hundreds of persons from across the municipality of Chatham-Kent.

1500

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Another tragedy on Highway 69 last week, so it is with sadness that I read the following petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

“Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

“Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

“Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of a government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease.”

Of course, I affix my signature again to this petition.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have quite a number of petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“The Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

“Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

“The Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into a fund for rural rate assistance, and rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

“Therefore I support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended to the Great Lakes Power service area immediately.”

This is signed by many of my constituents, these particular ones from Richards Landing and mostly from St Joseph Island.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

“Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

“Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

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

“That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted. Bill 112 received the unanimous all-party support of the Ontario Legislature at second reading on June 13, 2002.

“Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and....

“We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature.”

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition again concerns homemaking skills, which would be cut off in Sudbury by the CCAC due to a lack of funding:

“Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre's decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

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

"(1) Provide enough resources to the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre so that they can provide homemaking services; and

"(2) Instruct Associate Minister Dan Newman to attend a public meeting with MPP Rick Bartolucci "to hear stories about what will happen when homemaking services are cut off."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I did last week.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have yet another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

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

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted....

"Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and....

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

This petition is signed by persons from Acton and Rockwood, and I too have signed it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is 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 juris-

dictions 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"—if you can believe it—"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;

"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."

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to Timothy, our page from Don Valley East, to bring to the table.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"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," back 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;

"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 affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): “Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

Since I am very much in agreement with this, I am pleased to sign it and clearly indicate to the Toronto Star that this is not a voucher and that's an outright lie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I would ask the member for Brampton Centre to withdraw that comment.

Mr Spina: I withdraw.

1510

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

“Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

“Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

“Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

“Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

“Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

“Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered ‘hours worked’;

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

“To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers.”

I will affix my signature to this petition, because I am in full agreement.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. I have a number of petitions here.

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes at home to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I'm pleased to advise the House that this has in fact been changed and this petition has been addressed. I'm pleased to sign this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I just wanted to explain to the member for Brampton Centre, I may have been in a little bit of a rush to defend the institution that you were referring to, but I still think that it's maybe not parliamentary to use those words. It kind of leads us down a road that we don't want to go on. I may have been a little hasty, and if I was, I wanted to apologize to the member for Brampton Centre.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD CONSUMER PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA RÉGIE DE LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Baird moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect to consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les concessions municipales en ce qui a trait à la protection des consommateurs, à la régie de la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à d'autres questions.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I will indicate at the outset of my remarks that I'll be splitting my time with the hard-working member for Scarborough East, who not only acts as the parliamentary assistant at the Ministry of Energy but is also Ontario's first commissioner of alternative fuels, someone who is very highly regarded in the alternative energy sector in the province of Ontario for his outstanding work and leadership. He does a tremendous job.

I'm very pleased to have the chance to talk about Bill 23, which obviously seeks to overhaul and reform the Ontario Energy Board. The Premier ordered this review last fall. He ordered a quick review and gave us 100 days to listen to what stakeholders, citizens, unions and other market participants had to say. We did that and were able to report back to cabinet some 100 days later. We took the time to appropriately draft the legislation, table it in this House and enter into a debate.

The Ontario Energy Board's mandate has really grown so quickly, perhaps more quickly than the board could grow. This bill gives them the tools to more effectively address the challenges that they're now facing. They used to regulate the distribution of natural gas and provide advice with respect to electricity. Now they are a comprehensive regulator of all facets of the electricity industry, whether you're talking about transmission, distribution, retailing or even generation. They do a terrific amount of that.

The legislation that is in front of us today allows us the opportunity to really equip the board with additional powers to reform it and enable it to do its job better. I think if all members look at it, this is not a partisan bill. It's a bill that I hope all members will look at and give consideration to supporting in this place.

The legislation that we're presenting is the result of a lot of consultation, and I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about

that. We had the opportunity to get written submissions on this issue. We invited public comment, and I had the opportunity to sit down with well over 50 individuals at round tables to personally spend some time with them and hear what their concerns were.

We met with AMPCO, the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario. That's a group that provides us with a lot of good support and advice.

We also heard from the member opposite. She put a submission in, I understand.

We heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Judith Andrew does a great job to forcefully bring the concerns and interests of small and medium-sized enterprises to decision-makers on all sides of the House at Queen's Park.

We heard from the Consumers' Association of Canada.

We heard from Energy Probe and my very good friend Tom Adams.

We heard from Enersource, the old Hydro Mississauga, which is a leader in conservation.

We heard from the Industrial Gas Users Association and the Independent Power Producers' Society of Ontario. John Brace works as the president of that organization.

We heard from Bernie Jones and others from the Ontario Energy Association.

We listened to people at the board—staff, employees and officials—themselves to find out what they would have to say. I had the opportunity to sit down with Floyd Laughren, now the former chair, to get his assessment. I said, "Give the government and the Legislature your best advice and counsel on this initiative." I asked him particularly, "Are there any anomalies, things that we can correct that would provide a smoother operation of the board?" He came forward with a number of ideas.

We met with Pollution Probe, an environmental group.

We met with Don McKinnon and Bob Menard of the Power Workers' Union. I should go out of my way to say that—the Minister of Labour is here—the Power Workers' Union does an outstanding job in representing the interests of their membership. I have an open-door policy, and it has meant an incredibly productive relationship, by and large, with those gentlemen. They're a union in the province of Ontario who want to embrace change, and have been perhaps one of the most successful unions in representing their membership to the government. I enjoy and value the relationship that we have with them.

1520

We heard from the Stakeholders' Alliance for Electricity Competition and Consumer Choice, headed up by David McFadden, a former member of this place, who provided us with some useful advice. They're a group that has come together representing various interests to give ideas, suggestions and support for reforms in the energy sector.

I could go on. We got submissions from some 78 groups in Ontario. We listened to that advice and were

able to come forward with a plan that I think, by and large, has gotten overwhelming support, if you talk to folks in the energy sector and energy consumer representatives. I think it's a good bill.

The legislation before us today, Bill 23, would make the Ontario Energy Board self-financing while maintaining its status as a crown agency. This is very similar to the reforms that were undertaken by the Ontario Securities Commission. The Ontario Securities Commission was reformed in the past number of years, and I think that has given it more teeth and the ability to do a better job of protecting the interests of consumers in the province.

It provides for terms for initial periods, and renewals to ensure that we can get qualified members. It establishes a management committee to deal with the day-to-day administrative duties of the board, thereby allowing the board members to focus their full attention on hearings. That's something which will be beneficial. It establishes an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and consumers to review annually the board's performance measures. This is so important. Too often we don't look at performance measures. We can bring that to the table, to invite stakeholders, participants themselves, consumers' groups, to give some input and advice on that.

We're establishing a regulatory calendar with a statement of priorities to increase accountability and ensure that stringent timelines are established. For example, we know we have to give a general rate order for natural gas, whether it's to Union Gas or Enbridge. We know we're going to have to do that this year and next year. We go through a huge amount of effort. It's important to set a timetable. The management committee could perhaps even look at two-year decisions. They deal with these things every year. There's a lot of stability in the gas market, as far as the regulatory regime side of it. In fact, if you look at it historically, over the last 10 or 15 years under governments of all three political parties, they have, more or less, got inflation. So that would be of assistance.

We'll allow board members to delegate some routine decision-making responsibilities to officials. This is done in just about every government ministry or agency. For example, the registrar general doesn't have to sign every birth certificate himself, or any amendment. The Attorney General doesn't have to process every single paper before a court. As long as there was the ability to appeal to a panel on the board, that might be able to provide some more advantageous performance for the board.

We're developing criteria for consumer protection support to ensure that consumers have input into the hearing process. That's something that's important, particularly where the mandate of the board is there to really reflect the marketplace that doesn't exist when you have a monopoly. That's important.

We want to look at ways to harmonize the powers of the Ontario Energy Board to eliminate duplication and streamline the regulation of natural gas and electricity.

These systems evolved separately, and too often there would be one rule for natural gas and another rule for electricity. The bill allows those to be harmonized.

This is something that I think is quite important: it enhances the board's mandate with respect to communications and involving the public. The board should have those powers and part of its fundamental mandate to get out there and explain its role to the public and consumers, so consumers would better understand what goes into a decision and what their role can be. So I think this is an important group of reforms that will allow the board to move forward in the future and do a great job.

We've learned in the past how important sound leadership is. Floyd Laughren served with great distinction, not just in this place but at the Ontario Energy Board. His predecessor, Marie Rounding, was appointed by the Liberals and then renewed by the New Democrats, if I'm not mistaken. I think she did an outstanding job. She's someone whom I had the opportunity to work with as a member of the Agency Reform Commission, a commission I worked on for the better part of a year, where we looked at what we could do to reform administrative justice and provide better results in terms of the work that our tribunals do. Of course, Hugh Macaulay was chair of the board for a number of years.

With Mr Laughren's decision to retire, I think it was tremendously important, with the importance that energy plays in our economy—it's particularly high on our economic and political agenda in the province. We needed someone of outstanding abilities to provide new leadership to the board, particularly in light of this reform and with the huge amount of consultations that we began right across the province of Ontario.

Everywhere we went, people said, "Look at the reforms that the Ontario Securities Commission made." It better protects investors, whether that be the widow with some mutual funds or stocks in her pension plan or whether it be other market participants. We looked at the huge changes that went on there.

One of the great things about having the opportunity to serve as the Minister of Energy is—as you'll know, the Ministry of Energy is a small ministry; the ministry's budget is approximately \$20 million—it allowed me the opportunity to have a chance to sit down and talk to a number of individuals whom I hadn't met before and say, "What qualities and capacities do you think should be prevalent in the next chair of the energy board?" I sat down and listened. My first conversation was with Floyd Laughren, and he was able to provide some first-hand experience. I spoke to a number of energy stakeholders here in the city of Toronto and in Ottawa and made a number of phone calls. I was able to identify an absolutely outstanding candidate, someone whom I hadn't had the occasion to personally work with, but someone about whom everyone I talked to and whom this gentleman had worked for had something good to say.

I approached the Honourable Howard Wetston. Mr Wetston is currently completing his five-year term as vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. Howard

Wetston agreed to accept the challenge and the opportunity to become the chair. I think the people of the province of Ontario are tremendously fortunate that he has taken on this challenge.

Mr Wetston has five years under his belt, helping lead the reform at the Ontario Securities Commission. He has been able to see first-hand the administration and process side, but on the other side of the equation, he has heard cases and some pretty significant hearings with respect to issues that are before the commission.

Before taking that responsibility on, he was a Federal Court judge in Ottawa. Before that, he served as the director of the Competition Bureau for the federal public service in Ottawa. If you do a search of his time there, he was a real advocate for consumer protection, and he did a tremendous job in the federal sphere. He did serve as a deputy counsel to the National Energy Board in his early days of practising law.

I just think we are tremendously fortunate in the province of Ontario that this individual has agreed to be involved in public service.

Mr Wetston was called before the all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly. I'd like to quote what some of the members had to say about him. Michael Bryant, the member for St Paul's, said, "We believe that the Honourable Mr Wetston is in fact very qualified and is best prepared to take on this challenge."

1530

The member of this Legislature for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Mr Conway, said, "I want to just briefly recommend to the committee the concurrence in support of this nominee, who obviously comes to this responsibility with a very, very powerful and, I think, impressive resumé. I was particularly struck by his testimony here today. It is, as my friend Bryant says, not going to be an easy job."

Mr Conway's words again: "I also want to say to Judge Wetston that I particularly like what he said about transparency, about consumer protection and about an honest and frank recognition of a very complex set of forces that are at play on an absolutely vital public interest, especially as it relates to electricity."

I'll go on. Mr Conway said, "It's hard for me to imagine a stronger candidate than Howard Wetston, because he brings the judicial, the consumer, the OSC—all of that is a tremendous recommendation for this job."

I was very proud that members on both the opposition and the government sides saw fit to vote concurrence on Mr Wetston. I think he's undoubtedly one of the most qualified candidates to ever come before that committee, certainly in my eight years. I should underline that Mr Wetston has no political background and is a public servant in the very best tradition.

We announced these reforms, and we did receive a good amount of stakeholder support. There are a number of members from Toronto in the House today. Courtney Pratt, of Toronto Hydro, wrote, "Congratulations on the appointment of the Honourable Howard Wetston as the new chair of the Ontario Energy Board. Mr Wetston's

diverse experience in business regulation and consumer advocacy, along with his service on the National Energy Board, will be invaluable...."

"I would also like to congratulate you on your 10-point reform plan. These reforms are very progressive and they represent a positive step toward ensuring Ontario's regulatory regime provides a fair, efficient and predictable set of rules for all market participants."

