



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 23 June 2003

Lundi 23 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Monday 23 June 2003

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

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*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

IMMIGRANTS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Statistics Canada released some very interesting figures that the Minister of Citizenship must take note of. The poverty rate among immigrants has risen by almost 12%, from 24.6% two decades ago to 36% now. In short, thousands of people are a lot poorer now than a few years ago.

This great gap creates two kinds of Canadians: the well-off and the poor. The gap is widening because of the government's destructive policies relating to infrastructure services for immigrants. They killed settlement services for immigrants, cancelled Ontario's Welcome Houses, the advisory council, reduced payments to English-language programs, new skills programs and, in fact, a host of other programs.

What's really interesting is that those immigrants with the highest education are the least employable and the poorest. Three weeks ago, we passed Dalton McGuinty's bill on greater access to trades and professions for new Canadians, but to no effect. We still have internationally trained professionals driving taxis and delivering pizzas.

This government's policies are obviously not working. We need a new approach. We need our immigrants working full-time. We need a new government. We need a new Premier whose name is Dalton McGuinty.

NORTH BAY HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): It gives me pleasure today to rise before the House to invite everyone to the North Bay Heritage Festival and Grant Forest Products International Air Show, August 1 to 4.

This festival is important to the Nipissing region, not only because it promotes northern Ontario, but it also creates about a \$10-million economic impact on the entire region. This is one of northern Ontario's largest festivals, with a budget of over \$1.5 million, and it's very unique because it is volunteer-driven.

You will get four days of amazing open-air concerts and activities for the whole family, including the Village People, Wave, Leahy, Roch Voisine, Deana Carter, Jason McCoy, Shawn Desman and many more. We also have

the world strongman competition, one of the largest midways north of the CNE, Kid Kountry and the Inflatable Village, Parti Gras, cruises and the Grant Forest Products International Air Show, featuring the Canadian Snowbirds, the Skyhawks parachute team and the Canadian Harvard Aerobatics Team.

You will witness one of the largest, most breathtaking pyrotechnic displays ever to dazzle our region, by Nortek Fireworks.

I'd like to congratulate John Lechlitner, the management committee and the over 800 volunteers who make this event possible. Admission for the entire weekend is \$20, and you can get more information on the festival at www.heritagefestival.ca, or call 1-800-465-1882.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Residents of St Elizabeth Village, a seniors' development on Hamilton Mountain, have recently come to me expressing their deeply rooted concerns over the emergency spraying of pesticides to combat West Nile. They fear that the spraying of the controversial pesticide will have an overwhelmingly negative impact on both their allergies and their overall state of health.

Their fears were magnified last week when it was confirmed that Hamilton has recorded its first West Nile death. The man was bitten in September 2002 and was hospitalized until his death in January this year. The man, in his 60s, was active and healthy before contracting West Nile.

I recently wrote to the medical officer of health for the city of Hamilton, asking if the city's public education plan could include a meeting with the residents of St Elizabeth Village to discuss the health risks associated with the spraying of the pesticide. It is especially important that people of this high-risk group be aware of the health risks that may ensue as a result of such spraying. The medical officer quickly responded by stating that while they are making efforts to educate the public, the city of Hamilton's budget for West Nile virus cannot support educational visits to individual institutions and facilities. In fact, the city's budget for West Nile is hardly enough to adequately control the virus.

The minister needs to increase the funding to municipalities and the board of health to ensure that they have the budgetary capacity not only to properly control the virus but also to educate the public, especially groups

that are considered high risk. We don't want a repeat of last year and we certainly don't want to repeat current SARS-related mistakes. The government has a duty to protect its citizens. It should do its duty.

CALEDON TEEN RANCH

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Riveting revelations about the high-spending ways of the federal Liberals' hand-picked privacy czar have had people rushing for their morning papers across this country. And when we thought we could no longer be shocked, the most shocking revelation of all: discovering that this guy, who is no stranger to Liberal largesse, because he was around when the Liberals formed the government here in Ontario back in the 1980s, once again at the trough -- started small and went big. This Liberal enfant terrible finds himself with over half a million dollars in income taxes being wiped off the books the day before he was appointed to his plush \$200,000-plus job.

But we discover this week that Premier Eves, not to be out-Radwanskied, uses his little buddy Ted Arnott -- talk about a Batman and Robin scheme -- to try to slide a private bill through this Legislature that would relieve Mr Eves's constituent, one Caledon Teen Ranch, of over \$700,000 in property taxes. What's most interesting is that Robin, Mr Arnott, insists that Batman, Mr Eves, knew about it all along. But, holy Radwanski, Mr Eves insists he knew nothing of it. The problem is, they can't both be telling the truth. You can form the inevitable conclusion that one of them -- I like Mr Arnott. I would never accuse him of lying.

1340

ARVATO SERVICES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The twin cities of Kitchener-Waterloo have experienced profound growth since our government was elected in 1995, and I am proud of what our residents have achieved. It also brings me great pleasure to announce here today that Arvato Services, a leading global provider of integrated and customized outsourcing services, has chosen Kitchener as the location for a new customer support services centre. According to Arvato president, Peter Schmitz, the community of Kitchener-Waterloo "exceeded all key location criteria, the most important of which is an excellent supply of customer support specialists for Arvato's demanding Fortune 500 clients."

Arvato expects to initially hire 150 employees from the Kitchener area. An additional 100 are expected to be hired in mid-July. This is great news for our community, and I expect that Arvato will flourish. This new investment in Kitchener's downtown area will complement the development and revitalization to which the city of Kitchener has been committed.

It is always exciting news to have a world-class company choose a city in Ontario as the location for a new office, and Kitchener is a suitable home for Arvato.

Kitchener not only has attractive credentials in information technology, but it is also a great place to call home. I want to take this opportunity to officially recognize Arvato for their commitment to Kitchener, and to welcome a world-class company to a world-class city.

SOUTH MUSKOKA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I had the opportunity last week to visit the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital. This hospital has done a tremendous job in trying to serve the patient needs of that area. I was struck as I stood in the Frank Miller memorial wing, in speaking with the chair of the hospital board along with members of the administration, to find out that this is a hospital whose community has helped raise all the money required to purchase a CT scanner. Moreover, they have raised enough money to run the operating costs of that same machine for the first year.

This government has refused to give them permission to go forward and purchase the CT scanner. Lo and behold, the government, in its ideological bent, has given a private CT to a neighbouring town. What we know is that at this hospital they spend more money sending patients outside of the town for CT scans than it would cost to run the machine at that hospital in that same year. They send more than 1,400 patients a year. I ask the Minister of Health, why would he waste valuable health care dollars sending patients outside of the town rather than giving permission to a community that has already raised the money for the equipment?

This is a government bent solely on ideology. We need a government that makes sense. We need a Liberal government in Ontario.

TRILLIUM GRANT RECIPIENTS IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to rise in the House to congratulate two community organizations in Durham riding on their successful Ontario Trillium Foundation grant applications.

The Bowmanville Horticultural Society has completed two beautification projects in Bowmanville. These include the planting of native species of trees and plants in parkland adjacent to our tourist information centre and planting at the western entrance to Bowmanville. A total of \$20,000 was invested in this project from Trillium, in partnership with the municipality of Clarington and TD Canada Trust's Friends of the Environment. I would like to congratulate president Diane Howarth and past presidents Johanna Bryant and Luba Samochin for seeing this project through to completion.

The Great Canadian Town Band Festival in Orono received \$60,000 over two years in support of the festival. I would like to commend David Climenhage, chairman of the committee, as well as board members Judy Climenhage, Sue Pott, Frank Corcoran, Martha

Rutherford Conrad, Colin Rowe, Bob Stogryn and the many other volunteers who worked so hard to develop this new attractive tourism opportunity in my riding of Durham.

These are just two of the grants from the foundation to organizations that make Durham a better place to live, to work, to raise your family and to enjoy your life. Recent announcements also included funding for the Scugog Shores Historical Museum and the Blackstock Skating Club.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to Alan Strike and Aubrey Oppers, two Durham region residents who serve as volunteer members of the foundation's grant review team. With their knowledge and community commitment, they have helped to make our community a better place to live and to raise your family.

WORKPLACE FATALITIES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On Friday, it was my privilege to attend the 19th annual Workers' Memorial Day in recognition of the tragedy on June 20, 1984, when a rockburst at Falconbridge claimed the lives of five workers. On display at that workers' memorial was the LifeQuilt. The LifeQuilt is a unique, permanent memorial dedicated to the many young men and women who have been killed or injured on the job. It is a tapestry paying tribute to those who are woven together in life by a common thread: a workplace injury. The focal image showcases a figure holding its hands up to the heavens, overlaid with thousands of organza ribbons imprinted with the name, age and type of injury suffered by the young workers. One hundred commemorative quilt blocks surround the focal image, each conveying the life story of the victim of a fatal workplace injury: those who lost their lives trying to earn a day's wage.

One thing links these names and stories: the fact that these tragedies did not have to happen. Injuries in the workplace are predictable and completely preventable. That is the extraordinary message behind the Canadian LifeQuilt. More difficult to measure is the untold pain and suffering felt by the families of young workers each time we lose a young worker to a workplace injury.