That's from the head of the publicly owned Toronto Hydro.

The Electricity Distributors Association of Ontario—the EDA—put out a press release: "EDA Applauds Reforms to Ontario Energy Board." Many Electricity Distributors Association recommendations are adopted in the legislation we've presented here today.

"The Electricity Distributors Association (EDA) applauds today's announcement by energy minister John Baird in which he announced a series of reforms...."

"Today's announcement directly responds to the key recommendations made in the EDA's submission to the government consultation process on the review of the Ontario board's mandate," said EDA CEO Charlie Macaluso.

"The provincial government's acceptance of the EDA's recommendations affirms the EDA's belief that by working together, the regulatory framework governing Ontario's electricity market can be dramatically improved to the benefit of consumers, shareholders and all market participants...."

Mr Macaluso goes on to say, "We are encouraged by the government's increasing willingness to work with and respond to the recommendations of Ontario's electricity distributors.... I would like to congratulate the Honourable Howard Wetston on his appointment as OEB chair. We welcome his appointment and will continue to work closely with government and the OEB in ensuring that Ontario has a strong and vibrant electricity industry."

The Ontario Energy Association wrote: "The members of the OEA were very pleased that you 'heard' and are implementing so many of the OEB reforms" that were recommended in their submission, and they "look forward to working with" the new chair.

I look forward to hearing the NDP critic for energy, probably close to the end of the day today, because we'll be using our leadoff time.

Enersource Corp, the local distribution company in Mississauga, put out a press release in support: "Enersource Corp expressed further optimism...."

"The range of structural changes as announced today, steps to accelerate the regulatory decision making process and the appointment of a new chair with the experience of the Honourable Howard Wetston is another signal to us that this government is open and receptive to the views of stakeholders...." That's from Gunars Ceksters, the CEO of Enersource. And I could go on.

It shows there was a genuine willingness to work with consumer groups, with energy stakeholders, to listen to and hear what they have to say. I know there are a lot of

others. I'm trying to think if there is anyone in the great city of Hamilton who put in a submission. I'd have to look closely, but I suspect we did get some good advice from Hamilton.

I would be remiss if I didn't wish a friend of mine in Hamilton who's running for mayor my best in his efforts. I don't agree all the time with that friend, but I know him to be an honest, decent person, and honourable, someone who will work hard and work with people on all sides of the House. I want to wish that friend of mine in Hamilton, the member for Hamilton West and former member for Hamilton Centre, all the very best.

This legislation we're debating today was the result of consultation, and I think that too often we neglect to give credit to the people who in a very real sense make this happen. If I could just list the people at the Ministry of Energy who worked very hard: my very capable deputy minister, Bryne Purchase; Judy Hubert, probably the most outstanding public servant in the Ontario public service, who joins us here today, and my good friend; Rosalyn Lawrence; Helmuth Schumann; John Lang; Betty Morgan; Sheri Bizarro; Kaili Sermat-Harding; Ted Gruetzner; Barry Strader; George Nutter; our lawyers Susan Serena, James Rebob and Mike Lyle; Rose Norohna, Betty Arsenijevic, Elaine Gittens, Marie Cadena and Noreen Hickey, who helped with our OEB consultations; and in addition to the great people in the minister's office: Will Stewart; Lisa Pearson; Dan Miles and Suzanne Bezuk. These people all worked tremendously hard and helped us craft the legislation that is before us.

I would like to underline the balance we're seeking at the Ontario Energy Board. There are two fundamental things that have got to be balanced, particularly in those areas of the board where it's the board's responsibility to substitute for a free market. We obviously can't have distribution systems for natural gas competing with one another. We couldn't have a set of five or six sets of pipelines going up and down every street in Ontario and in industrial areas, so the nature of that distribution business is obviously a monopoly.

The board's mandate there is to act as the balance between the interests of consumers, who need to be protected in the absence of a market—if it's another good or service, you can choose to go across the street to someone else who sells the product or perhaps even substitute the product for a comparable one. You can't do that with respect to the distribution of natural gas. So the board is there to act as a balance between the legitimate interests of consumers who require protection and also the legitimate interests of capital to get a fair and reasonable return on equity. No one in this House, I think, would deny that it's a difficult balance but one that is required.

For example, I was quoting Enersource, a publicly owned company. It's owned 90% by the city of Mississauga—that's the residents and businesses in the city of Mississauga—and 10% owned by Borealis, which is a pension fund of the Ontario municipal employees. It's a

pension fund for those people who require a pension, and what they want is some confidence that if they play by the market rules they'll get the return on equity that they believe they're entitled to. That's why the board has to step in and provide that type of balance. People have to know that if they make investments in Ontario, they'll get a fair return and it won't be done based on the public outcry or the demands of big business; it'll be done based on what's actually before them. So consumer protection and fair treatment for investment are what we seek the board to do.

I say to all members of this House, the legislation we've got in front of us today better equips the board to be able to provide protection for consumers. The legislation before us will serve everyone. We need to have more expeditious decisions. I think it is wrong for something to take 12 to 18 months to come to a decision from its first application before the board. We know about many of these issues years ahead of time. We're going to give the tools to the dedicated staff and team at the Ontario Energy Board that will allow them to get their job done. Some of the timelines can be, perhaps, one of the biggest concerns there.

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There was a huge amount of public concern and public interest with respect to retroactive charges. We heard those loud voices and have come forward with some reforms that help to deal with that and address it head on. With performance measures and with an annual regulatory calendar, what we seek to do is to effectively eliminate the need for retroactive charges. Consumers don't like them, and they don't instill confidence in the regulatory regime, which I think is important for consumers' interests and for investment in the province alike. If we can get into a situation where we can provide a fair and expeditious hearing, together with these reforms, we will effectively eliminate the need for retroactive charges in the province. That is something that is tremendously important.

Some people will say, "Well, you should be retroactive and go back and change things over the last 25 or 30 years." I guess what we're seeking to do with the legislation before us is to deal in a pretty fundamental way with the challenge before us. The legislation that we're bringing forward will do just that.

I will be concluding my remarks and I'm looking forward to—I deliberately have not talked about the new mandate for the board with respect to conservation and alternative energy. I'll leave that to Commissioner Gilchrist to talk about and address.

I was pleased that Howard Wetston, the incoming chair of the Ontario Energy Board, has said very strongly that he wants a role in policy and that there is a legitimate role for the regulator in that. We look forward to receiving his suggestions and his advice on these issues.

I'll turn it over to Commissioner Gilchrist, and I would be remiss if—the more I have the opportunity to meet with stakeholders, people who are advocating green energy and green power, windmills, solar, biomass,

whether it's net metering, whether it's any range of conservation and alternative energy, they all, without a doubt, speak with great affection for their chief advocate within the Ontario government, someone who, while he works with the Ministry of Energy, really is the czar of alternative energy and can work with natural resources on the use of public land, with the Ministry of the Environment on those issues, with the Ministry of Finance on tax issues, and can work with my colleague, the Minister of—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Natural Resources.

Hon Mr Baird:—Natural Resources, who I work very closely with on an issue in my community with the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, something he knows I have a tremendous concern about. I am hearing from a number of constituents who want Katie the fox returned to her owners. I've done that in a very public way, asking the minister to give consideration to that.

But the legislation before us today will do a great job. Whether you're a young person coming out of university named Michael Lebrock, this will provide you with better support; whether you're a small business person in Hamilton, this will provide you with better support; whether you're a big business like Stelco or Dofasco, this will help give you greater certainty that there will be someone representing your consumer needs. When we think of consumers, we're not just thinking of residential customers; we're also thinking about industrial customers that depend on electricity to fuel their operations. So I'm very pleased.

I would legitimately ask all members of the House to look at Mr Wetston's background, to look at the legislation before us here today. I know I've had some quiet discussions with some of the opposition members. I would hope they would give consideration to supporting the bill. I don't think it's perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but I think it represents a huge amount of consultation where we didn't just listen to what people said, we heard their message, and we've come forward with, I think, a very outstanding piece of legislation and one with which I think we'll do a great benefit to working families and to enterprise in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): To continue the lead-off, the member for Scarborough East.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'd like to start my comments by thanking Minister Baird for his very kind comments and congratulating him on the content of this bill, a bill that certainly will advance consumer protection. It is long overdue in terms of updating the very structure of the OEB. I want to say further that whatever successes we've achieved so far in advancing the cause of alternative energy and energy conservation we would not have done without the fulsome and complete support of Minister Baird and the Premier himself, as well as the other ministers I am privileged to work with in that regard.

Today we are debating Bill 23, the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, 2003. I think it has to be said at the outset that as important as this bill is, it has to be seen as just one more piece in a comprehensive, integrated energy policy that our government has adopted. It's a policy that was created by listening to the people, understanding their concerns and making sure there are programs and legislation in place to address the concerns of 2003, not 1903.

Our energy policy does many positive things: it protects consumers; ensures that investors get a fair return on their commitment to Ontario's energy future; streamlines the regulatory process; and, perhaps most important, protects the environment. As all the members know, I've had a long and keen interest in the environment. As the provincial Commissioner of Alternative Energy, it's very exciting to be part of a government that's leading us to a cleaner and sustainable energy future.

We are the first government to do more than just talk about clean energy and conservation. In 2005—no later than April 1, 2005, in fact—the Lakeview coal generating plant west of Toronto will stop producing power based on the consumption of coal. We've made the unprecedented commitment to shut down all the province's coal-fired facilities no later than 2015. I think it has to be stressed that it's not just a date picked out of the air. We've said that, hand in hand with the creation of new renewable power generation across Ontario, we will, coincidentally, shut down the dirtiest existing forms of energy generation, namely the coal-fired plants. We are not going to leave people out in the cold, though. The renewable power comes first, before you pull the plug on the coal plants.

We know that the provincial government itself is a very large user of electricity, so we think it's important to lead by example, and make a commitment that 20% of the power we use—not just in this building but in all government agencies and in all offices across Ontario—will come from new green sources of power.

Our recent budget included proposals such as 10-year tax holidays. Unprecedented anywhere in North America, the provincial government has basically walked away from any form of revenue from new green power generation for 10 years. Not only have we said that that generator will pay no income tax, but there will be no increase in the property tax, no increase in the capital tax, a full rebate of the sales tax and an opportunity to take a 100% write-off of any investment in the year that investment is made.

We've put in place corporate incentives, but we didn't stop there. We've already instituted a sales tax rebate that would give consumers a full rebate of all the Ontario sales tax if they purchased either a solar-thermal or a solar-photovoltaic energy system.

We've gone further down the road to conservation by coming up with a rebate program that will return your provincial sales tax if you buy an Energy Star appliance: a washer, a dryer, a dishwasher, a freezer—so far, we've had almost 50,000 applications for that rebate. The re-

fund is pushing \$4 million. In fact, enough power has been saved just in the conversion of those appliances to equal the total annual power consumed by 3,000 homes—a staggering step forward.

I want to make sure that people remember it's this government that made it possible for the wind turbine down on the waterfront here in Toronto, the wind turbine in Pickering and the one on the shore of Lake Huron to be built. It was this government that pledged to allow people who want to install their own renewable electricity generation systems to take advantage of net metering. It was this government that put in place a system where Ontario Power Generation and other generators can now market green power to their customers. It was this government that announced plans that will make Ontario the leader in clean energy technologies.

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To do that, we have undertaken to invest \$20 million to create a centre of excellence for electricity and alternative energy technology in a total of five universities. I'm extremely excited at the opportunity that gives us to attract some of the leading-edge pure research to take us beyond even the technical innovations that have already happened in the renewable energy field into an even more promising and even more affordable renewable power future.

It's clear that energy is a vital part of our economy. Lost somewhat in the debate this past year about the importance of guaranteeing that business and consumers have affordable power is the recognition that it was that low-cost power that was in large measure responsible for attracting all the industry we now take for granted. It was attracting the General Motors, the Fords, the Incos and the Falconbridges to invest private funds, to build their manufacturing facilities and to use Ontario as the base to distribute their goods across North America and, in many cases, around the world. We don't ever want to lose that competitive advantage.

While others may quibble about the structure of the consumer protection we've put in place, the fact remains that our government is committed to two things: making money at the 4.3 cent cap—the plan will break even at worst and make money at best—but just as importantly, that consumers and businesses will continue to have the assurance that there will be rate stability and that they will have the most competitive power we can possibly put into the grid to backstop their efforts to continue to grow their businesses and to continue to make sure their households have affordable sources of power.

That's why last fall Premier Eves protected consumers and set the price of electricity back to 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. Residential consumers, small businesses and farmers now have the protection they were looking for, and now more than 98% of the province's electricity consumers have their rates frozen until 2006.

It has to be stressed, though, that contrary to some of the mythology that spread after the residential price cap was installed, there are no disincentives for someone interested in bringing new renewable power generation

on line, because the wholesale market continues absolutely open for new generators to bid in their power. It also ensures that the large power consumers continue to have the ability to manage their energy needs through the use of interval meters.

The market remains open for generators, and the proof is the fact that across this province there are companies that are staking out good resources and that are leasing farmland for future use as sites for wind power generators. There are companies that are developing solar photovoltaic manufacturing facilities. In fact, we've gone from zero to three companies in the last year that are building factories to become large-scale manufacturers of solar PV systems.

I recently met with just one wind generation company. They have leased 38,000 acres of land. They have hundreds of test towers already up. They are assessing, over a 12-month period, the wind resource available in some parts of the province that are well known to be likely profitable sites for wind power generation. This one company alone is looking to invest \$1 billion of their own equity to produce at least 400 megawatts of power, but they're not alone.

Another company is talking about 500 megawatts on the shores of Lake Erie and actually in Lake Erie itself. The city of Sudbury has contracted for 90 megawatts of power. There's an application for 34 megawatts down in Prince Edward county, and a company is looking to put 80 megawatts on Wolfe Island, just offshore from Kingston. In fact, across Ontario, from Thunder Bay to Sault Ste Marie to Leamington to Collingwood to Kingston, we have seen an extraordinary expansion in interest since the announcement of our nine-point action plan last November.

I think people can take seriously, with great confidence, the fact that we are committed to a dramatic expansion in wind power and other renewable power, and that the wholesale market continues to be open and able to assimilate that new generation, without any barriers. In fact, I want to really thank my colleagues the Ministers of Finance, Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines, Agriculture, Environment and Energy, who have all recognized that historically there were barriers that stood in the way of new renewable power generation.

For example, no one had ever been forced to deal with the reality that there wasn't even a process to apply to lease crown land as a site for wind generation. It's staggering when you think that through us, through the government, the people of Ontario continue to own 85% of the land mass of this province as crown land. So it stands to reason that at least 85% of the best wind sites were unavailable. There wasn't a process. There was no form, there was no fee structure, and now there is.

I'm very proud to say that virtually every single regulatory tax or other barrier that historically stood in the way of expanding renewable power in this province has been addressed, and the few that haven't are making their way through the cabinet process as we speak. I have great confidence that we'll very shortly be in a position to

announce that they too have been eliminated and we will have addressed every single issue that the wind and water power generators in particular have brought to our attention.

I think at the same time it's important to see the relationship with the OEB and what's happening in expanding the renewable power market. One of the commitments we made last November, at the same time as we made the commitment to the rate freeze and to become the leading jurisdiction in all of North America for the research and development, the manufacturing and the use of alternative energy and energy conservation technologies—we said that the OEB has a role to play in that crusade as well.

The new chair and his colleagues will be expected to work with all the utilities, all the LDCs, to dramatically expand consumer education in their efforts at promoting energy conservation, whether it's demand-side management programs or simply educating consumers in some of the very simple steps they can take personally—in their own lives, in their own homes and in their own businesses—that individually cost almost nothing but in aggregate across the province would pay huge dividends.

These little changes are as simple as taking the three traditional incandescent light bulbs that you use most in your house and changing them to comparable-wattage compact fluorescent bulbs. Every single bulb you convert will, over the course of its life, reduce your demand on the energy system by the equivalent of one tonne of coal. What an incredible image that is. Each light bulb offsets the burning of one tonne of coal. So people who suggest that they are concerned about the environment need do nothing more than invest \$3 or \$4 to buy compact fluorescent bulbs, to install timers, to make sure the lights are turned off when they leave a room and wherever possible recognize the fact that off-peak, we as Ontarians pay less for our power than we do at peak hours. So turning on your dishwasher at 10:30 instead of 6:30, turning on other heavy energy-use appliances at the end of the day, saves, in aggregate, an incredible amount of money.

The OEB will be required to dramatically expand its promotion of these specific and general concepts, and who better to deliver that message than the local utilities? Every month they are sending mailings out to every one of their customers in the form of a bill. But those bills normally have inserts. It's a virtually free way to communicate with every single electricity consumer in this province.

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It isn't a question that the utilities have necessarily been doing something wrong, but the reality is that they have not been as fulsome in their embracing of the importance of energy conservation as they could have, and working with the OEB. I have every confidence, as does Minister Baird, that the utilities will become very active partners and will become, along with the province, responsible for far more efficient use of energy than has been the case in this province in the past.

Our plan is working. We see a future where clean fuels such as natural gas, wind, solar and hydro power will play an increasingly larger role in this province. Over the past few months, we've seen a number of new generators come on line. Many of the members will have heard of the large TransAlta natural gas generating station in Sarnia. But they may not have heard of the opening of the province's first commercial wind farm, the opening of Brascan's 45-megawatt hydroelectric facility near Wawa, the opening of another private dam near Misema and the installation of the wind turbine here on the Toronto waterfront.

Two units at the Bruce nuclear reactor plant will soon be producing power for the first time in years. These are units that would have remained closed if there had not been private sector investment and if this government had not created the environment that made such investment attractive. As well, Ontario Power Generation will soon have the first of its Pickering A units putting power back into the system.

All in all, this summer we expect to have 11% more generation available than we did last year—11% more. When you recognize that there has never been one minute in the history of the province of Ontario that any consumer was denied access to power as a result of supply, that there's never been a supply-related blackout or brownout, adding 11% on top of what was already a well-managed system last year gives us an incredible insurance policy. It's an incredible hedge that protects us even though we know Ontario's economy, each year for the last seven years, has grown faster than any of the other G7 nations, has literally been a leader in the industrialized world in expanding the size of its economy and, hand in hand with that, expanding the needs of its electricity sector. More supply means greater reliability, it means stable prices and it means less reliance on imported power.

It is a fact that had we not had the problem with one of the Bruce reactors and the failure of OPG to bring one of the Pickering reactors on line, as we had expected last summer, we would have had to buy power outside this province, if my memory serves me correctly, a grand total of 14 times for as short as five minutes each. In effect, we would have had no shortfall of power.

It is critically important and it is one of the underpinnings of our action plan that Ontario just doesn't need adequate power, it needs adequate supply of domestic power. Every dollar that leaves our province is a dollar that isn't creating a four- to five-time multiplier effect here in Ontario. That includes a dollar spent on coal that goes to Alberta or natural gas that leaves our province.

We recognize that these aren't things that you change overnight, and that's why we've said that no later than 2015 we will have completed the transition to shut down our coal facilities. But I personally think the time frame will be much tighter than that, because our government recognizes that if we can be putting the money into the Ontario manufacture—in your city of Hamilton, for example—of the steel towers and if we can attract more

manufacturers that currently produce almost all the wind turbines made in the world over in Europe, if we can attract them to set up a North American beachhead and take advantage of the fact that Ontario has almost the lowest provincial tax rates of any province or state anywhere in North America, then obviously we will make sure that we will have captured those dollars to the greatest extent possible.

We disagree with the province of Quebec, which has made a commitment—and I want to give them full marks for having made a commitment—to purchase wind power, but they've attached too many strings to it. In fact, they've said that the winning company will have to open a manufacturing plant in the middle of the Gaspésie, hundreds of miles removed from any other market.

Our government does not believe in inspiring another Bricklin. We believe it is appropriate to eliminate the barriers. It's appropriate to create a tax regime that is the most attractive in all of North America. The fact that our revenues have increased \$16 billion as a result of all of those new companies and all of those new jobs that have been attracted to Ontario since we started cutting taxes I think makes that point better than I ever could.

The reality is that there already is the expertise here in Ontario to be dramatically expanding the use of renewable power. It's not widely known, but again you can take great pride that 40% of the dollar value of all the wind turbines that have ever been erected in Canada were sourced in Ontario, either with Ontario material or Ontario labour. A large portion of that came from steel fabricators in the Hamilton area.

Looking forward, we recognize the OEB will continue to deal with an increasing complexity as more and more generators come on-line, because they won't all be the size of the nuclear facilities at Bruce. They won't even be the size of the TransAlta natural gas facility, which is 440 megawatts of power. There will be literally dozens, indeed hundreds, of small-scale generators attracted into this marketplace. The OEB has been directed to deal with the interconnection problems that have served as a barrier to ensure that there is an easy-to-understand process, an affordable process, for those folks who wish to make an investment, for their own house, their own farm or perhaps on a slightly larger scale, in renewable power.

We want to ensure that all of the technical issues are addressed upfront, and people shouldn't be made to jump through all sorts of hoops or suffer long delays. The OEB will play a significant role in making sure those barriers are eliminated and that people have access in a timely fashion to the most up-to-date and technically adroit set of plans and policies to work with the private sector and ensure that the investments they want to make are made here in Ontario.

We know that Ontario Power Generation and ATCO are nearing completion of the Brighton Beach generating station down in Windsor, OPG and TransCanada Pipelines are in the early stages of a new generating station here in Ontario, and Imperial Oil is building a large

generator at their Sarnia plant. Because that investment is in large measure coming from the private sector, it won't add to the staggering debt that the old Ontario Hydro has left us, a debt of \$38 billion and a debt which, I should say, continues to drop every month, notwithstanding the mythology that has been extant since November 11.

It's true, on the one hand, that capping the consumer rate in that account might have suffered a shortfall, but it's a little bit like saying that your MasterCard bill went up and failing to recognize that you'd make twice as great a payment on your Visa bill each month, because the total debt of all the electricity sector continues to decline. I'm very proud to see that as a trend that our government has ensured, has become institutionalized.

Private investment and the move to cleaner forms of generation have happened because this government has put in place the policies that allowed it to happen. New supply will increase reliability, provide price stability and make for a cleaner environment. It's a remarkable achievement, and I want to congratulate all the players: the private sector and, to the extent that they are now heading in the right direction, the folks at Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One.

In the time I'm left I'd like to note some of what I see as the key elements of Bill 23.

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The legislation will make sure that the OEB has an advanced communications role. It's an important step. Decisions that are made by the OEB have long-term and far-reaching implications. The people of Ontario have a right to be properly informed, a right to be kept up to date on board decisions and, most importantly, a right to be told why the OEB made the decisions it did. When it comes to making these decisions, this legislation, if passed, streamlines and speeds up the hearing process, while ensuring that consumers have a chance to offer their views. By speeding up the decision-making process, the legislation, if passed, addresses the issue of retroactive decisions. I spent many years in the retail sector, and I can't imagine contacting customers months later and saying, "By the way, I put the wrong price on that toaster oven. You owe me more money." If passed, Bill 23 will effectively eliminate charges that sit and accumulate month after month.

This proposed legislation also ensures that the OEB is accountable. The legislation establishes an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and independent members to review the board's performance.

If passed by the Legislature, this bill allows the OEB to become self-financing and it also allows it to attract the best people in the industry.

The proposed legislation will also require the OEB to establish an annual regulatory calendar that outlines their priorities, increases accountability and ensures stringent timelines are established and, most importantly, that they meet those timelines.

The Minister of Energy, in introducing this proposed legislation, noted that he used the recent changes to the Ontario Securities Commission as a model. This made a

lot of sense. The changes that the OSC has implemented have created a stronger and far more effective operation. I am confident that, if passed, the changes that we have outlined in Bill 23 will do the same thing for the Ontario Energy Board.

I am very proud of the proposed changes that this bill will bring to the OEB. I want to congratulate the Premier for ordering the review in the first place, and I congratulate the Minister of Energy for doing a topnotch job of listening and making sure that the energy interests of the people of Ontario will be protected for many years to come. It really has to be seen in concert with all of the other changes that we have brought forward and continue to discuss with the industry and with consumers, whether it's interconnection protocols, net metering, demand-side management, energy conservation, a renewable portfolio standard, crown land leasing, or something as important as the government's procurement of power for its own needs, the 20% commitment to buy power from green sources.

We've also made an announcement that the government will henceforth ensure that all new buildings it funds will be energy-self-sufficient. That's unprecedented, and it too will add to the complexity and challenge that the OEB will have to face in years to come. In the past it was very easy for OEB to have an almost one-to-one relationship with Ontario Power Generation, which had by far the overwhelming share of the electricity generation market. But in the future the OEB will be dealing with a vast assortment of generators, large and small. They will come from the traditional wind, nuclear and natural gas forms of generation. But they will also be expanded into biomass and geothermal. There will even be folks who use off-peak power to produce hydrogen, store it and then feed it back into the grid during peak hours. All of these folks need to be encouraged, and the changes we're putting into this bill will do just that.