PARRY SOUND DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): In my riding, the town of Parry Sound was blessed with great weather this weekend for the second annual dragon boat festival.

Dragon boat racing is very impressive. To race one boat takes 22 participants. In Parry Sound they had 47 teams competing. That's over 1,000 people in a town of 6,000 people. The community spirit and commitment was amazing, as one out of every six local residents was racing, and a good portion of the rest were there to cheer them on. The dragon boat festival is organized by the

Parry Sound Rotary club and the West Parry Sound Hospital Foundation, with the generous support of the Royal Bank and other local businesses.

Without the hard work of local Rotary president Ralph Smith and the hospital foundation's director of community services, Dawn Cooper, as well as their many volunteers, this event could not have been such a great success. I was at the festival on Friday night and walked in their parade with my team from the hospital, the Rusty Trustees. The festival was opened with remarks from West Parry Sound Health Centre board chair Len Yauk and welcomes from Mayor Ted Knight and MP Andy Mitchell.

I joined Ray Pavlov, the local Trillium board representative, in recognizing the \$22,500 that the foundation had contributed to supporting the event. This year the hospital foundation raised \$36,000 in pledges to support local charities, plus the monies they raised over the weekend. Events like the dragon boat festival exhibit each of our great communities. They promote towns like Parry Sound as great places to live and visit. As the busy tourist season begins, I'm glad that our government, through the Trillium Foundation, has supported the Parry Sound dragon boat festival and many other similar events.

VISITORS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Tyler Goettl, who is one of our wonderful pages from London-Fanshawe, would like to welcome his grandmother, Mary, his aunt Kristen, and her friend Tom. Please welcome them to the Legislature.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to welcome constituents Mrs Rose Ladha from Oak Ridges and her children Shereen and Raheem Ladha. Please welcome them.

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

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to have second and third readings of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, which will make June 30 a statutory holiday in the year 2003.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to have this day, the first day of a deadly smog season in Ontario, officially declared Smog Day Baird, in recognition of the Eves government's total inaction to reduce smog in this province.

What do you think, John?

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like the House to recognize a constituent of mine, Paul Chrétien, from Thornhill, who is here visiting today in the members' gallery.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003 / LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Mr Tascona moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to public holidays for certain workers / Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui a trait aux jours fériés pour certains travailleurs.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): The Employment Standards Act, 2000, is amended to guarantee that workers who have entered into agreements providing that they may elect to work or not when requested to do so are entitled to the benefits of the public holidays part of the act.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2003 / LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids / Projet de loi 120, Loi réglementant l'épandage et le stockage des boues d'épuration et des matières sèches biologiques.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd first like to be on the record as thanking constituents in my riding for being good stewards of our environment, namely the Protect the Ridges organization, and others, I might say, who take an interest.

This bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to regulate the land application of biosolids such as paper sludge. I might make reference that this is the second time I've introduced this, with a couple of improvements which I might outline: a specific reference to paper sludge biosolids, and also to regulate the use of products derived from biosolids that would include Sound-Sorb and Nitro-Sorb. I would expect the House to be interested in passing this legislation.

MICHAEL MAXWELL ACT (HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT), 2003 / LOI MICHAEL MAXWELL DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act, in memory of Michael Maxwell, to amend the Health Insurance Act to provide for immunization against meningitis C / Projet de loi 121, Loi à la mémoire de Michael Maxwell modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin de prévoir une immunisation contre la méningite C.

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

The member for a short statement?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The purpose of the bill is to convince the Ontario government to adopt a province-wide immunization program against meningitis C. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has accepted and endorsed a vaccine which is safe for use even with infants aged two months. Both Quebec and Alberta have begun province-wide programs to protect infants and adolescents because they recognize that meningitis C is a serious public health issue which must be addressed.

It's time for Ontario to follow this lead by adopting a province-wide meningitis immunization program so that the tragedy which affected the Maxwell family can never occur with another Ontario family.

VISITORS

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce Ralph and Katie Porter, from my constituency, who are here today. They actually bid good money at a charity auction to come and spend a day with me. They're both very sensitive people. For what they paid the charity, they would appreciate it if there would be no heckling of me today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We appreciate that.

It's not a point of order, but while we're at it, we also have Robyn Perritt's family -- Bob Evans, her grandfather, and Robert, her brother, all from Peterborough -- here to see her. She's one of the pages. We welcome them as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment, if he's in the precinct at this time. This is the acting Minister of the Environment, I guess.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We'll look for some guidance. We'll stop the clock and set it back to the

beginning. If not, what we can do, as you probably know, is stand it down.

Interjection.

The Speaker: We'll stand the question down. That brings us, then, to the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. When it comes to protecting children in this province, your record is abysmal. Children in provincial care are being put at risk because of your neglect. These are children who have no parents. It is your job to be their parent. It is your job to take care of them, to protect them, and you are failing.

Between 1978 and 1995, there was not one single questionable death of a child in a provincial facility. Since you took office, there have been seven questionable deaths of children in provincial care facilities.

There are over 280 recommendations from public inquests into the deaths of five of these children that you have not implemented. Minister, why, after seven children have died on your watch, do you continue to sit on your hands and do nothing? Why do you continue to fail the children you are supposed to be caring for?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I can only say to the member opposite that I could not disagree more heartily with the comments she just made. This government is very concerned about the children we are tasked to care for. That is why in 1997 we changed the family act so that not only would we be able to protect, under law, the children who are abused in the province of Ontario but also those suspected of being neglected. That is why, in the province of Ontario, under Premier Eves, over \$1 billion is devoted to the programs of care for children who are brought into foster care through the children's aid society and other programs.

We take these issues very, very seriously. From time to time, we have had incidents where it was recognized that perhaps we might be able to do a better job. When that has occurred -- most regrettably -- we have listened closely and we have made tremendous changes, for instance, improving the training for those who are responsible for caring for children in group homes.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Minister, your response only demonstrates how truly out of touch you are with this file. As someone who is supposed to advocate for children, you are not doing your job. Here's what Ontario's child advocate, Judy Finlay, had to say in a recent article, called "Drawing a Line in the Sand," and I quote her: "There appears to have been a lowering of the bar in terms of standards and expectations of group home providers. In some circumstances, the living conditions of children in care are deplorable." She goes on to talk about the seven deaths in Ontario on your watch, and I

quote again from the same document: "All of these deaths were avoidable and unnecessary."

Minister, your own child advocate is saying you are failing these children. Why are you preventing her from doing her job? Why are you afraid to meet with her? You haven't met her. You haven't called her. You haven't even sent her a greeting card. Why are you muzzling her?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I want to be very clear. Neither I nor any member of this government has done a single thing in any way to impede the activities of the child advocate. We have never, ever heard from the child advocate to indicate that services or advice have been denied. We have never stopped the child advocate from going into any of our facilities. Not one change has been made on this side of the House to the powers or the mandate of the child advocate, nor have we made any limitations to her authority. We are very clear on this side: the child advocate's office is allowed to, and indeed should, investigate any circumstances that they feel should be investigated. They do not need to call the minister's office first. We would hope that she would do just that.

1400

Mrs Dombrowsky: Ms Finlay has been quite clear: you have lowered your standards. Children are dying under your care. That's your record. You can stand up here and recite all you want, but seven children have died. For 18 years there was not a single death; now there have been seven. Now the child advocate is raising questions.

Are you trying to muzzle her? Judy Finlay told the *Globe and Mail* that there is a dynamic tension between her office and you. Section 102(b) of the Child and Family Services Act directs the advocate to advise you, not your bureaucrats -- and you haven't met with her. I have met with her.

While you try to shirk your responsibility to protect children, I take mine very seriously and will advocate for them. Ontario Liberals will not sit idly by while children in provincial care facilities continue to die. If you won't meet with the child advocate, if all you're going to do is prevent her from doing her job, then get out of the way and let someone who is capable do your job.

Hon Mrs Elliott: I think the member across the way perhaps does not understand the role of the child advocate. The role of the child advocate is to operate independently of the minister, to assist families for our children, or for whatever reason they somehow feel they need assistance that is not working through the ministry. It would be completely inappropriate for the child advocate to be under my thumb, so I think that it has been very right to let the child advocate be independent in the work that she does. Never have we changed the mandate, never have we indicated that there would be any limitations on the work she would do.

There have been a number of allegations made that are completely incorrect. I want that to be very clear. The member opposite has said that we somehow prevented the child advocate from getting posters. I've indicated that posters are available; they are reproduced and the

material is made available. In fact, it is now under Plexiglas in some facilities because the children would actually rip up the material and it couldn't be shared with other individuals. Those things have been addressed. We are taking every action we can on this side to make sure -

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

AIR QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and the Minister of the Environment. As we enter the summer months, it is obvious that we're in exactly the same serious situation with smog that confronted Ontario all last summer. We know that almost the entire southern part, and even some of the northern part, of the province is affected by smog which is choking people with respiratory problems. What is worrisome is that the Eves government has placed the health and well-being of vulnerable Ontario residents at risk by withholding vital information about bad smog episodes.

Last week, in downtown Windsor, Windsor West, Tiverton, Sarnia and Mississauga, an ozone reading of 50 or over was recorded, indicating the need for vulnerable adults and children to take action to avoid being confronted with a respiratory crisis, yet no smog alert was issued to the news media in Ontario. Isn't it time that the Eves government began to protect the personal health of the people of Ontario, rather than the political health of your tired and cynical regime?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): I'd be happy to get further information for the honourable member. My understanding, that I learned from the smog summit last Friday, in reading reports from it, is that that period of smog in Windsor lasted for two hours. The standard in North America is to issue an alert after smog occurs for six hours or more. I think that's why it wasn't done. But in case I'm wrong, I'll be sure to get back to the honourable member if I need to correct any of that information.

Mr Bradley: Last Friday morning I attended the Toronto Smog Summit at Metro Hall and listened to a number of speakers, including Dr Ted Boadway of the Ontario Medical Association. It was an air quality conference that quite frankly I expected to see you, as Minister of the Environment of Ontario, attending, and not just for a cameo appearance.

Should I pause while you get prompting from the commissioner? The commissioner is trying to prompt you over there.

Dr Boadway provided clear and irrefutable evidence that smog has a serious impact on human health immediately upon coming into contact with our lungs. He has also informed us that 2,030 premature deaths occur in Ontario each year as a result of smog and that smog costs our economy over \$1 billion a year.

I'm having a hard time getting through to you because you're being prompted by Mr Gilchrist.

Why is it that when bad air has an immediate impact on human health -- on children, on the elderly, on people with respiratory problems -- that you will not issue a smog alert unless the Eves government predicts that it will experience six hours of bad air, when Dr Boadway said it has an immediate impact on their health?

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm not exactly personally sure how the six hours was arrived at, except that it's the same standard you had when you were Minister of the Environment. But you never made smog days public back then.

Mr Bradley: You're getting prompting from Gilchrist. He wants to answer the question, but he's not a minister, unfortunately.

It is obvious that the minister and his government's cozy relationship with Ontario Power Generation means that they are calling the tune on smog reduction requirements, and it is clear that no one but your government and OPG believes that they will meet any targets that have been set. It is equally clear that Ontario's lack of meaningful action will cause Canada to be in violation of the US-Canada air quality agreement.

Today I'm trying to get you to at least commit to alerting Ontario residents from Aberfoyle to Algonquin Park to damaging smog levels which will seriously impact on their health.

Minister, will you commit to the Legislature and the people of this province that you will abandon your politically convenient policy of refusing to alert the people of Ontario through the news media unless the bad smog is, in your estimation, going to last for six hours, contrary to the recommendation of Dr Ted Boadway?

Hon Mr Wilson: There's a word for this line of questioning by the honourable member. I would just ask him when he's going to apologize to the people of Ontario for never alerting them about smog days. This government is the first government to make it known, because even people like myself -- I have bad sinuses, and no one likes smog.

This government has taken a number of actions, including that of OPG trying to curtail its use of its coal-fired plants during smog days, and that's why it's helpful that the alert is public. We ask others to try and curtail barbecuing, for example, and to curtail activities like cutting the lawn during smog alerts.

The government puts out these alerts to try and help clean the air. All of us have a part to do in that. Smog alerts aren't new in the world. They were practised elsewhere when that guy was Minister of the Environment, and he never made it public to the people of Ontario. This government has the guts to do so. We're happy to do so because we all need to work together to keep smog in check.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. This week Ontario is bracing for a heat wave that could plunge us into brownouts and blackouts. More than two months ago I offered you a suggestion on how you could avoid this situation. It's called an aggressive conservation and energy efficiency strategy. California used it when their experiment with hydro deregulation blew up in their face. I showed you how you could save about 3,500 megawatts through efficiency and conservation, but you've put all of your eggs in one basket: your expensive emergency generators.

Minister, why have you completely ignored conservation and energy efficiency and put all of your faith in expensive emergency generators?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I take a great amount of interest in listening to the honourable member, who chastised members on this side of the House allegedly for pointing to California as the promised land to look at their experience with respect to energy policy. Now he, of course, is lauding California as an example for Ontario.

The leader of the third party did come up with a California energy model, of which energy analyst Tom Adams, who is a vocal spokesman for energy interests in Ontario, said, "Hampton's conservation claims are 'not credible.'"

1410

Mr Hampton: This is the same Tom Adams you used to cite when you said that hydro prices are going to go down and we've got lots of hydroelectricity. You just keep on citing him, Minister. He'll get you into more trouble.

We've had a chance to look at these emergency generators that you've lined up, these very expensive, private, for-profit emergency generators. We've discovered that TransAlta, Toromont and TransCanada Energy, the people you've given these \$100-million contracts to, are also very large contributors to the Conservative Party. In fact, the three of them have contributed \$120,000 to the Conservative Party.

It seems to the public that you're more interested in rewarding your corporate friends who give the Conservative Party lots of money; you're more interested in doing that than you are in protecting the electricity future of the people of Ontario. Minister, why have you done that? Why have you ignored conservation and energy efficiency and given these lucrative contracts to your corporate friends?

Hon Mr Baird: I take great offence at the comments of the leader of the third party. For him to suggest that there was any political interference with respect to a public request for proposals in these contracts is patently false. It is not true, and I would dare suggest that the member opposite has not a shred of evidence to back up that claim. If he wants to suggest that, I encourage him to

do it outside this place, if he has the courage of his convictions and the guts to say it outdoors. He is engaging in smear, gutter politics, which will not build his credibility.

Mr Hampton: We're seeing gunslinger John Baird. Well, Mr Baird, let's go outside. These companies gave the Conservative Party \$120,000. You gave them a \$100-million contract to provide so-called emergency generators.

But this gets worse. In your original request for proposals, you said they had to have the emergency power on-line by June 15. These corporate friends that you've given the emergency generation contracts to can't provide the electricity. They couldn't provide it on June 15; they can't provide it now. They won't be able to provide it, it looks like, until the end of July.

I repeat my question, Minister. Why are you spending \$100 million of the public's money to line the pockets of your corporate friends when they will not be able to provide emergency hydro generation on hot days like we're having this week and next week? Why are you putting the public of Ontario at risk of brownouts in order to line the pockets of your corporate friends?

Hon Mr Baird: The leader of the third party is engaging in gutter politics, and I think it's beneath even him.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is for the Minister of Finance. We'll deal with the Minister of Energy later.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Outside.

Mr Hampton: Outside. I'll repeat the charge outside, and you can tell people why you gave your corporate friends such lucrative contracts when they can't provide the hydro.

Minister of Finance, we see daily instances now where the people of Ontario are becoming increasingly upset with your skyrocketing auto insurance scheme. But what is upsetting them even more is the discrimination which becomes evident: people are assigned auto insurance rates not on the basis of their driving record but on the basis of their gender, on the basis of their age, on the basis of where they live in the province and on the basis of a whole lot of other extraneous factors that have nothing to do with their driving record.

Let me give you an example. A 19-year-old driver in Toronto would pay \$2,553 for auto insurance on a 1996 Toyota. In Vancouver, he'd pay only \$1,298. Why? Because there he's judged on his driving record.

Why do you continue to insist on an auto insurance plan which results in this kind of unfairness and this kind of discrimination?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): We insist on an auto insurance system that is going to meet the needs of consumers. That's why we're making the changes that we are proposing to make.

Mr Hampton: You were forced to admit outside the Legislature last week that the scheme you have in mind, which will be to reduce or limit people's medical benefits when they're injured in a car accident, will not bring down auto insurance rates; it will simply moderate the increase.

The real problem in the auto insurance system is this: your friends in the auto insurance industry lost billions of dollars on the stock market. They gambled on the likes of Nortel and Enron, and when Nortel and Enron went down the sewer pipe, they lost billions of dollars. Now they want the consumers of Ontario to make up that money.

But equally, they continue to insist on an insurance system that is based upon discrimination. People are not classified on the basis of their driving record; they're classified on the basis of: what's your gender; are you single or are you married; where do you live; what's your age etc. None of those things are directly related to someone's driving record. In British Columbia, good drivers don't subsidize bad drivers. You're judged on your own individual driving record.

Why won't you bring in a public, not-for-profit auto insurance system, which doesn't involve the kind of discrimination we're seeing in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, other taxpayers subsidize those driving records. Secondly, there is a process in place to ensure that criteria do relate to driving experience, that they are accurate assessments of risk. If there are questions on that, we'd be very pleased to take a look at that, because that is an important issue that the honourable member raises. Thirdly, the reforms we are talking about are actually about improving benefits for consumers, not taking them away, as the honourable member insists on scaremongering. Finally, we are not bringing in public auto insurance because we think there was an expert who actually commented on this some years ago, former Premier Bob Rae, who said, "We will not be proceeding with it for two very simple reasons: it will cost too much money; it will cost too many jobs."

USER FEES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Education and Deputy Premier. The funding formula your government introduced in 1998 provided no funds for community use of school spaces. Since then, fees for sports teams and clubs for children have skyrocketed. In Scarborough, the fee to play house league basketball jumped from \$4 a child to \$100. In Collingwood, the cost for trailblazer basketball jumped from \$25 to \$400 for each child.