I'd just like to close by saying, on behalf of Mr Baird, that he also wanted to recognize Paula Day for all of her hard work on OEB reform.

As my very final thought, given that we're approaching the end of this session and it may be my last time to make this comment and pose this question, I would like to ask from all the members their consideration—I know I continue to have the support of members from all parties, the members for Elgin-Middlesex-London, Trinity-Spadina, Whitby-Ajax, Parkdale-High Park, Kitchener Centre and Toronto-Danforth to name just a few—to seek unanimous consent to put the question on third reading for the organ donation bill. There are people literally dying every week waiting on that bill, and I would ask the consideration of the members to follow up on the unanimous support it had at second reading. I would ask consideration to put the question for third reading on that bill.

The Acting Speaker: Am I understanding that you're requesting that unanimous consent now?

Mr Gilchrist: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: It's now been put before the House, a request for unanimous consent. You've heard what it's for. If that doesn't need to be repeated, then I will ask, is there unanimous consent?

I'm sorry, I heard a few noes.

The time for the leadoff debate has now expired.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Hang on. We're not going there.

It's now time for questions and comments. Members have up to two minutes.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Isn't this precious? A government that has been in place for eight years is now telling us about how wonderful their energy policy is.

I want to tell you I just received news today that the good folks at the Legion in Wawa have just been debating whether they can keep their Legion open, because the electricity bill at the Legion in Wawa is now \$3,200 a month. President Dick Watson has called me about this. He is busily getting some petitions together. I have talked to people, including the district governor, Peter Vintinner, about this. It's not just the Wawa Legion, it's many of the service clubs. I know we've had trouble at Richards Landing, at St Joseph Island, where they're facing the same kind of problem. Thessalon is having the same kind of problem. It's because we have an energy policy that is just absolutely at odds with all reality. Especially in the Great Lakes Power area, we have a situation where consumers are paying roughly twice what they did the year before the government provided us with their new re-regulation deregulation policy. It is unacceptable to seniors in the community. Anybody on a fixed income, small businesses, are being ravaged by this policy. To hear the precious, wonderful words about how well we're doing drives a lot of us a little bit crazy.

Great Lakes Power promised the consumers within its area a 20% decrease in price. You know what? They don't have it. Why don't they have it? When we made inquiries, it's because your OEB has not approved the reduction in electricity prices. This is just a shame.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. The sad reality is that we're here with a bill that tries to make hydro privatization and deregulation a little bit better and there isn't anything that's going to make hydro privatization and deregulation better except to get rid of the whole thing and return to public power. That's the kind of bill we should be debating in the Legislature today, instead of Bill 23, which, just like the bill the Conservatives brought in in the fall, which the Liberals supported, attempts to cover up the mess instead of clean up the mess.

The reality is that many big companies right across northern Ontario are now in the process of laying off workers because of high hydro bills. We have the example in Falconbridge where a number of workers are going to be laid off for an extended period of time,

directly related to hydro; problems at Dubreuilville Forest Products; problems in Wawa; problems in the mine outside of Wawa; problems in factories and facilities and plants in one community after another right across northern Ontario. I suspect high hydro was part of the concern DaimlerChrysler had with respect to its decision on Windsor as well.

The problem hasn't gone away. The problem hasn't been fixed. The rate caps that the government brought in last November, which were supported by the Liberals, hide the mess, hide the true cost that we're going to have to pay once those caps come off. What is that cost already? About half a billion dollars that's going to be added on to the backs of taxpayers because of high hydro rates, instead of getting rid of those rates by getting rid of hydro privatization. It didn't work in California. It didn't work in Alberta. It didn't work in Montana. There was no reason it was going to work here, and it didn't. That's why the government, in November, was forced to bring in the rate caps and the rebates, to hide the mess.

I say, get rid of Bill 23. Bring in a bill that brings back public power.

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Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I just want to take the two minutes to comment that my colleagues across the way are right with respect to Wawa. Our government should be doing more with the OEB. I note that the mill at Dubreuilville is laying off employees, in part because of the high distribution costs set by Great Lakes Power and in part because of softwood lumber and other forestry-related issues.

I call upon my own energy minister, my own cabinet and my own government to help Wawa. The solution that they're working on, as all members are aware, is to bring the distribution system of Wawa and Great Lakes Power into the rural and remote rate subsidy program. I think that's what the solution should be. I just want to assure members that they are working on that.

I appreciate the encouragement of people like Mike Brown and Ms Martel, in terms of encouraging the government to move forward. It is a serious issue—

Ms Martel: Be clear on what I encouraged. Come on.

Hon Mr Wilson:—now, Shelley, be good—and one that we need to deal with sooner rather than later. I appreciate the encouragement from across the way. I think there is a solution.

But remember that it's not so much the price of power that's the main issue in Wawa and a few other pockets across the north; it's the distribution charges. In this case, the distribution charges aren't in the hands of the government; they're with Great Lakes Power and other distributors.

Where we can protect consumers, we should move to do so. I agree with other northern members. I, as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, call upon my own colleagues to get working a little faster on this portfolio and get moving.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): Just to add to the comments that both ministers have made with respect to the second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the government has been diddling for eight-plus years now with respect to doing something about not only the provision of energy itself but the cost of that energy for individual members and the business public as well.

Now that they see themselves painted into a corner, they're trying to rush and say, "We're going to amend this, we're going to amend that, we're going to do this, we're going to do that," including the announcement the other day of probably using some generators at a cost of \$100 million for the summer for providing some extra energy. Where have they been? The symptoms were out there, not yesterday or last year but well ahead of time. They had all the time in the world to provide for the necessities of the people which they are saying we have to provide. Of course, now that they have seen the effect of not only the energy cost and the shortage of energy in the last year or so, they are rushing to say, "We have to do this; we have to do that."

I think the people of Ontario, the business community, expected a lot more from this government. Unfortunately, we are down to the wire and they are rushing with a number of announcements. I do hope that we don't have to end up in the same situation as this past year.

The Acting Speaker: Now to respond, the member for Scarborough East has up to two minutes.

Mr Gilchrist: I can certainly spend two minutes expressing my disappointment that the members of the Liberals and NDP would not agree to move forward on an important private member's bill, but I will fight the urge.

The comments of the last member, from York West, certainly bear some response, because there's no doubt that the mythology that was perpetuated last year continues to be advanced by the opposition party, particularly the Liberals, that somehow the market went haywire.

The fact of the matter is that every consumer in this province gets a bill that's somewhere in the 10-cent to 11-cent range. The wholesale part of their bill went from 4.3 to 5.2 cents on the day that the cap was reinstalled. For those following me on the math, that means a 9% increase was attributable to the increase in the price of power.

Having said that, the member has conveniently overlooked the fact that just this past month, without the return to service of three nuclear plants expected over the next few weeks, the price of power had already come back down to 4.51 cents. When you recognize that half of the power that OPG sells, over 3.8 cents, gets returned as a rebate to consumers, it's a wash. In fact, arguably, the province was slightly ahead last month. But at worse, it was a wash. The reality is, the member opposite knows full well that this plan will pay for itself. The suggestion that somehow we shouldn't protect businesses, farmers and consumers by giving them affordable power, as has

been the hallmark of Ontario, certainly all of my life, is shameful. You should be applauding the reinstatement of the cap, applauding our moves to create new generation, and applauding our elimination of all of the barriers that stood in the way when you and the NDP were in government. But instead, you'd rather nitpick. I hope, on the last day, you'll see fit to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Bradley: I feel a bit inadequate speaking after the alternative energy czar of the province, as he's referred to, or the commissioner. It seems that they've had a few commissioners on the other side, for various reasons. It sounds like it's very distinguished, but I find the word "commissioner" is kind of an American term.

I digress from the bill itself. It is worthy of some comment. Quite obviously, after eight years in power, the government has suddenly discovered that the Ontario Energy Board required some considerable change. You will recall, Speaker, because you were in the House listening attentively last fall when the government was in full crisis over the electrical power—by the way, I should say to the table that I am forgoing the lead. What's the terminology I use?

Interjection: You're supposed to stand down the lead.

Mr Bradley: I stand down the lead, so I'm actually on a 20-minute speech. Is that OK? You can change the clock on that.

The Acting Speaker: If I can just advise the member for St Catharines, we're going to need unanimous consent to stand that down. Do I consider that to be put to the House?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: There's a request to stand down the leadoff debate of the official opposition. Is it agreed? I hear agreement. You may now continue in regular rotation.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much. I was looking for the actual terminology. It's "stand down."

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I know you were eager to hear me for an hour, but you'll have to put up with 20 minutes only today. I assure you of that.

As I was saying to you, Mr Speaker, you were aware when the government was in full crisis last fall and wondering what on earth it was going to do because the price of electrical power in the province was skyrocketing. People were calling constituency offices on an hourly basis with stories of genuine concern and hardship. This was not confined only to individual citizens, a lot of them in lower-income brackets, but there were also businesses and companies who were calling and saying, "This is just outrageous, what is happening."

Again, it happened because the government, and I must say personally that I happen to disagree with this, was going to open the market and privatize it. When they did so, there was obviously not adequate time given—if the government was going to proceed in that direction—and adequate consideration to the ramifications of it and

looking at the experience of other jurisdictions. I noted at that time, and you'll recall this habit—you're neutral as you sit in the chair; when you sit in your own chair you're allowed to be partisan—but the first thing this government does when there's some good news is that it gets out its third hand and pats itself on the back. It's large as life to accept the credit, but when there's some responsibility when the news is bad, the fingers start pointing elsewhere. I recall on that occasion that the fingers were pointing at the chair of the energy board, Floyd Laughren, the former Minister of Finance for the province and long-term member of the Legislature. Here they were blaming a person whom they'd referred to as a socialist in years gone by for not being, shall I say, socialist enough in controlling energy prices in the province. I found that both amusing and inaccurate that they would be pointing the finger at Mr Laughren on that occasion.

I have to say that once in a while you have to provide even a modest compliment to the government. If you want to know where they might have gotten this idea to reform the Ontario Energy Board, let me read a letter that I wrote to the Premier on September 27, 2002, before we heard anything about this bill coming into effect.

1630

"Dear Premier

"As you would be aware, electrical power consumers across Ontario have been receiving bills which have reflected enormous increases in the cost of electricity provided to their homes and businesses and they have been expressing justifiable outrage at the magnitude of these increases.

"The Ontario Energy Board was established to deal with the field of energy and one of its responsibilities relates to the cost of electricity to consumers in Ontario.

"Those who have been receiving their electricity bills containing dramatic increases have asked how these increases can be justified and have asked why the Ontario Energy Board, appointed by you, has permitted the electrical utilities to charge such outrageous prices for this commodity.

"It has become clear that the Ontario Energy Board has neither the staff nor the financial resources to carry out its responsibilities appropriately and in addition to this, it is in the position of having to reflect government policy.

"I am writing to you to recommend that you strengthen the Ontario Energy Board significantly by providing it with the resources and personnel to carry out its responsibilities and by giving it direction to protect consumers in this province from unjustified increases in the cost of energy.

"It is obvious that the energy companies have the staff and expertise to prepare their cases which come before the board and that those in opposition to proposed rate increases have, at best, meagre resources to oppose the applications by electrical and gas companies. This places an even greater onus on the employees and members of the Ontario Energy Board to acquire the expertise to

analyze these proposals carefully and to protect consumers from unjustified increases in costs.

“It is important that you deal with this matter at the very earliest opportunity to protect consumers from further gouging.

“As you know, in the past, there was a select committee on hydro affairs and I think that most people would agree that it did an excellent job of dealing with matters related to electrical power in Ontario.

“It is apparent, Premier, that this committee should be re-established with a specific mandate to act as a watchdog on electrical power in this province and I would urge you to act upon this suggestion immediately.”

The Premier has accepted one of the two recommendations I have made. I think what happened at the time was that they were floundering and looking for ideas and along came a letter from the member for St Catharines that had a positive suggestion, and in an act of larceny—is that a permitted word? I guess it is, because I'm saying it in a nice way—the government stole my idea and tried to implement it in this legislation.

I must say I have to be quite reasonable this afternoon in saying that the idea of changing the energy board, even though it's eight years after the government got in power, has some resonance with me. I do believe that what the government had done in the past was, first of all, deliberately weaken the energy board by not providing the necessary funding and staff to carry out its responsibilities. That must sound familiar to you as a former labour critic; we saw that happen in the Ministry of Labour. We've seen it happen in the Ministry of Natural Resources. The minister is here today, and I'm here to help him out by suggesting that he get more resources and staff for his ministry and more clout for his ministry to be able to do the job appropriately. The Ontario Energy Board needs that, and the Ministry of the Environment needs it. Instead what we're getting is a tax cut for the wealthiest in the province, particularly the corporations.