But while community programs using school facilities are being strangled, you're trying to slip through a tax break for one private recreation institution. Why is the Premier pushing a \$700,000 tax write-off for a private recreation centre in his riding, while basketball groups, Boys and Girls Clubs, the Ontario Special Olympics and

other organizations are being shut out of public school spaces?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I would strongly recommend that the member opposite very carefully check the facts. I understand that the issue she's talking about refers to a private bill. As the member herself knows, private bills are brought forth at the volition and the expense of the proponents of the private bill. As you know, they usually approach your constituency office. However, if you're a member of cabinet, you cannot introduce those types of bills, so it's usually referred to another MPP.

What we're talking about here is a bill that the Premier was first personally informed about on June 9. At that time, he was made aware of the fact that Mr Arnott was going to introduce it. He didn't know the details of this bill, but as you know, the Premier has been very clear.

1420

I can also tell you that the Caledon town council unanimously passed a motion today that they will form a committee to work with the Caledon Teen Ranch in reviewing the arrears of taxes and the taxes on a go-forward basis. I understand the private bill is going to be withdrawn pending a made-in-Caledon solution, so I would not --

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the Deputy Premier's time is up. Supplementary?

Ms Di Cocco: I guess the only reason that this bill is going to be withdrawn is because the Premier got caught. Mr Arnott introduced the bill at the request of the Premier's office, and he kept him informed --

The Speaker: Just to interrupt the member for a quick minute. Her first question was related to funding formulas and so on with the minister. It isn't appropriate to ask a question regarding private members' bills. You know it has to be within the minister's responsibility. That isn't within the responsibility. The last one, with a bit of a spin on it, dealt with the funding formula. I would ask the member to ask a question relating to the minister's portfolio, if she would, please.

Ms Di Cocco: I guess it's about a skewed sense of priorities. We have here an awful problem, a crisis across this province regarding school spaces and the inaccessibility of school spaces to groups, to thousands and thousands of children, youth and seniors who can't use school spaces because of the skyrocketing costs. I have a report that Boys and Girls Clubs now have to pay up to \$1,000 for two hours. It's just unfair.

We tried to get through a bill that was going to give \$700,000 in tax breaks and, at the same time, we have all of these groups across this province who can't access public spaces. They are being shut out. These are programs that help kids learn better; they keep them off the street; they are good for their physical activity and for their health. Yet you're shutting them out, while at the same time the priority is to give a possible \$700,000 tax break.

Hon Mrs Witmer: It concerns me that the member continues to make the allegation, which I've just pointed out to her was incorrect.

I would also remind the member opposite, if she were to go back at least to 1937, boards of education in this province have always been able to use their schools for other purposes and they have been able to collect fees for the use of those facilities. It's up to boards to decide whether or not they're going to allow this to happen. We would encourage them to make sure the charge is based on a fair recovery of the actual cost and that it also be sensitive to a group's ability to pay.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Finance. In order to encourage investment, economic growth and job creation, the government has announced 225 tax cuts since 1995. Can the minister tell the House what this government has done to ensure that its economic plan continues to support economic growth and prosperity?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): At a time when the Canadian economy and the Ontario economy are indeed facing challenges, I think it is more important than ever that we stick to an economic plan that has allowed us to pay down debt, balance budgets and help the private and public sectors create over a million new jobs. The tax cuts that we have put in place have provided over \$16 billion in tax relief.

We know that the Liberal Party is against tax relief. They have voted against every tax cut we have brought forward. We know that according to the taxpayers' federation, the agenda they have brought forward and the promises they are making are going to result in over a \$4-billion tax increase, something that at this time we certainly don't think is appropriate for more job growth, prosperity and future employment growth in this province.

Mr Miller: I certainly share your concerns that the Liberals, with their planned \$4.6-billion tax increase, would take us back to the days when high taxes stifled economic growth in this province.

Just last night I spoke with an Ontarian who had been working in the United States and just moved back to Oakville. I asked him how he felt about being back in Ontario and he said, "Taxes are too high." My friend commented that in Ontario it takes six weeks to earn what it took him four weeks in the United States.

Minister, can you expand on why we cannot afford to go back to the tax-and-spend Liberal days?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Quite simply, because it would destroy the record of growth, jobs and prosperity that we've seen in this province.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I hear the honourable members across the way from the Liberal Party laughing at what the taxpayers' federation said their promises will cost -- over \$4 billion -- in terms of tax increases. They like to

quote the federation to criticize us, but certainly not when he points out the problems they have.

Let's take a look -- not at what they're promising -- at their record. They voted against every tax cut we brought in; every single one. Secondly, they're promising to reverse tax relief. But thirdly, if any taxpayer had any doubt about where the Liberals are coming from, look at their record: they increased the sales tax from 7% to 8%; they did a \$2-billion employer health tax; they raised fuel taxes by \$1 billion; and then there was the commercial concentration tax. They believe in higher taxes --

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time is up.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Madam Minister, last week in this House I asked you a question, which was: why is it that 192 days after the passage of Bill 198, while Ontario's motorists are being given renewal notices with an average increase of 19.2%, we in this House, five days later, are not being provided with an opportunity to see the regulations that you have focus-grouped and round-tabled and sent out for consultation? For all we know, you've had seances to deal with the regulations that you've been talking about.

Ontario's motorists want to know: where are your regulations? Will you table them for all members today to get a glimpse at them so we can see exactly what reforms you're talking about and why it is you can't get them through your cabinet?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The honourable member may recall in this House when he asked previously that I did offer to send him a copy of the regulations, which have been publicly available since February. If he hasn't availed himself of that opportunity, I'm very sorry. We'd be quite happy to send them across.

Again, when we brought forward legislation in this House to allow us to take steps to help consumers, you voted against it, sir.

Mr Smitherman: The minister has a very hard time remembering that we voted against her Bill 198 because it had a bunch of flaws in it, including the pension stuff that she had to retreat on fully. So don't be wagging your finger at me about the quality of the piece of legislation you brought forward to this House.

With respect to the regulations you offered to me, the February version isn't what we're interested in. What we're interested in is the version that you're working with now, the version that you're taking out to focus groups in places like London, Ontario. So instead of offering me some stale-dated version of your regulations that everybody has seen and commented on, I'm rather more interested in the current set of the regulations, the ones that you're keeping to yourself and that your cabinet colleagues so far haven't had the willingness to support.

Madam Minister, will you, today, in this House, table the regulations that are supposed to offer some relief to Ontario's driving motorists?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member just said that everyone has seen the regulations, so with all due respect, I'm not sure how come they haven't shared them with him, if everyone else has seen them. We'd be quite happy to send them over.

Secondly, it's interesting: we responded to the concerns of pensioners, we removed that section from the bill, and the Liberals still voted against legislation that promised to provide relief to consumers.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Interestingly enough, my question is also to the Minister of Finance. In my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, I've received many calls from seniors, have spoken with many seniors, by and large living on fixed incomes, and they're asking how they can apply for their property tax rebate.

We certainly recognize their lifetime of contribution, not only to education funding but also to building Ontario into what it is today. Could you explain to me how the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act would benefit Ontario seniors, how it will support them to stay in their own homes and essentially what it will mean for their pocketbook?

1430

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'd like to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for that question. We do believe on this side of the House that seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes, are having challenges in meeting rising costs -- for example, property tax increases -- and that's why we are proposing to provide additional tax relief focused directly on seniors. Under this program, eligible seniors who own or rent their home would be reimbursed for a portion of their property tax. It will work out to an average annual net saving of about \$475, and that will benefit over 945,000 seniors. We know the Liberals have promised to revoke this tax relief, to cancel this tax relief for seniors, but on this side of the House we believe that our seniors deserve that break.

Mr Barrett: I know there's been some concern about this, so I do wish to ask the minister if this new proposal for a seniors' tax cut based on the education portion of their property tax will in any way reduce the amount of funding that goes to public education in this province.

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's a good question. I know the opposition have tried to confuse our seniors about this. The amount of education funding is based on a very good, validated, student-focused funding formula -- that's what drives the amount of money school boards get. For example, my public school board received over 30 million new dollars this year due to that particular formula. Education funding does not have any bearing on the amount of property tax that an individual is paying. So seniors can receive this tax relief, they can benefit from this tax relief and they can know that it has no

bearing at all on the amount of money their schools are getting in their community.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today is the first day of what is sure to be a long and deadly smog season. The OMA estimates that over 2,000 people in Ontario will die from smog this year. About 400,000 children and 600,000 adults in Ontario suffer from asthma, and about 150 of these people will die this year because they cannot breathe.

Smog in Ontario is a disaster, and just like hurricanes and tornadoes, the NDP is declaring today Smog Day Baird in recognition of your government's total inaction to reduce smog. We're sending the Minister of Energy this certificate in recognition of your government's total inaction to reduce smog. Minister of the Environment, don't be jealous; your day is going to come.

I want to ask you, are you content to watch the death toll rise due to smog in Ontario or will you adopt the NDP's Public Power plan of closing the coal-fired plants by 2007 by implementing aggressive conservation and efficiency methods?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): Since the question primarily deals with energy and conservation, I'll refer it to the energy minister.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I'd like to thank the member for the certificate. She didn't in fact send the certificate that she promised to send over. Well, why don't you send it over? Send the one over. You didn't do it.