I would rather see the Minister of Natural Resources, who is here today, get the resources rather than give away yet another tax gift to corporations in Ontario that really don't need it. I know he'd be pleased with that suggestion.

There's the letter of September 27, 2002, and here we are in June. We weren't even expected to sit. Everybody in the world expected an election would be over by now, that the government would have its budget and that it would go to the people because there have been millions upon millions of dollars spent on taxpayer-paid government advertising that has been taking place on the airwaves. If you turn on Channel 11 in your community, Cable 12, CH Television—if you turn on any channel—you've got government propaganda on there, paid for by the taxpayer. If you open the newspapers, there are full-page ads. If you open Maclean's magazine, there's a 30-page insert costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. When you go to your mailbox, you pull out glossy

pamphlets telling you what a great job the government is doing.

You and I would say that would be fine, Mr Speaker, if the Conservative Party were paying. But instead the grateful taxpayer—in this case, the ungrateful taxpayer—of Ontario is forced to assume that burdensome cost.

Does the bill have some merit? There are provisions in it that are worthy of consideration, and favourable consideration at that. But it certainly doesn't go as far as we would like to see it go.

The government has not yet dealt in a meaningful way with energy conservation. I suspect they're now cooking up in the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Energy some program where they can advertise. There won't be anything meaningful in conservation; they'll have a big advertising program going on. If they can get the Premier into it, they'll do it; if there has been too much adverse publicity, they'll keep the Premier out of the advertising.

There's no question that the cheapest way to meet the problem of supply in the province is to reduce the need, and you can do that through conservation. When people have their backs to the wall in terms of costs and availability, that's where you find conservation. The state of California, which went through some chaos over the past few years, found that when it got its back to the wall, it went to its consumers and said, “This is how we can save electrical power,” and it was a very effective program to try to save electrical power.

This government cancelled programs that the previous Liberal and New Democratic Party governments had brought in to effect an Ontario for energy conservation. They cancelled those programs and tossed them out. Now they would like to bring them back. They'd like to call the member for Scarborough East the commissioner of alternative fuels and are dangling a few of those carrots in front of us.

By the way, I want to say that the select committee on alternative fuels was a very interesting experience. I like select committees, because they tend to have people check their partisan hats at the door. I know that the Minister of Natural Resources was excited to be on the committee, even temporarily, with some of his own assiduous government members, who were certainly wonderful to work with on that occasion, and the opposition members. I'll tell you, there was a report put out that was very good, I think, a very good report. Unfortunately, few of the recommendations are going to be implemented in any meaningful way.

As well, there's no reference in here to the pollution caused by the production of electricity in this province. I believe that the coal-fired plants have a major impact on air quality and water quality. People ask, “How does it affect water quality?” The St Catharines Standard is running a series of five or six articles at the present time on the state of the Great Lakes. Remember that the Great Lakes and other waterways are impacted by deposition coming from the air—from industrial pollution and from pollution produced by electrical plants in this province

that are coal-fired. It seems to me the government is not moving nearly as quickly as it could to address that particular issue. The Nanticoke plant belches out pollutants. Pilots tell me that when you're flying, you can see the pollutants, or if you're in the CN Tour, that pollutant line comes over our part of the province, the Hamilton-Niagara area, and into New York state. The people in New York state are agitated by that, and it happens elsewhere in the province.

I was watching Bob Rae, the former leader of the New Democratic Party, on Focus Ontario on Saturday. He was making a point that is interesting, and I guess nobody really wants to address it very aggressively at this time. He was wondering how you can buy power at a wholesale rate of about six cents—I'll just use that as an example—and then sell it at 4.3 cents and not have something wrong with that. Who in business would run an operation that way?

There's a way to bring down that power price, and that is to ensure there is sufficient capacity out there and that there are conservation programs. So we need that demand-and-supply circumstance to help solve that problem. The government, however, has got the worst of both worlds. It headed off in a privatization mode and then it pulled back from that, and even the people in the private sector who wanted to invest said, "The government doesn't know where it's going on this, so we're not going to invest." My preference, of course, is for Ontario Power Generation, the public utility, to provide the power in this province.

Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, a member of St Catharines city council and a member of the local hydro commission, has written extensively on the impact of government policy on local hydroelectric commissions. He points out one thing—I don't want to isolate all of them; he's written in *Municipal World* and other publications—but he points out that one of the things that has happened is that they become secretive. For instance, now you can't know how much the people in the upper echelons of our local commission are making—not that that's the primary thing people are looking for. Because they're a competing company now, supposedly, they do not reveal facts and figures for the local people. That's a step backward.

1640

The regulations which have been imposed on these local utilities represent red tape that they believe is not positive red tape. In other words, they could produce electrical power in a more efficient fashion without all these rules and regulations that have been imposed on them. So that's something that has to be looked at.

I know that initially some of the municipalities had councillors who wanted to sell the local utility, just as this government has a fire sale every time it has a problem with money. During the last election they sold Highway 407 for \$3 billion even though it was worth \$10 billion, just so they could show a budgetary surplus for that election. We hear that they're going to have to find

something to sell to achieve the same thing before this election.

So there were people on councils who wanted to sell it; I was against that. There were people who wanted to run it as a profitable business paying dividends.

You have your mind, to a certain extent, on municipal matters right now—I almost said "Mr Mayor"; sorry, a Freudian slip there—Mr Speaker, in Hamilton, but what they want to do is use the profit gained from a local utility so they don't have to raise property taxes. They can say, "Look, we don't have any property tax increase," but people are paying more for their hydro-electric power.

My preference would be to have a nonprofit local utility with openness to the public providing power at cost. I understand the need for a reserve fund to be built up, but essentially power at cost.

I also want to say that I do not have the same confidence that the two government members have expressed on the ability to get power from the Bruce nuclear station and the Pickering nuclear station in a timely fashion. We have had three or four delays so far on firm deadlines to get that power back on-stream. It is way, way over cost—billions of dollars over the estimated cost—and way behind schedule.

Finally, at the last moment, they found a former Tory cabinet minister to head up a commission to look into it. I don't think that will be a very thorough review; not the kind of objective review I would look at. I find that unfortunate, because I think we needed to have a commission to look at that—a public inquiry, if you will—to assess what went wrong—not so much to pin the blame on the government; they're wearing that blame now—but rather to see where the mistakes were made so we don't repeat those in the future.

I want to emphasize again that I believe there's a need for a select committee on hydro affairs. I've sat on that in years gone by. I describe it as a watchdog over hydro affairs. I can't think of a government, if I want to be ecumenical and nonpartisan today, that has controlled Ontario Hydro. I've seen Ontario Hydro control lots of governments; I haven't seen the opposite. Therefore, I think a select committee of the Legislature would be helpful, the independent thinking of the committee.

The member for London West is here. He has some ideas on these matters, and I think that would work very well. I would like to see him on such a committee. If it were at least struck at this time, he would be on it. Whether any of us would be on it after the next election is up to the electorate to make that decision.

People tricked into signing contracts: the Ontario Energy Board didn't have the resources to deal with that. There were a lot of people who were just—I don't usually use these terms—"ripped off" by people coming door-to-door and using high-pressure tactics to get people to sign contracts. There were some people who even forged names on contracts; my friend Jean-Marc Lalonde experienced that at his own office. That was not adequately handled. Obviously, the Ontario Energy Board

would need more power, more resources and more clout to be able to deal with that situation adequately.

What I'm interested in as well, now that I still have a couple of minutes left, is who is getting these contracts for the temporary generators. Somebody told me the other day—and the government will correct me if I'm wrong, I'm sure—that they looked down the list of the people, and there were companies that had contributed to the Conservative Party rather significantly. That's probably purely coincidental. I don't want to make any accusations. It's probably a coincidence that a lot of the companies which are getting those contracts had given big donations to the Conservative Party. I can't think that there would be anything malicious in there, but if someone had a suspicious mind, he or she would come to the conclusion that one and one was two. I'll leave that for others to investigate and find out about.

I also know that since 1995 the price of electricity—I was given this figure by a reliable person, my staff person—has increased by some 142% in Ontario.

The last thing I want to mention is Beck 3. You'll say, "What does it have to do with this?" It has nothing to do with it, but I have a couple of seconds left to say it. I remember going down to Niagara Falls and advocating for the expansion of the tunnels at what we call the Beck 3 project, the generating station in Niagara Falls. My good friend the czar of all alternative energy at the time, when Dalton McGuinty and I were down there recommending this, said, "It can't be done. It's going to cost too much and it's impossible." My friend from Niagara Falls suggested that we were living in another world if we thought that could happen. And lo and behold, when they got into a crisis, they all came down and announced, "We're going to have a Beck 3 project." Well, I'm delighted with that, but as I say, the road to Damascus is very crowded these days.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Ms Martel: I noted that the member for St Catharines talked about the former chair of the OEB, and I think he forgot to mention that in the bill it appears—and I say "it appears"—that the new chair is going to be making more than three times the salary of former chair Floyd Laughren.

Mr Bradley: I did not know that. Wow.

Ms Martel: Now, I say "it appears." I want to be very careful, but it looks to me like shades of Eleanor Clitheroe all over again. Wasn't it enough that there was a yacht and a car and a driver for the kids and \$6 million if she had to leave? Where does this end? I look at what the government wants to do with respect to the OEB, and I say it appears—I'm trying to clarify—that we're just heading down that privatization road once again in terms of the OEB acting now like people in the private sector. And where will that take us? It didn't take us to a very positive situation with respect to Hydro One, and I don't think it's going to do much good with the passage of this bill.

As I said earlier, we shouldn't be dealing with Bill 23; we should be here talking about how to end hydro privatization and deregulation. The bill that's before us attempts to fix a situation that is fundamentally, and I think fatally, flawed; that is, the bill tries to give the OEB some power to try to fix a bit of the mess with respect to hydro privatization. We're not going to be able to fix the mess. It hasn't been fixed with the rate caps and the rebates. That papered over the mess; that covered it up. I think the government hopes that will get them through the next election and then they'll blow off the rate caps, just like Klein did in Alberta after the public paid \$2.3 billion for the pleasure of having private power. But it doesn't fix the mess, and that's what we should be doing: dealing with a bill that gets rid of hydro privatization and deregulation.

Mr Gilchrist: There's no doubt the member opposite, not surprisingly—they do this in every bill—would rather talk about all sorts of things other than the content of the bill itself. In fact, I think some of his speech was as good an expository of why you would need this bill as I could ever come up with. The reality is, it does fix past problems. Talking about issues that occurred eight, 10, 20 years ago that your government didn't fix and the NDP didn't fix, standing here and suggesting that you threw up your hands and cried uncle in the face of the awesome power of Ontario Hydro—and you put it on the record here today that they were the tail wagging your dog—is a staggering admission, but it's the reinforcement of why we have moved forward.

I didn't hear you say that any of the issues to expand consumer protection, to expand access, to eliminate retroactive charges, any of those things were bad. So maybe in the two-minute summary, you'll have a chance to stand up and say which specific sections of the bill we're debating you think are a problem. We would be more than happy to hear your comments, as we always are when there is reasoned and rationed debate in this House. If you want to simply finger-point or look in your rear-view mirror, there's not a lot I'm going to disagree with. It's precisely because there have been problems in the system that we have brought forward a far more progressive, arm's-length approach to the regulator out in the electricity sector.

The suggestion that the price of power has increased 142% is really quite remarkable. You might want to name the name of the staffer and give some hard numbers. It's fun with numbers in here sometimes. Remember, it was capped at 4.3 cents back in 1995; it's capped at 4.3 cents today. The math class I went to says that that's not a 142% increase; it's exactly the same price.

1650

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm pleased to be able to comment on the remarks made by the member for St Catharines. I believe that there are few people in the House as qualified to speak on this issue as the member for St Catharines. Certainly, he spells out clearly that the cheapest way to meet the needs of the province is to reduce the need. He also mentioned that coal-fired plants

have a major impact on our environment; that's worth repeating because it's a very significant point for now and the future.

What he was saying, really, is that good energy conservation is good energy management; good energy management, obviously then, becomes good energy conservation. I believe that it's something that all of us in this House would do well to preach to the people that we represent and the people across Ontario: that we all have a hand in this and ensuring that we have adequate energy for the future.

The select committee on hydro affairs is a very important initiative that I wish someone had the courage to champion because it is a very necessary thing for the future.

I also think that it's important for us to understand that this bill, Bill 23, gives enormous powers to the government again. We're looking at an advisory committee that's going to be hand-picked by the government. We all know from historical evidence that that's not the best way to go. I think this government will run into serious problems with that. I also think that consumers who have been negatively impacted in the past have no protection with this legislation, so I think there's a lot to object to with this bill.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for St Catharines. He speaks in measured tones but he usually gets out what needs to be said. I commend his environmental stance about us needing to reduce the needs. It's all-important, of course, to say that we need more electrical capacity, but I would suggest that we may not need that capacity if all of us learned to be just a little bit more energy-efficient. At the same time, we would not need the capacity of the coal-fired plants which we fire up as soon as the weather starts to get hot. We produce smog all over this province, and we would not need to do that at all were we just a little bit more efficient in terms of our electrical needs, particularly in the summer months but this time it's not unique to the summer months.

I was also quite impressed with what he had to talk about on the nature of the new board that might be coming in and looking at who that that new board might be. We have the name of a chairman but we don't know who all the players are going to be—how many of them are going to be consumers; we don't know how many of them are going to be environmentalists. I would suggest that if there's one thing that this new board is going to need, it's some high-powered, professional, dedicated environmentalists who can look into where our electricity is going to come from in terms of renewable energy, even though that always will cost more. Maybe I shouldn't say "always," because technology is a wonderful thing and those costs may be starting to come down, but we certainly do need to look at what he has talked about in terms of hand-picking a board that can work. Now, I'm not suggesting for a minute—I think the board is necessary, and I'll get into that when it's my turn to speak.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I like this exercise of being able to respond. First of all, the member for Nickel Belt appropriately raised the issue of the fact that the new chair will be making three times what the last chair did. I was not aware of the exact figures that she talked about, but it is interesting and it certainly fits the pattern of how this government has dealt with Ontario Power Generation and anything to do with electricity. The sky seems to be the limit in terms of salaries and perks. But for many months, the sky was also the limit in terms of the costs to the consumer.

The member for Scarborough East talked about the content of the bill. I thought he addressed that very appropriately. Certainly it is a long time in coming with this government. It was only when it got into a crisis, in which it had to be seen to be reacting, and only after the Premier received a letter from me making some concrete suggestions on how he might deal with this matter, that we had any action take place.

The member for Sudbury emphasizes a need for a select committee on hydro affairs. For members of this House's edification, I recall that back in 1979-80, the select committee on hydro affairs of the day, in a minority Parliament, was dealing with the problem of the boilers at Pickering nuclear generating station. How nice it would be to have that committee back in action.

The member for Beaches-East York underlined, I think appropriately, the need for having environmentalists on this board. I happen to be the Chair of the standing committee on government agencies, which deals with government appointments. I am neutral, so I can't observe what is happening, but others on the committee, in the opposition, have told me that there is a preponderance of adherence to the Conservative Party. Those who have made donations and worked hard in Conservative campaigns appear to get appointments. As the neutral Chair, I can't make that observation, but others certainly have done so.

The Acting Speaker: It is now time for the leadoff debate for the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I intend to use the full hour, because obviously there is a lot to speak about here. So without further ado, let's get started.

I want to review just the last few years. I want to review a government that said the deregulation and privatization of our hydro system weren't going to cost people more money; they weren't going to drive up their electricity bills. I want to review the statements: "Gee, they replace energy ministers about every six months because that's how long it takes them to lose their credibility." Let's see, there was Norm Sterling, then there was Wilson, then there was Stockwell and now there's poor John Baird, who's left holding the bag after what everyone else said has been proven to be false. Chris Stockwell: "There won't be any electricity shortages." Last summer, virtually every second week,

the IMO was saying to people, "Please turn down your air conditioner, please turn out the lights, before we have a brownout or a blackout."

That is the history, and now the reality, of the statements of this government. Go across this province and ask people to take out their hydro bill now and compare it with their hydro bill of two years ago and they will show you that it has doubled. The hydro bill is twice what it used to be. This government wants to say, "Oh, yes, but we froze the rate." But if anyone looks at their hydro bill now, they find 10 bills on the hydro bill, and when you add up the 10 different items, the figure at the bottom is twice what it used to be.

Is this legislation going to do anything about that? No. Is it going to do anything in terms of making people's hydroelectricity more affordable? Not a thing. Is it going to do anything about the fact that the government had to go out and pay \$100 million this summer for emergency generators—\$250,000 a megawatt? Is it going to do anything to ease that supply situation? No. Is it going to do anything for those people across the province who had these private energy marketers come to their doorstep, lie to them, manipulate them and intimidate them into signing contracts which cause people to have to pay far more for their electricity? Is it going to do anything about that? No. Nothing.

1700

What is this bill going to do? Not much at all. This is another effort by a desperate government to try to cover up the problem they've created, to try to cover up the fact that we are in danger of losing Ontario's electricity independence, that we're in grave danger of not having enough electricity, and that for all kinds of industries, businesses and just individual people across this province, paying the hydro bill is now a serious problem. This bill won't do a damned thing about any of those problems, but it's another propaganda effort by the government to try to cover up and temporarily hide the problem, hoping they can get through the next election. It's not going to work, because more and more people across this province are becoming very aware of how serious the problems are and about the fact that this government doesn't have any answers. In fact, virtually everything it does is making the problem worse.

I just want to discuss for a minute the magnitude of the problem, what we're really talking about here.

The reality of Ontario's economy for the past 80 years has been that it was built upon the availability of an affordable supply of electricity and a reliable and predictable supply of electricity. Speaker, you're from Hamilton. I can tell you that Hamilton today would not have a steel industry and the thousands of jobs that depend upon that steel industry but for the fact that we had public power in Ontario, power available at cost; not cost plus 40% profit for this guy, a 10% fee for somebody over here and a 20% commission for someone over there but public power, power at cost. That is what brought the steel industry to Hamilton.

I can tell you that those people who come from places like Oshawa, Whitby, Oakville, Windsor or London-St Thomas, where we see a number of auto assembly plants—but for the existence of public power, publicly owned hydroelectricity providing electricity at cost, we would not have an auto assembly industry in this province, nor an auto parts industry either. These are all industries that are heavily dependent upon electricity. It forms a very big part of their daily cost of doing business. What attracted them to Ontario was the availability of affordable hydroelectricity and the reliable, predictable and dependable provision of hydroelectricity in the province.

Let's go to the pulp and paper industry across northern Ontario, another very intensive user of hydroelectricity. Virtually all of those paper machines and all the equipment you find in a paper mill run on electricity. If the price of electricity goes too high, these mills shut down. The sawmill industry, the mining industry, the smelting industry, the refining industry of northern Ontario, the mines in Sudbury, Timmins and Red Lake, all of these are heavily dependent upon an affordable, reliable supply of electricity. That has been the economic underpinning of Ontario. That is the fundamental underpinning of Ontario's economy: the existence of public power, affordable power, reliable power, power at cost.

What has this government done? What they've done is, they've said, "We no longer believe in power at cost." This is a government that says you should invite all of the fee takers, the commission takers and the profit takers into the system and, if it results in the price of hydro doubling or tripling, that's OK.

The evidence is occurring across this province that it's not OK. Just a few weeks ago the business reporter in the Toronto Globe and Mail, Eric Reguly—not a friend of mine but a former friend of the government—pointed out that one of the reasons DaimlerChrysler decided not to build a new assembly plant, not to establish 2,500 new jobs in the Windsor area, is because they looked at the predicted price of power in this government's privatized, deregulated hydro market and said, "This is too expensive. It is not economic for us to build a new assembly plant here when you can see predicted power rates that are this high." That was in southern Ontario.

The employers in Belleville—the Belleville area represents something in the neighbourhood of 35,000 jobs—literally have petitioned this government, pointing out that privatized and deregulated hydroelectricity is not only terminating some existing jobs, but is writing off the possibility of establishing new businesses, new industries and new jobs. Why? Because the potential businesses, the potential industries are saying, "We cannot afford these power prices. We cannot afford them."

Let's go further afield. In my riding of Kenora there is a paper mill owned by Abitibi Consolidated. The price of their electricity in a deregulated, privatized market has become too expensive for them to run the paper mill some weeks. In a regulated, not-for-profit, power-at-cost market, they could predict what their hydro price was

going to be, what their costs were going to be, what they had to charge for their paper and how they had to manage their other costs so they could stay in business. But on too many occasions this winter, they would come to work on a Monday morning and discover that the price of electricity in the privatized market—which is what they have to pay, because most industries and most businesses are not covered by these phony rate caps; they have to pay that completely privatized, deregulated price—was not 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, which is what this government wants you to believe, but 39 cents, 40 cents and 45 cents a kilowatt hour. You didn't have to get out the calculator to figure out that they couldn't make paper that week. So they tell everyone, "We're shutting down for the next two weeks. You're on layoff. We can't afford to make paper."

The Abitibi mill in Kenora is not unique. Tembec's mill at Smooth Rock Falls is going to shut down and lay off people. What is a fundamental part of the problem? The price of electricity. They cannot afford to pay a price for electricity that is up there at 20 cents, 30 cents, 40 cents a kilowatt hour. Some 500 jobs, the heart of a community, and lots of other jobs are dependent on it. Why? Once again, this government says, "Oh, it's just fine to privatize and deregulate our electricity system. It won't have any effect." Well, it's killing job after job.

Falconbridge in Timmins is shutting down their refinery, not for two months or three months but what looks like five months this summer—500 jobs, 500 people on layoff. Why? They can't afford the price of privatized, deregulated hydroelectricity. In fact, I'm told that they are now even looking at moving some of the operation permanently into Quebec. Why? Because Quebec has had the wisdom to understand that privatized, deregulated electricity is a job killer. Quebec has had the wisdom to understand that having not-for-profit, power-at-cost, publicly owned hydro is a fundamental economic advantage. So Falconbridge can move much of their smelting to Quebec, lower their costs substantially, but it potentially kills about 500 jobs in Ontario.

Let's go to Wawa. I invite all the government members to go to Wawa. You should really go to Wawa, because you know what? They are no less than five hydro dams literally within the municipal limits of Wawa. It's up there in the rocks above Lake Superior, so it's simply falling water that goes through those dams and through the turbines. Do you know what it costs to produce hydroelectricity in those five hydro dams that are within the geographic boundary of Wawa? It only costs about half a cent a kilowatt hour. But in the privatized, deregulated market, are people in Wawa paying half a cent a kilowatt hour? No. If you look at their hydro bill and quantify it all in terms of the number of kilowatt hours used and what they're paying, people are paying in excess of 15 cents a kilowatt hour. That's what it works out to. Imagine that; they're paying 30 times what it costs to produce the electricity, and this government says that's good.

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The private company didn't do anything ingenious to create this power. It was a natural resource of Ontario. It's something that belongs to all the people of Ontario. But this government has now privatized it and deregulated it and they're allowing somebody to put the screws to the people of Wawa, to charge them 30 times what it costs to produce that electricity.

What does that mean for Wawa? Well, Dubreuil Forest Products used to employ about 450 people. Now, with the latest layoffs, it's down to about 150. It's killed 300 jobs. The gold mine in Wawa can't afford to pay their hydro bill. They are looking at shutting down—a couple of hundred more jobs. There are two supermarkets in Wawa; one of them is shutting down. They can't afford to pay their hydro bill. And so it goes. Across Ontario we are seeing more and more businesses, more and more industries simply saying, "We have to. We can't afford to pay these hydro bills."

The government is going to say, "Oh, but there's the increasing value of the Canadian dollar and that's a problem." Speaker, I invite the government members to read your friend Eric Reguly's article in the *Globe and Mail*. He says, "You can't do anything about the devaluation of the American dollar but you could certainly do something about hydro prices. You could certainly do something about the supply of hydroelectricity, namely, don't privatize it, don't deregulate it."

Is this bill going to do anything about that? Nothing. It won't do one single thing, but it will attempt to paper over the problem. In the short term, in the run-up to an election campaign, it will attempt to convince people that something is being done. I want people to understand that this will not do anything about hydro bills that have doubled. This will not do anything about pulp mills, paper mills, sawmills, mining operations, steel-making operations and other operations that are shutting down or laying people off. It won't do anything about DaimlerChrysler looking at projected electricity prices and saying, "No, we're not going to build a new assembly plant in Windsor. The electricity is too expensive." This won't do anything about that.