The Ernie Eves government takes the issue of smog and pollution reduction tremendously seriously. That's why we're one of the first governments in North America to make a commitment to phase out coal-fired plants; that's why we're accepting the recommendations of the all-party committee -- where I believe you sat as a member -- to adopt 2015 as the date to phase out coal. That's a date that you agreed to, I say to the former minister. We've made a commitment to close the Lakeview plant by 2005; we're spending a quarter of a billion dollars on pollution abatement measures at two of the larger facilities. We have a substantial agenda with respect to conservation and a substantial agenda with respect to alternative, new green energy. That will be good news for the people of the province of Ontario. You sat back and did nothing on coal-fired plants the full five years you were in government.

Ms Churley: That's simply not true, but I want to come back to the Minister of the Environment, because this specifically refers to something you said, Minister. On May 21, the Stayner Sun reported that you told a community meeting that the last of Ontario's coal-fired generators has received state-of-the-art scrubbers to minimize smog. Well, this is simply not the case. Only two of

four units at Lambton and only two of eight units at Nanticoke have any scrubbers.

I think the minister needs to come clean with the people of Ontario about that. Nanticoke is the single worst contributor to deadly smog in Ontario, but your government has done nothing to shut it down. The NDP's commitment is clear. We brought in an energy conservation and efficiency program that your government cancelled, and what you're doing now is hiding behind scrubbers that haven't even been installed and, when they are, won't even make a dent in the problem.

Will you correct the record today, Minister, tell the truth about that and admit that the only real action to reduce smog and save lives is to bring in tough conservation and efficiency measures so that these deadly coal plants can be shut down by 2007?

Hon Mr Baird: I agree that we've got to do more on conservation. The Minister of Finance, in her recent budget, announced that the government would be pursuing a strategy on conservation. We've already done a huge amount with respect to efficiencies. I know your leader held a press conference that said only 3,200 people had participated in our appliance rebate program. In fact, as of a month ago, it was more than 45,000 Ontarians getting involved actively in energy efficiency, and that's good news.

I say to the member opposite, when her party was in government they did a big study on vehicle emission tests and then shelved it and did nothing. It was the Ernie Eves government that took the action to bring in the Drive Clean program, headed up by my good friend Norm Sterling. It was the Ernie Eves government that has been a leader at bringing forward a plan which you agreed to on closing coal-fired generation. If she and her party were so concerned about coal, why did they do absolutely nothing? Five long years -- not a single coal-fired plant was closed in Ontario. Zero.

Ernie Eves is providing environmental leadership, more so than any other jurisdiction in North America.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES PROGRAM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question today is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Type 1 diabetes is a very challenging condition to manage. It requires constant monitoring and blood tests. It requires constant injection of insulin. It's particularly difficult for very young children to manage. Not to not manage type 1 diabetes results in things such as heart attacks, kidney failure, loss of vision, amputations and death.

We have the technology to manage it. Insulin pumps have proven to be literally life-saving in Ontario. They cost over \$5,000 to purchase, although one heart attack costs \$100,000 to our health care system. Families have met with you. Premier Eves, when he was in Belleville last month, indicated that he would look into it and he had a concern about it.

Minister, you're responsible for the assistive devices program, which can provide 75% funding for these. I'm asking you now if you will approve funding under the assistive devices program for insulin pumps.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): Speaker, I will refer that question to the Minister of Health.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the honourable member, the assistive devices program is a Ministry of Health program, and I can tell you that it is a program that is funded 100% by provincial dollars. There's not a single dime, not a nickel, not a pfennig, nothing that comes in from the federal government. It is a program that is managed by 100% provincial dollars.

It has been a challenge in the past, I will say to the honourable member, when it comes to funding new devices that come through. We do have a procedure by which we do seek to consider new devices and their applicability. So I will certainly take the honourable member's points of view into consideration as we continue to improve this program.

Mr Parsons: This is not a new device. This has been around for some years, Minister, with due respect. In fact, insurance companies pay toward it. The problem is that we now have two-tier medicine in Ontario. For families that are not insured, they're literally going without this life-saving insulin pump. For young children, it is severely restricting their activities and in fact is restricting their health.

There is a private member's bill from the member for Windsor-St Clair before the House to recognize that this is proven technology, it is cost-saving technology and it truly affects the quality of life for thousands of individuals. You need only see a small child who is having to have eight or nine needles a day to realize there's got to be a better way.

1440

Minister, this is a proven technology. With the stroke of a pen or the calling of the private member's bill, this could be in place today. From a financial viewpoint, it offsets health care costs. From a humanitarian viewpoint, it prolongs life. I will ask you again, given your leader's support for this device when he was in Belleville, will you today approve, under the assistive devices program, funding for insulin pumps?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, I want to assure the honourable member, and through him this chamber, that indeed I'm aware of the issue. All of these new technological advances -- even if they're a few years old, they're still relatively new -- are worthy of consideration. The technological advances of the last few years certainly have improved the quality of life of a number of individuals, including those who rely upon insulin.

I would convey to the honourable member that he can be of assistance to us as we seek to have a new deal with the federal government so that they are paying more than 14 cents on the dollar when it comes to health care costs. If he could be of assistance to our side of the House

because we are battling on behalf of Ontario, that would be very much of assistance and would prove to be a tangible benefit to the people of Ontario so that we can in fact deliver the quality health care which he cares so passionately about.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Attorney General. A couple of weeks ago, I attended a luncheon in Kleinburg celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline of York region. The Attorney General was also present at the luncheon, where he delivered a speech saluting the organization on their anniversary and for all the hard work they perform in assisting women in York region.

I was wondering if the Attorney General could inform my constituents about the commitment the Eves government provides to assisting women in York region, specifically the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline and the Outreach centre for York region.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I would be happy to answer the question of my colleague. I was happy to be there with her at this fundraising luncheon with a very important group in York region.

It's important for all Ontarians to know how committed our government is to reducing all forms of violence against women, and we are proud to take a zero tolerance stance on this issue.

Through my ministry's victims' services division, this government provides over \$350,000 in funding annually to the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline and Outreach centre for York region.

I am pleased to mention that the centre received two grants from the Trillium Foundation, totalling over \$415,000. One was to provide young women in the high school setting with counselling.

Again, my thanks to all those involved at the centre for all their hard work in combatting violence against women.

Mrs Munro: I am proud to be a member of a government that places the protection of women in such high priority. In fact, last year alone the Eves government invested \$160 million to help prevent and address violence against women and their children. No other government has committed so much in addressing such a serious problem.

This being said, I was wondering if the Attorney General could provide another example of how the Eves government is assisting women in my region and riding who are at risk of personal harm.

Hon Mr Sterling: Since we've been elected, this government has brought forth many initiatives and services to help those who have been sexually assaulted or are living under the threat of sexual assault. For example, our government launched SupportLink in 1998. In conjunction with its corporate partners Ericsson Canada and Rogers AT&T Wireless, SupportLink

provides personal safety planning and free mobile telephones pre-programmed to dial 911 to women at risk of personal harm. Last year, SupportLink assisted more than 750 women. The program has proven to be such a success that it is being expanded into five more communities, including York region.

This government is proud of its record in combatting violence against women in all communities across Ontario, including York region.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question today for the Minister of Education. Last December, you had a report from Dr Rozanski about putting money back that you took out of education. At different times -- on May 27, for example -- you've said things like, "Dr Rozanski recommended \$1.8 billion. We're going to be investing \$2 billion." Some people believe you might be indulging in big-number gobbledegook, mixing apples and oranges, blending the funding for annual cost changes with the improvements that Dr Rozanski demanded. Can you be clear for the Ontario public and this House: have you already committed to implementing all the recommendations in the Rozanski report?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): First of all, to set the record straight, Dr Rozanski did not make recommendation that we replace the money. Dr Rozanski did a review of the funding formula, which we introduced in 1998. It was based on the fact that we introduced it in order to ensure that all students in Ontario would have access to fair, equitable funding that would allow stability in the classroom. I'm very pleased to say that Dr Rozanski, when he completed his review, did validate the funding formula and indicate that it was providing students across the province with fair and equitable funding.

Mr Kennedy: I can understand why you want to avoid the direct question. In estimates committee you said there might be some more announcements in the future, because you have not committed to even one third of the Rozanski report. There is no money, beyond some small dollars for textbooks, for the foundation grant, for more teachers, for smaller class sizes -- the single-largest recommendation: \$477 million. There is no money for English-as-a-second-language classes to be improved. There isn't a single dime for crumbling schools. The fact is, your own independent investigator caught you taking money away from Ontario students and demanded you put it back. But you wouldn't do it. Isn't it true that the money you're talking about is simply the money that the Premier decided would be available for education even before the Rozanski report came out? What the people, the parents and the students of Ontario want to know is, why have you failed Rozanski? Why have you failed to get the dollars that students need back into our schools?

Hon Mrs Witmer: One more time we hear information which isn't accurate. I would just remind the

member opposite that within three days of Dr Rozanski's report, we announced \$610 million, which was invested. I'm also pleased to say that we have committed over \$1.8 billion in three years, while the Liberals are still only promising a less-than-adequate \$1.6 billion over four years.