This is really sort of a second stage. Earlier last fall, November 11, Remembrance Day, the government made their announcement that they're going to establish rate caps. The government wants to pretend that that's going to look after the problem. Well, that sad, sorry game has been tried before, in Alberta, by Ralph Klein. After deregulating electricity in Alberta and trying to force many of the publicly owned utilities there to privatize and sell off—for example, Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat—after that deregulation-privatization strategy resulted in hydro prices going through the roof, in a run-up to an election, what does Klein do? He sends out a rebate cheque. Some might say it's a bribe, but I wouldn't say that. Then he puts in place a temporary rate cap and says to people, "This is going to solve the problem." Eight months after the election, what happened? Off come the rate caps, and hydro bills in Alberta are higher than ever;

so high in rural Alberta in fact that they have now had to create a review to find out why hydro prices are so high.

There's no mystery here. If you take something that previously was provided at cost—that means, whatever it costs to produce the hydro electricity, that is what it's sold to people for—and then you introduce a profit-taker over here, a fee-taker over there and a commission-taker over there, and they all want to line their pockets with hard-working people's money—yes, the hydro bill's going to go up.

I invite people across Ontario, take out your hydro bill and look at all the 10 or 11 new charges there. The people that are responsible for many of these new charges don't generate electricity, they don't transmit electricity, they don't distribute electricity. They don't do anything except to try to take money out of your pocket for a fee, a commission or a profit. They do nothing but they want to get into your pocket. The Conservatives and the Liberals say that's OK. The Conservatives and the Liberals think that's the way to go. It is costing us jobs, it is costing us the potential of jobs in the future and it is costing people far too much money.

But still, Conservatives want to try to finesse this through the next election. Liberals hope the issue sort of disappears in the next election, because they don't want to talk about it either. Why don't they want to talk about it? I want to read the Liberal position. I just happen to have a copy of a Liberal fundraising letter. This is an "Energy sector reception for Dalton McGuinty." This is a letter that went out in early 2001, sent to a lot of the corporate powers that be on Bay St. It basically says:

"Dear corporate president:

"We are writing to invite you to a reception to meet Dalton McGuinty, leader of the official opposition."

Then it goes on to say:

"Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario."

What does that mean? That means Liberals, just like Conservatives, believe in this privatization-deregulation fiasco.

I want to speak just for a minute about some of the incredible propaganda that's been put out over the last three or four years. I had an opportunity to read the Ontario Hydro report of 1995. I'd like all the Conservative members to read it, because it was signed by your bagman, your golfing buddy, Bill Farlinger. Bill Farlinger is appointed to be the chair of the Ontario Hydro board in November 1995. The year is basically over, all of the cost control measures have been put in place etc. He is appointed at the end and he gets to sign the Ontario Hydro annual report. What does he say in that 1995 annual report that comes out early in 1996? What he says is that in fact Ontario Hydro has substantially reduced its costs, it's making money, it has been able to pay down a substantial amount of its debts. He points out that in the beginning of 1996 Ontario Hydro's long-term debt stands at \$31.4 billion.

The government today tells us that the hydro system's debt stands at \$38 billion. They tell us that's an improvement. I want the people of Ontario to ask the question, what have they gotten for \$6.5 billion more in debt? Did they get a new generating station somewhere? Can't find any. Did they get a new transmission line somewhere, an upgraded transmission line? Can't find any of those. Did they get some new technology that was worth \$6.5 billion? Can't find any of that either. Almost all of that's been sold off.

I want the Conservative members, during the election campaign, to go out there and tell people how your strategy of privatizing and deregulating our hydro has added \$6.5 billion in debt and the people of Ontario have nothing to show for it—nothing.

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I can tell you how you can rack up that kind of debt in a hurry. Let me just talk about Eleanor Clitheroe, because she exemplifies how you can rack up a whole lot of Hydro debt and a whole lot of costs on people's hydro bills in a hurry.

When the Conservatives said, "Privatize and deregulate," they took Ontario Hydro, split it up into Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, the Electrical Safety Authority and then the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. But they told OPG and Hydro One, "You behave like a private corporation. You behave like those big dogs out there on Bay Street. You raise your salary. You go for the big fat expense account. You go for the big severance allowance and the car allowance."

What did Eleanor Clitheroe do? When she worked for an Ontario publicly owned, not-for-profit corporation, she was paid about \$500,000 a year. As soon as she was told, "Behave like a private corporation," what did she want for pay? She wanted \$2.2 million a year in salary and bonuses—not bad money. Not a bad job, I guess, if you can find it. But that wasn't the end. If she decided to leave or if she was fired from Hydro One, she wanted a \$6-million severance allowance. She wanted what amounted to a \$1-million-a-year retirement pension and she wanted a \$173,000 car allowance. I've been going around the province for a year and a half trying to find a car that costs \$173,000 a year. That's some car. But that's what the Conservatives set up for her. And she wanted a \$330,000 limousine allowance. I don't think anyone can figure out why you need a \$173,000 car allowance and then a \$330,000 limousine allowance.

All of that gets added to people's hydro bills. That's why people's hydro bills go through the roof: because Eleanor Clitheroe, like the profit takers, the fee takers and the commission takers, wanted to line her pockets. Because the Conservatives said, "It's OK. Behave like those big dogs on Bay Street."

I'm sorry, I forgot the yacht. Eleanor also wanted to have a yacht paid for and provided at public expense.

I say to people across Ontario, this is what hydro privatization and deregulation does. It no longer becomes a matter of having an affordable service for people, an affordable service that people need every day. It

becomes, “How much can the executives expand their pay? How much can the profit takers, the fee takers and the commission takers get into your pocket?”

There is a fundamental reason why hydro privatization and deregulation won't work, and it's this. The Conservatives and the Liberals try to say, “This is like any other market. This is like selling cars.” Well, it's not like selling cars. If tomorrow Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Honda, Toyota and Nissan all tripled the price of cars, you and I wouldn't be captive consumers. We wouldn't have to go out and pay three times the price for a car. Why? We could keep the old car that we've got and fix it up. We could buy a second-hand car. We could agree to car pool or maybe we could just say, “I'll take public transit or I'll walk.” But we wouldn't be captive consumers.

In electricity, if you do what Enron did in California—oh, by the way, this government spent a lot of time talking to Enron. They invited those crooks from Enron, those swindlers from Enron to come to Ontario and help them design this hydroelectricity market. But when you privatize Hydro and you put a company like Enron in control, they have captive consumers. The reality of electricity is that you need it every day, and we all need it. And you can't store it. You can't find a cupboard somewhere and put some away for a rainy day. Whatever the price that's being charged that day is, that's what you have to pay.

In California, Enron and their co-conspirators were responsible not for hydro prices going up by five times, 10 times, not even 20 times, but 40 times, and people and industry were forced to pay it. That's why this doesn't work. You're putting an essential service that people need every day, that can't be stored, that we all need, in the hands of a profit-driven corporation that has every incentive to do what Enron did in California—manipulate the market, create an artificial electricity shortage and then drive the price through the roof. That's what we've seen in Ontario.

Just an example of how absurd this has been: the people of Ontario used to own four hydro plants on the Mississagi River, halfway between Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury. These were very efficient hydro plants. Again, they generate electricity at about half a cent a kilowatt hour. This low-cost electricity should be provided to the people of Ontario on that kind of basis. But what did this government do? This is a fascinating story. More people have to find out about this story.

You'll remember that a year and five months ago there was a Conservative leadership contest, and Ernie Eves wanted to become the leader of the Conservative Party and Premier of Ontario. So this company that's now big in the private hydro market, Brascan—Brascan has a number of subsidiaries—contributed in excess of \$140,000 to Mr Eves's campaign to become leader of the Conservative Party. They contributed \$140,000 in January and February. Mr Eves becomes leader of the Conservative Party in March and then shortly after becomes Premier of Ontario.

What happens shortly after he becomes leader of the Conservative Party and Premier of Ontario? The four hydro generating stations on the Mississagi River are sold to those Brascan companies at a fraction of their worth, at a minor fraction of what it would cost to build those hydro dams and those hydro generators anew. Then, on May 1, the electricity market opens; that is, there's no longer a regulated price and corporations like Brascan can charge whatever they want.

We get into the hot months of July, August and September, and what does Brascan do? Brascan makes \$8.8 million profit on hydro dams that they paid a pittance for just four months earlier. That's not a bad investment. You give \$150,000 to Ernie Eves in January and February, and then in July, August and September you get to make \$8.8 million profit on something that used to belong to the people of Ontario. You get to sock it to the people and charge them not 10 cents a kilowatt hour, not 20 cents a kilowatt hour but 40 and 50 and 60 cents a kilowatt hour for power that used to be theirs. That's how badly people are being ripped off in this scenario.

By the way, the environment be damned in this process. Brascan was making so much money that they literally emptied the lake, they literally opened the lake and drained it because, after all, they could make lots of money in terms of privatized, deregulated hydro. The environment be damned, consumers be damned, a sense of economic justice for the people of Ontario be damned. In a privatized, deregulated hydro market the only thing that matters is, “How much money can we make?” and that's exactly what's been going on. The pitiful events, the terrible events on the Mississagi illustrate that to a T.

The government has gotten itself into such an electricity shortage problem that this summer they had to go out and secure temporary generation for \$100 million. As I said earlier, it works out to a quarter-million dollars a megawatt, and this government thinks that's a good deal. I suppose if you were paying a quarter-million dollars a megawatt and it was power that was going to be there for 40 or 50 years, that might be good, but this power is only going to be there, as we understand it, for six, maybe 18 months. This is completely temporary, but this government says, “That's a good deal.”

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How many people do you know in this province who could afford to pay a quarter of a million dollars for a megawatt of power? Could the steel mills in Hamilton? Could the paper mills in Kenora, Fort Frances, Dryden, Thunder Bay, Terrace Bay, Marathon, Sault Ste Marie, Kapuskasing, Iroquois Falls, Smooth Rock Falls and Espanola afford to pay? No. Could the mines and smelters and refinery in Sudbury afford to pay that? No. How about the smelter and refinery and mines in Timmins? No. This is completely unaffordable. This is the kind of hydro pricing that will certainly kill jobs, yet this government now says, “This is a good deal.” This illustrates how completely bankrupt the whole scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation really is.

That is but the tip of the iceberg, because what's really involved here is that you have to interpret hydro privatization and deregulation in terms of a number of the trade agreements that Conservative and Liberal governments in Ottawa have signed. What the NAFTA agreement essentially says is that once you move down this road of privatization and deregulation, once you say that hydroelectricity is a privatized commodity, companies can sell it wherever they can get the highest price. Even that electricity that's produced on the Mississagi River is no longer our electricity. Even that electricity that's produced at the Sir Adam Beck stations on the Niagara River is no longer necessarily our electricity.

If New York City is prepared to pay double for that electricity, then it's their electricity, and if the steel mills in Hamilton want that electricity, they would have to pay double too. If the auto plants in Windsor or St Thomas or Bramalea or Oshawa want that electricity, they would have to pay double too. That is the further piece of ugly business that hasn't reared its awful head yet, but it's fully, additionally part of this package. Even the electricity we produce in Ontario, in a completely privatized and deregulated market, is no longer our electricity. It belongs to whoever is prepared to bid the highest for that electricity. If somebody in Baltimore or Washington or New Jersey or New York or Boston or Chicago or Detroit is prepared to pay double or triple, then that becomes the prevailing price in Ontario.

I actually had a chance to talk at length with some of the Brascan executives in Sault Ste Marie. I said to them, "What is your corporate strategy in this scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation that the Conservatives and Liberals think so highly of?" The head of the corporation—well, he was head of the corporation then; he's no longer the head now—was very open with me. He said, "We have already started an application to put a transmission cable under the St Marys River and transmit much of this electricity down to the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor. If you look at the average price of electricity, the average price in that corridor is about 40% or 50% higher than the prevailing average price in Ontario, so we would like to sell as much electricity into that market as we can." Then I said to him, "Once you get that cable under the river and you can transmit all your electricity down there and sell it for 40% or 50% more and sell it in American dollars, what happens to the consumers in the Sault Ste Marie area? What happens to the citizens of Sault Ste Marie? What happens to Algoma Steel? What happens to all those people who live along the north shore of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay and the people of Wawa?" He was very blunt. He said, "Well, we're not going to charge less for the electricity in Ontario. As soon as we can establish a price that's 40% or 50% higher in the Milwaukee-Chicago corridor, then that's what everybody in Ontario will have to pay—40% or 50% more." And I said, "Won't that kill jobs at Dobreuil Forest Products, for example? Won't that make it harder for Algoma Steel to stay in business? Won't that make it harder for consumers in the Sault Ste Marie area?" He

looked at me and said, "Well, that's not our problem. In a privatized, deregulated market, our only issue is: how much money can we make? How high can we get the price and how much money can we make? If Algoma Steel goes out of business and 4,000 people lose their jobs—not our problem. If Dobreuil Forest Products goes out of business and 400 people lose their jobs—not our problem. If Sault Ste Marie loses the fundamental building block of its economy—not our problem."

They're only interested in selling the electricity for the highest price possible, and if that means moving into Chicago and Milwaukee, that's completely and totally what they're prepared to do. People across this province need to know that's what happens in the further iteration of Hydro privatization and deregulation. That won't happen overnight. But if this government gets an opportunity to continue down this road with the support of the Liberals, that is certainly already in the cards. That is certainly already on the card table.

Now there are some other issues that I want to address—and it's not just me who is saying this. I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of people who've worked in the electricity industry in Ontario, both from the private side—that is, they have worked on the financial side as investment bankers or accountants—and people who have been engineers, for example, chief of the nuclear division or chief of electricity production for what was Ontario Hydro. They sent me a paper. They're very clear about their concerns.

They said, "Unless the province has firm control of its electricity supply sector, we may be unable to fend off unwelcome pressure by US energy interests, a serious threat to our electrical energy independence and to the price advantage that Ontario 'now enjoys with respect to all of our neighbouring US states.'"

They're very clear that's at risk. They raise the further point—and my Liberal colleagues should listen to this—"We are greatly concerned that the current US Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade initiative to get General Agreement on Trade Services (GATS) approval of a common North American deregulated energy market is the tip of the iceberg on a series of US initiatives to gain control of our electrical energy resources."

Guess what? Liberal cabinet ministers in Ottawa are all too willing to talk to US energy interests about giving them greater control over Canada and Ontario's electricity supply, just as Mr McGuinty said he is a consistent supporter of the move to a deregulated, privatized electricity system.

So the more you go down this road, the worse it gets: the more we lose our electricity independence, the more the price of our electricity and we lose the cost-of-electricity advantage that has been a fundamental underpinning of Ontario's industry and jobs. That's where this is headed.

As I said, Conservatives don't want this to be an issue in the upcoming election. That is why they're doing everything possible to bring in temporary rate caps. That

is why they've presented this current piece of legislation, once again, to try to paper over the problem. That's why Liberals want this issue to disappear too. Liberals want to go through the campaign pretending that Hydro privatization and deregulation isn't an issue.

I've got news for both of them. New Democrats are going to ensure that every citizen knows that this is a critical issue for Ontario consumers, Ontario industry, Ontario jobs and Ontario's environment.

I want to spend just a few minutes talking about the environment. When this government was elected in 1995 and immediately started down the almost religious road of Hydro privatization and deregulation, one of the first things they killed was an energy conservation and energy efficiency strategy that was already being built here in Ontario.

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There was the green communities program, where a number of communities across this province were bringing together the carpenters, gas fitters, electricians and roofers in the community, and they were doing energy audits on their public buildings and on individual residences. They were giving people estimates of how much it would cost to make their homes, their apartment buildings, the schools, the community centres and the hospitals more energy efficient. Many people were taking up the green communities strategy. They were actually taking steps to make their homes more energy efficient. They were actually taking steps to lower their use of electricity, heating oil and natural gas. Then, with the money they'd save on their hydro bill or their heating bill, they could pay off the loan that allowed those energy retrofits to take place, and further down the road, after the loan was paid off, they would be paying less to heat and light their homes.

What did the Conservatives do? They killed that strategy.

In 1993, people at Ontario Hydro came before a legislative committee and outlined a strategy whereby we could reduce our consumption of electricity in the province as a whole by over 5,000 megawatts. Imagine that. That's the equivalent of a couple of Darlington. Darlington cost \$15 billion to build. Imagine being able to introduce energy efficiency like that. You wouldn't use as much, so you wouldn't have to construct two Darlington. You wouldn't have to have those coal-burning plants belching smoke and smog and CO₂ every day. You wouldn't have to have some of the other environmental degradation we've seen.

But what did the Conservatives do? They killed the energy conservation and energy efficiency strategies. Why? Well, if you're wining and dining Enron and companies like Enron to begin to provide hydroelectricity, Enron is not interested in electricity conservation. Enron is not interested in electricity efficiency or energy efficiency. Enron is interested in driving up the price as high as they can and then selling as much power as they can, because that's how they can make the most money.

This government now wants to talk about energy efficiency and energy conservation, but it's the very government that killed the energy conservation and energy efficiency strategies that were already in place. So I say shame on you for trying to hoodwink the people of Ontario yet again. You have not been environmentally responsible. You have not been environmentally enlightened. If anything, you have created a terrible environmental situation.

I want to investigate the so-called energy efficiency incentives they've brought out. They'll tell people, "We'll waive the PST if you go out and buy an energy-efficient fridge." That may make for good public relations and good advertising, but in fact it does next to nothing in terms of providing an incentive for hard-working people who are already having a hard time paying their hydro bills to afford to go out and buy an energy-efficient fridge, air conditioner, washer or dryer. It doesn't do any of those things. The so-called energy efficiency strategies that this government has put together in the last five months are nothing more than another propaganda campaign. It doesn't result in effective energy efficiency at all. It merely allows them to run another government ad. But as we've seen, government ads aren't doing much, other than create more cynicism out there.

I want to use the remaining time to outline for the people of Ontario what we really need to do. I want to tell people, you won't hear this from Liberals and you won't hear this from Conservatives.

Hydro privatization and deregulation have been a disaster virtually everywhere. The Conservatives: Jim Wilson, a former energy minister, used to stand in this Legislature and say, "Oh, California is the model. We ought to follow California. We ought to do, in terms of hydro deregulation and privatization, what they've done in California." Then the lights went out in California and hydro bills went through the roof. The latest estimate of the cost of hydro privatization and deregulation for the California economy, the all-in cost, is \$100 billion. That is what one economist at Stanford University has estimated the cost to be. It's been a disaster there. California is now trying to figure out how they disassemble the last elements of hydro deregulation there.

Then this government used to refer to Great Britain. They used to say, "Well, privatize and deregulate the way they did in Britain." In Britain, the Labour government has had to go in and float a \$4-billion loan to British Energy to keep them afloat so they can continue to produce electricity for consumers in Great Britain. Not only that; they've had to go in and reregulate the market. They've actually had to put in place a new regime of regulation to force down the price so that consumers in Great Britain can afford their hydroelectricity.

They used to speak about New Zealand. New Zealand continues to experience electricity brownouts and blackouts and electricity prices that continue to skyrocket.

Then they used to refer to Alberta, but their hero, Ralph Klein, has had to call a review after the phony

price caps and the phony rebates on the hydro bill were over. After the last election was over, hydro prices in Alberta skyrocketed again, so now they've had to review yet again why Alberta has gone from being a jurisdiction with some of the most affordable hydro prices before deregulation to being one that now has, like Ontario, some of the highest electricity prices after deregulation.

Montana is a bit like Wawa. Montana is a state that is more or less in the Rocky Mountains, so you get these rapid rivers flowing out of the Rocky Mountains through the state of Montana. Before deregulation, Montana had some of the most affordable hydroelectricity prices in the United States. This has been documented on 60 Minutes. In fact, 60 Minutes was so fascinated, they did not one, but two programs illustrating the rip-off that happened in Montana. After they privatized and deregulated, did the price of electricity for Montana consumers double? No. Did it triple? No, it went up four times. People's hydro bills went up four times.

This has been a disaster wherever it's been tried, and yet Conservatives and Liberals want to take the fundamental underpinning of the Ontario economy and turn it over to some of the same corporate crooks, the Enrons that so badly screwed things up in California, that so terribly manipulated people in Montana and continue to manipulate people in Alberta.

This is their energy strategy, their economic strategy for Ontario. I say shame on Conservatives and Liberals for buying into a strategy which will only put money in the pockets of their corporate friends but which will take a great deal of money, great sums of money, from the ordinary consumers of Ontario and undermine our fundamental industries and a fundamental part of our economy.

What do we need to do? First, let us recognize that neither of the jurisdictions immediately to our east and west, Quebec and Manitoba, is going to privatize and deregulate this most essential of services. They recognize that hydroelectricity is something people need every day and we all need it. Their philosophy is that something like electricity, that people need every day and that we all need, like health care for our families and like education for our children, something that is essential, should never be turned over to profit-driven corporations, who have every incentive to manipulate the market and try to drive up the price. We should recognize the wisdom of the philosophy in Manitoba and Quebec. We need to end hydro privatization and deregulation here and now. We need to recognize that the further we go down this trail, the more painful it will become for people in Ontario.

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After eight years of telling people in Ontario that the private sector will do it, here is the sad result: there is virtually no new supply of electricity. I can remember the various Ministers of Energy for the Conservatives announcing, "Oh, Sithe Energy is going to build a new generating station in Mississauga. Sithe Energy is going to build another new gas generating station elsewhere in Mississauga. And there's a plant coming on stream here

and a plant coming on stream there." That's not happening. That is simply not happening. That is why we find ourselves in the position where the government has to pay a quarter of a million dollars a megawatt for temporary electricity for this summer.

How do we get out of this? What we need to do is to implement now an across-the-province strategy of energy efficiency and energy conservation. I call it Efficiency Ontario. Let me give you just some practical examples. We should say to people this summer, "We will provide you with a low-interest loan so that you can take the refrigerator in your home that was built before 1994, before the NDP said that refrigerators had to be electrically efficient, and purchase an efficient one." What does that mean? An energy-inefficient refrigerator uses about 900 kilowatt hours of electricity a year. An efficient one uses less than 200. A really efficient one uses less than 100. So let's just take the moderately efficient one that uses 200. You're using three quarters less electricity, one quarter of the electricity you used to use. Multiply that by four million homes in Ontario and add up the result. You can save an awful lot of electricity.

Then we need to look at air conditioners, especially in the greater Toronto area. The reality is that air conditioners—and I'm taking about the air conditioners you might install in your home—that have come on the market in the last two years, many of them are electricity-efficient; those that have been around for about 10 years aren't. Provide people with a low-interest loan so they can replace that old clunker that uses a lot electricity with one which is electricity-efficient.

Conservatives will say, "How do you get the money?" It's a loan. With the money that people save on their electricity bill from using three quarters less electricity, in three or four years they can pay back the loan, and then whatever else they save on their electricity bill they can put in their pocket. Instead of taking money out of people's pockets to give to the corporate friends of the Conservatives and the Liberals; instead of taking money out of people's pockets on their hydro bill to give to the profit-takers, the fee-takers and the commission-takers; to pay for Eleanor Clitheroe's yacht and her \$173,000 car allowance, bring in electricity efficiency so people can keep it in their own pockets. But it only really works if we implement, once again, a public power system, a publicly owned electricity system that provides electricity at cost. That's how it works.

What do we do beyond that? There are literally thousands of small-scale hydro-potential rivers in this province. I probably have 40 or 50 of them in my own constituency. They will not generate 1,000 megawatts or 500 megawatts. They're not the big, fast-flowing rivers. But some can generate 10 megawatts, five megawatts, 15 megawatts. Many of them are quite close to the existing transmission lines. We should begin to develop those, but we should develop them as part of a publicly owned system so that the very low-cost power they produce, a half-cent a kilowatt hour, inures to the benefit of the people of Ontario.

What do Conservatives and Liberals have in mind? They want to sell the remaining water rights off to their corporate friends. They want to see more Brascans, where it costs half a cent a kilowatt hour to produce the hydro but their corporate friends would sell the electricity for 20 and 30 cents a kilowatt hour, 20 times what it cost to produce.

I say and New Democrats say, keep those water rights under public control. Build those new run-of-the-river turbines on a not-for-profit basis so that the people get to benefit from the true cost of producing that power: half a cent a kilowatt hour or three quarters of a cent a kilowatt hour. That's what must be done.

Finally, we know that there is the potential of wind power. I listened to the so-called commissioner of energy efficiency a while ago. I have to say to him that you've been telling people for eight years to let the private sector do it. The reality is the private sector has done squat. Hydro-Québec already has wind turbines up and

functioning. In Manitoba, under a public power system, they've already completed their wind mapping of the province. They know where it will be most cost-effective, most efficient and most environmentally responsible to build those wind turbine farms. Public power is already doing this.

Your private sector friends haven't done anything yet, and when they do it, if you continue down the road that you're on, they'll want to charge people again an arm and a leg for what is yet another natural resource. I say, shame on you. Those wind resources should be developed on a not-for-profit basis so that the benefit goes to the citizens, the jobs, the industry of Ontario, not your corporate friends. That's public power, and it's time we had public power.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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