TAXATION

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Ontario government's policy of cutting taxes, balancing the budget and eliminating unnecessary regulations has inspired business and consumer confidence and turned Ontario's economy around. Will the minister tell the members of this House what this government is doing to ensure that individuals continue to benefit from ongoing tax cut measures, such as reducing the personal income tax?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The tax relief program that this government has been following, with 225 individual tax decreases for individuals in our business community, has been responsible for the job growth we've seen: over a million new jobs. For example, this budget that we've introduced and are debating before the House this week confirms our commitment to completing the additional 20% reduction in personal income tax by January 1, 2004. I know the Liberals voted against that tax relief for individuals. As a matter of fact, their record was that they increased personal taxes three times when they were in government. Three tax increases over there, a 20% tax reduction over here -- I think the voters and taxpayers in this province appreciate that contribution to economic growth.

1450

Mr McDonald: I've heard from many of my constituents, low- and middle-income earners, and their concerns. Could you please tell the House how low- and middle-income earners will benefit from the proposed tax relief measures?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, I think a very valid question from the member for Nipissing, who actually represents a community that has taken considerable steps to bring down the tax load on their community as well.

The tax relief that we have been providing individuals has benefited an average family of four with \$60,000 in income. That family is actually going to see, if this budget passes, over \$2,500 worth of tax relief. Again, I think it's important for the voters, the taxpayers who are watching, to know that the Liberals have voted against that.

Secondly, we have another 45,000 modest-income Ontarians who will be relieved of the obligation to pay any Ontario income tax. It's under the Ontario tax reduction program. There are now some 700,000 low-income Ontarians who do not have to pay Ontario income tax because of the decisions on this side of the House. The other side of the House does not agree with tax relief for low- and modest-income Ontarians.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. This past weekend in northwestern Ontario, hundreds of residents of Kasabonika Lake First Nation were evacuated by air from their community because of forest fires raging out of control. Evacuation may protect the people, but it does nothing to protect their homes, their property, their school, their nursing station, the recreation centre. Nor does it do anything to protect their lands, which they rely upon in terms of trapping or hunting or fishing.

Why is evacuation happening? Because your government refused to implement the far north fire management strategy as requested by the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation First Nations.

Deputy Premier, can you tell the people who are now watching their homes at risk of burning up, their nursing station, their school at risk of burning up, the land that they depend upon at risk of being burned, why your government refuses to provide a level of forest fire protection to those First Nation communities that you're willing to provide elsewhere in Ontario?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'll refer that to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): We take the forest fire situation very seriously in the province of Ontario. Yes, we evacuated the community. They're in the far north. As a matter of fact, it was the preliminary work that was done in there that ensured that the fire went around the community. We had sprinkler systems out. We were able to suppress any fires before they got to that area to make sure that when and if the fire did pass, it moved on through.

Currently, we have in the area of 55 active fires taking place in the province of Ontario. For those who didn't realize it, we've had rather severe weather fronts move through, where we've had over 12,000 lightning strikes this weekend alone that have been responsible for a large number of fires in the province of Ontario.

Also, we have a large number of fires currently burning. About 130,000 hectares are currently burning right now. We have all the individuals available for that fire suppression throughout Canada. I might add that currently there are no crews available in Canada, because we've gone all across Canada to get to those groups available.

Mr Hampton: Well, a torrent of information, but none of it answered the question. The question is this: these First Nation communities have approached your government over and over and over again. They've asked you to implement a far north fire management strategy, which would mean that these forest fires would be attacked much sooner, that there would be a greater level of protection for these people and for their community. Your government has refused to do that. You've refused to provide them with the same level of forest fire protection that you provide elsewhere in the province. Meanwhile, your government wants to open up their

territory for mining, for forestry extraction, for hydro-electric development.

It seems that you regard their land, their territory, as being valuable when it comes to extracting resources, but when it comes to providing them with a level of forest fire protection that is equal to that which other Ontarians receive, you refuse. Can you tell those people why, in your view, their resources are so valuable but their communities don't seem to be valuable to your government at all?

Hon Mr Ouellette: Currently, we have over 2,000 firefighters actively fighting fires in the province of Ontario. We take the far north strategy very seriously, to the point that a week ago Friday last, I was sitting down with the federal government and all the jurisdictions across Canada to discuss that very issue. We have tried to sit down with the plan. It's a \$1.1-billion plan that we're trying to work out with other provinces and the federal government to come on line to deal with this very serious issue. Quite frankly, it appears from the results of the meeting that we're getting some very positive responses on the five-point plan. It looks like we may have some aspects that will move fairly soon.

USER FEES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is for the Minister of Education. Parents across the city of Toronto are very upset because they feel that, through your supervisor, you're imposing double taxation on them when they try to use school grounds or school gyms for basketball or soccer, for instance.

We've got fees -- for instance, the Swansea Soccer Club is now supposed to come up with \$12,000. I've got a group of underprivileged children playing basketball at Fairbank school. They're supposed to find \$10,000 to play basketball in the gym. The kids don't have the money. The parents tell me they've already paid their education taxes; the schools are paid for. For the last 50 years they had a reasonable little fee for using school gyms and for soccer fields. Now, with your government bragging about tax cuts, they've got to pay to use their own school gyms and their soccer fields. Even the Boys and Girls Clubs have to pay over \$1,000. How can you justify this double taxation on the use of school facilities by your appointed supervisor, Paul Christie? Stand up on your feet and defend Paul Christie's new tax on Toronto.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The member opposite knows full well that since 1937, boards have always been able to make their space available to community groups. Since that time they've also been in a position where they're able to collect fees for the use of those facilities.

You know, unlike what is happening in some other communities, the city of Toronto can work with the Toronto school board, and I understand that they are now, to focus on how, together, they can improve community access to the schools and to the pools.

PETITIONS

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature. It states:

"Whereas the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre will be cutting homemaking services to seniors and the disabled effective June 23, 2003" -- sadly, that's today; and

"Whereas nursing services, personal support and homemaking services should be of equal importance;" -- a point that the Associate Minister does not understand -- "and

"Whereas most seniors and the disabled live on fixed incomes and cannot afford to purchase private homemaking services; and

"Whereas many seniors and disabled people will be forced to move into institutions once their homemaking services are cut off;

"Therefore, be it resolved that, we the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Eves government increase the CCAC budget in order to allow them the necessary funds to enable them to continue to provide homemaking services to those who are eligible in Sudbury."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition and give it to Brittany to bring to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition is from Nicole Herbert, the chair of the Leslieville School Council, and parents within that school. It reads:

"As parents, educators and community members, we are strongly opposed to the continued diminishment of support for our children and their education. The 0.5 loss of our vice-principal is yet another in the already long list of cutbacks mandated by supervisor Paul Christie in order meet his \$60-million target. The impact on Leslieville and the students has already been significant. The new year saw a 0.5 loss of the secretarial staff. The 0.5 loss of the vice-principal will further erode and impact the overall safety of the school's unique and valuable learning programs currently available, the supports to children at risk and the valuable communication between home and school."

I will affix my name to this petition, because I support it.

SERVICE DE DIALYSE

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): C'est une pétition pour le service quotidien d'hémodialyse à la maison pour Marie-Ève Chainey.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, les soussignés, demandons au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'agir sans délai dans le dossier de Marie-Ève Chainey qui requiert les services quotidiens d'hémodialyse à la maison. Marie-Ève était candidate pour recevoir ces services sous peu; cependant, mercredi dernier, faute de financement du gouvernement de l'Ontario, l'hôpital Riverside d'Ottawa lui refuse ce service. Nous demandons au gouvernement conservateur de Ernie Eves d'écouter ses concitoyens et d'agir rapidement. »

J'appose ma signature.

1500

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.”

The bill would impose “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 is signed by a number of residents from Innerkip, Woodstock and Drumbo, and I too have signed this petition.

VISITORS

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know members would want to join with me in welcoming Greg Townsend, Doug Townsend and Ashley Townsend in the gallery today. They're the uncle and cousins of a very capable page, Ryan Baulke. A point of history here is that Ryan's father was also a page in the early 1970s.

STATUTORY HOLIDAY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that was collected this past weekend in Crescent Town in Beaches-East York. It reads as follows:

“Petition to Make Monday, June 30, 2003, a Holiday.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the former Conservative cabinet minister, Chris Stockwell, had a lovely European vacation at taxpayers' expense;

“And whereas the people of Ontario are working longer and harder to support themselves and their families;

“And whereas Ontario has fewer statutory holidays (eight) than the United States (10), England (13), France (13) and other jurisdictions;

“And whereas the people of Ontario deserve a real long weekend to celebrate Canada Day and to spend time with family and friends;

“I hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the bill proposed by the New Democratic Party to make June 30, 2003 a statutory holiday.”

It is signed by just about 100 people. I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I was just speaking with the Minister of Finance and consulting with her. She is a very able person, and I seek her wisdom.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe, secure retirement;

“And whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003;

“And whereas the act would ensure that every eligible senior homeowner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence starting July 1, 2003;

“And whereas this would provide an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure” that all “Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes.”

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents to Robyn, who is one of the legislative pages here.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It deals with the multi-laning of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound, a project that was promised by this government which they haven't lived up to.

“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 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 any 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.”

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to Nicolas to bring to the table.

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“That the ministry immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11.

“This highway is in a deplorable condition. Those who have to travel this corridor to their jobs, shopping, medical services etc have been promised by the MTO that this highway would be upgraded to allow for safe and problem-free travel.

“We request the ministry to commence reconstruction immediately.”

I sign my name in support of this petition.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a petition that’s signed by a number of residents from Clifford, Mount Forest, Arthur and Holstein.

“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. The bill would impose 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.”

I have signed this petition.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It is my privilege to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is an ecological treasure that warrants protection and careful stewardship now and into future generations; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario has recognized the importance of the moraine with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, to protect natural and water resources, preserve agricultural land and provide clarity on where development can and cannot occur; and

“Whereas the act has resulted in certain limitations on citizens’ use of their own property within the moraine;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario take all necessary action to ensure there are no undue restrictions on Oak Ridges moraine residents making minor improvements to their homes and property; and

“That the province of Ontario work together with municipalities and landowners to ensure the interpretation and enforcement of the act continues to fully protect the moraine while also giving residents the right to fair and reasonable enjoyment of their property.”

I’m pleased to present this to Caitlyn, who is one of the pages. And your riding is?

Interjection: Brant.

Mr O’Toole: That’s a good riding. Who is the member there?

Interjection: Dave Levac.

Mr O’Toole: Thank you very much. I also sign this.

1510

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature, and it concerns the homemaking services cutbacks.

“Whereas the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre will be cutting homemaking services to seniors and the disabled effective June 23, 2003” -- that’s today, Speaker.

"Whereas nursing services, personal support and homemaking services should be of equal importance" -- and the associate minister does not seem to understand that.

"Whereas most seniors and the disabled lived on fixed incomes and cannot afford to purchase private home-making services;

"Whereas many seniors and disabled will be forced to move into institutions once their homemaking is cut off;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Eves government increase the CCAC budget in order to allow them the necessary funds to enable them to continue to provide homemaking services to those who are eligible."

Again I give this petition to Brittany, after I sign it, to bring to the table.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed my distinct pleasure again -- and an infrequent occasion -- to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe, secure retirement; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; and

"Whereas the act would ensure that every eligible senior homeowner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence, starting July 1, 2003" -- that's right away.

"Whereas this would provide an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes" immediately.

I'm pleased to present this to Tyler, from the riding of London-Fanshawe, Frank Mazzilli's riding, a great member. I'll sign and endorse this.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have yet another petition, signed by a number of residents of Peterborough and Lakefield.

"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."

I too have signed this petition.

SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The petitions keep coming.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's senior citizens have devoted themselves to building Ontario's outstanding quality of life and have earned the right to a safe, secure retirement; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; and

"Whereas the act would ensure that every eligible senior homeowner or renter would receive property tax reimbursements on their principal residence, starting July 1, 2003; and

"Whereas this would provide an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households" in Ontario -- marvellous.

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003, to ensure Ontario's seniors benefit from lower taxes on their homes."

I am pleased to present this to Bryant from the riding of Leeds-Grenville -- Mr Runciman is the member there -- and sign this on his behalf.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the

Municipal Franchises Act in respect of consumer protection, the governance of the Ontario Energy Board and other matters, when Bill 23 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may then be immediately called; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second and third reading votes pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister?

Hon Mr Baird: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise in debate to the motion before us.

With the indulgence of the House, I did want to congratulate an outstanding citizen of Ontario. Madame Helen Vari, who has made an outstanding contribution to Ontario, was awarded an honorary doctorate of laws at York University last week. I regret that new cabinet responsibilities prevented me from attending her receiving this honorary degree.

Helen is involved in a lot of projects in Canada and internationally of cultural, social and humanitarian nature. She is the president of the George and Helen Vari Foundation, founded in 1984, to promote education and cultural exchanges between nations. She is the founding and honorary president of the World Monuments Fund France, a worldwide foundation for preserving cultural heritage.

The George and Helen Vari Foundation donated the central building of York University, called Vari Hall. They've also funded the Vari Laboratory at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, among other projects. Most important, and in a very nice cultural gesture, in the year 2001 the foundation donated 3,000 Ontario maple trees to the Versailles castle and the city of Paris after the storms which took out a lot of very historic trees.

Helen was awarded the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur de France in February 1993. She's a great ambassador of Canada and francophones in Ontario, where she takes a particular pleasure and interest in promoting the fact that in Ontario we have a dynamic and big francophone community, and it's not exclusively limited to the province of Quebec. She's a great ambassador for Canada and for Ontario in France.

It's certainly a privilege to know her and to call her a friend. So I wanted to recognize that accomplishment and achievement. I know all members of the House would want to join me in congratulating a great humanitarian like Madame Vari.

With respect to the motion before us concerning Bill 23, the Ontario Energy Board reform that was committed last fall, I think by and large this is not a terribly contro-

versial bill. It's significant, it's certainly not a housekeeping bill. It's not a terribly controversial bill, I would indicate to all members of the House, and I think by and large most members, if they looked at the content, would not take great exception to anything contained in the bill. They may suggest additional measures be put in the bill, such as making it retroactive, but by and large the content of the bill, I think, is good for consumers, good for the energy industry. It is a win-win scenario.

I did listen with great interest to the speech by the member for Renfrew North. He spoke very well, and he talked about the government's commitment to follow through with the legislation. Would we have the people and the finances to have a topnotch regulator in the province of Ontario? Of course, we have the person and the leadership of the Honourable Howard Wetston. His character is beyond question. He's a phenomenal individual. I think he represents one of the very best appointments we've seen in the province in the last 10 years. I was certainly very proud to nominate him and to have him confirmed by the committee, with the official opposition supporting him.

1520

Of course an important part of the legislation, to go to the point that the member for Renfrew North spoke of, is the ability of the Ontario Energy Board to be self-financing. There is, I suppose, some degree of a conflict of interest when we want a regulator to be independent, to operate at arm's length from the government. Today, the Ontario Energy Board's budget is actually parked with the Ministry of Energy. The general manager is in a situation where he has to get his resources approved, not just by the executive council but indeed by this House. In virtual unanimity we heard that there had to be regulatory independence, that the government of the day, for political reasons or partisan reasons, should not become involved in decisions of the board, and its becoming self-financing is a step to strengthen that independence, an independence which has universal support.

I should say, with respect to the speech by the member for Renfrew North, that I think he had the attention of all members of the House. I want to use this opportunity, in what could be the last week the House is sitting, to wish him well and to acknowledge the contribution he has made to Ontario. I don't agree with everything he says, but he certainly has the respect, I think, of all members of this place, and that should be acknowledged. I'd like to put that on the record. He is someone, as the critic for energy, who will likely know more about energy policy when I leave this post, even if I did serve in it for a full term. So that speaks to his experience.

To talk about the need for the time allocation motion before this place, I think there is a need for reform of the way we practise legislative affairs in this province. It is regrettable, I think, that even with a bill that is relatively uncontroversial like this, there can't be agreement. I certainly look forward to trying to reform the relationships that all three political parties -- we will debate a terribly controversial, substantive bill for the same

amount of time as a relatively straightforward bill. I don't think that's in the best interests, and I don't think anyone can point fingers. I think there's probably responsibility on both sides of the aisle for that.

In listening to the debate, I'd encourage any member or member of the public to look at the debate we had on this bill. By and large, there wasn't a lot of debate. We had excellent debate, but not debate on Bill 23. We had discussions about energy policy. We had discussions about the issue of supply, which I think is a fair and legitimate issue and should be a fair and legitimate concern for residential customers and for enterprise in the province. We had debate on pricing. We had debate on privatization. We had debate on deregulation. We had debate on an open market. We had debate about a lot of things in energy, but we didn't have a huge amount of debate on Bill 23, yet today we're dealing with a motion to get on to the next important part of debate, which of course is to have a vote in principle on the bill. I think it's important that we do take a period of time to debate the bill, but an important part of the debate is actually to make a decision, to allow members on all sides of the House to express their support or their opposition to the bill by standing in their place and being counted.

I don't think there was a lot of debate about the bill, because I think, by and large, members on all sides of the House support it. I listened to the debate from members opposite with great interest, and I frankly don't know whether they're going to vote for the bill or not. I'm hoping they'll look at the content of the bill and see fit to support it. It's not a partisan bill. The bill is not in any way, shape or form linked to deregulation or to an open market in electricity. The Ontario Energy Board does deal with a lot of very important issues with respect to natural gas and the monopoly substituting for a market economy, which of course can't exist with the monopoly on the distribution side of natural gas. The board has an important function with respect to the transmission and distribution of electricity, to the generation and retailing of electricity. But the Ontario Energy Board of course doesn't deal with the issue of opening the market, because that of course is settled in this House, not by the regulator.

I feel very strongly about good adjudicative-regulatory instruments and bodies. I served as a member of the Agency Reform Commission for a year, where we looked at what we could do to reform adjudicative justice and approve it. I worked under the Bob Wood committee on agencies, boards and commissions, where we reviewed every agency board and commission. We were able to reduce them substantively to do a better job for the taxpayer. So this is something that I have a personal interest in as an important part of government. Too often we've seen that these agencies, boards and commissions, which were set up to provide a function outside of the courts, have not been as effective as they could be. I think Bill 23, before us, will help the board administer itself better.

I think folks at the board have done a very good job with the tools that they have had available. What this bill, Bill 23, seeks to do is to give them additional tools. In many respects, the board's mandate has grown quicker than it could have. I'm pleased that we will have some tools to give the folks at the board some help in doing a better job for consumers.

Bill 23 takes dead aim at a real concern that taxpayers have. It's with respect to retroactive prices. We have a regulatory regime in Ontario that allowed an 18-month retroactive charge to go forward. I think it's important that we put in place a regulatory regime that ensures that that doesn't happen. It deals with the retroactivity by ensuring that we have a regulatory calendar and performance measures and that there's a time frame. I say to the member for Windsor, it is a difficult task indeed to make anything retroactive. What we want is to ensure that we have a good regulatory regime in place that ensures that consumers are protected. The enhanced consumer protection in this bill and the tools that the board will have on the staffing side, on the financial side and on the power side to step in and protect the interests of consumers is good news for the people of Ontario. It's good news for enterprise in the province, those companies like the auto companies in Windsor that use a lot of electricity or the companies that use a substantial amount of natural gas. It is tremendously good.

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): It's privately generated, thanks to the NDP.

Hon Mr Baird: What is privately generated?

Ms Pupatello: Cogeneration.

Hon Mr Baird: Cogeneration? Yes. The member for Windsor talks about the major privatization and expansion in privatization. The second-biggest privatization that took place in the electricity sector was, as the member for Windsor said, the NUG contracts, the non-utility generator contracts, where the NDP said, "We don't want the government or Ontario Hydro to generate electricity any more. We want to get private sector companies to generate electricity for the government." They're call non-utility generators. That was done under the NDP.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): No, that's not the way it happened.

Hon Mr Baird: That is exactly how it happened, I say to the member for Timmins-James Bay. I guess they forgot about that because they were worrying about the auto insurance issue, making it public. Of course, they didn't do that either.

Did they privatize the coal plants? Did they get rid of the coal plants and shut them down? I said to the officials at the Ministry of Energy, "Get me a list of all the coal plants that were shut down by the NDP. I want a list of every single one of them." They couldn't get me a list. "Where's the list?" They said they didn't close down a single coal-fired unit in Ontario. Nothing.

Thank goodness, under the leadership of Premier Ernie Eves, we finally have a commitment to do that. We have a moratorium on new, coal-fired plants. They're not

allowed. Ernie Eves vetoed the sale of two private sector partners unless there was a commitment to close the coal-fired plants.

The Ernie Eves government, through the Ontario Power Generation, is ensuring a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar investment in pollution abatement at Nanticoke and Lambton, something that could have been done under the NDP, but they didn't do anything. They kept the coal-fired plants open. They had no plan to reduce pollution. It was go forward, full steam ahead.

We have a responsible plan, unlike the provincial Liberals, who won't release their plan on closing the coal-fired plants by 2007. I'd like the Liberals to tell us what the price of electricity would be in 2007 if they fired their coal-fired plants? We see the huge, looming, natural gas shortage coming from Alberta, and we'll see how they do it. If you'd like eight-cent power, 10-cent power, 15-cent power, vote for Dalton McGuinty. He's the one to do it.

1530

People wonder where Dalton McGuinty stands on these issues. He, of course, was a big proponent of an open market. The official spokesman for Dalton McGuinty said, "Ontario Liberals have always been consistent. We support an open marketplace." The Liberal Party said in a fundraising letter.

On November 11, I saw Dalton McGuinty in Ottawa at the airport. He was flying to Toronto where the government was making an announcement with respect to electricity policy. I said, "Dalton, would you look at the policy? It's a good one. I bet you might be able to support it." Dalton said, "No, John; unlikely." Of course then he came out against the November 11 announcement. Five days later, he actually said he was going to vote for it. He was against it, in favour of it, against it, then in favour of it, and then all the Liberals stood up in this House and voted for Bill 210.

The day Dalton McGuinty changed his mind for the third time, he sent out a fundraising letter to all energy companies saying, "Give me money. I want this money for energy policy too." He was consistent, and he supported an open market. The very same day that Dalton McGuinty put out that letter that he was trolling for energy bucks on Bay Street, he changed his mind again. I don't know whether he signed those letters in the morning asking for money from the oil companies and the energy companies and then changed his mind after lunch. I don't know whether he even caucused the issue. I did notice, when we voted on Bill 210, that the official spokesman for the Liberal Party on energy snuck out, because he didn't want to be there to vote against his own party. That was most interesting. The official spokesman of the Liberal Party didn't want to be there to back up his leader on energy policy.

Frankly, I am looking forward to seeing the plan. I thought Jim Bradley did a good job on the all-party committee on alternate fuels. Doug Galt was involved with that, as was --

Interjection: Chaired it.

Hon Mr Baird: -- chaired it -- as was Commissioner Gilchrist.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It was Mr Baird that called Howard Hampton outside. Howard's been waiting for him for 45 minutes.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. The minister may continue.

Hon Mr Baird: While Howard is playing political games, I'm in here doing my job as government House leader, as Minister of Energy. I look forward to talking to my friends outside.

I think it's important, though, that people should conduct themselves in an integral way and they shouldn't engage in sleazy name-calling and tactics when they have nothing to back it up. I found the conduct of the leader of the third party in the House this afternoon quite frankly disappointing. The comments he made and the inferences he suggested were frankly not fit for a member of this House, let alone a person who wants to become Premier. I know him to be an honourable man, and for him to suggest the things he did in the House reflect poorly on him and poorly on his party. I think those comments were regrettable.

I am looking forward to finishing the debate on this motion and on the bill because an important part of the debate is that we have an opportunity to vote, to take a stand. Peter Kormos -- I know where he stands. I bet you I know where he stands on this bill, and he'll have an opportunity to stand and be counted.

I want to see where my friends in the official opposition will stand, because I think frankly Bill 23 is a good piece of legislation. I think Howard Wetston is a good man for the job of chair of the Ontario Energy Board. The changes that go on there will be good for administrative justice and for regulatory affairs in the energy field in the province of Ontario.

I ask all members of the House to support Bill 23, to look at the bill and at the debate on the bill in Hansard. I say to my friend from Windsor, what was the percentage of the time that people actually spoke to the bill? Very little, which suggests to me that there's not a great objection to it. There was a 100-day period where we had widespread consultations from the public, from stakeholders, from consumer groups. We reflected on what they said and responded. I haven't heard a substantial amount of criticism anywhere in the province about this legislation. Local distribution companies and most of the publicly owned companies in our communities support the legislation. Consumer groups have reacted positively to the legislation. Energy industry officials say it gives a greater arm's length and independence to the regulatory function of the Ontario Energy Board.

I ask all members of the House to join me in supporting this important piece of legislation to allow us to better protect consumers and to ensure that enterprise in the province has a fair and level playing field at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):

The floor is open for further debate.

Ms Pupatello: I am pleased to speak to this bill. It is a time allocation motion.

When the government decides it wants to talk about energy, we realize it insists on tinkering around the edges of what the real problems are in energy today in Ontario. I listened to the minister very carefully talk about how people addressed all kinds of issues in the debate over Bill 23, specifically around this regulatory body, but he didn't really want us to talk about the real underlying issues around energy in Ontario.

I come from a very southwesterly part of the province. I come, fortunately, from a place that is very industrial. We have our history with energy in Windsor. Our industry in Windsor has led the charge in moving to low-cost, reliable energy, and in those years it dragged the Ontario government along and it worked with local utilities. I'm going back to the early 1990s, when expansions were afoot and they said, "We are prepared to pour money into our auto industry in the Windsor area, but we need to be guaranteed good-priced, good-quality energy and it has to be reliable." At that time, they worked with the NDP government and they said to them, "We are prepared to invest, we are prepared to join and partner with the private sector to produce this low-cost, reliable, good energy for our sector. Will you let us do this?" The NDP government came along and in fact opened these plants to allow our industry to flourish, and it does to this day.

Our Windsor Utilities Commission, under the direction of Kent Edwards at the time, was a leader in the utilities business, working with other sectors to make energy reliable and affordable for industry, which drives all of our communities. I spoke with Kent Edwards, going back, longing for those days again when we understood that those partners we had in this field had an ability to work with all levels of government to make it happen where it was required.

When I fast-forward to today and the last meeting I had with our local utilities -- now, under new legislation, its own corporation, and the shareholders are all the residents of Windsor -- I asked them what their issues of the day are. Well, the issues of the day are as long as my arm. We are now dealing with utilities across the province that are massively in debt thanks to the provincial government. We had a government that came along and said, "No, no, we know how to do this better. We are going to have the market bear the price of electricity, and they will tell us." Sure enough, like everyone could predict, because we had never addressed the issue of supply, the prices went through the roof, to the point that consumers could not stand it. That meant we heard from businesses and residents alike who could not afford their utility bills, because this government decided they were going to deregulate the market.

I remember at the time doing wide-ranging interviews, discussions and on-air talk shows on radio about what the real issues were with electricity. Most people, I suspect,

in the area of electricity need to know that when they get to the light switch and flick it on, the light comes on, and when they don't need it, they shut it off. I suspect they don't need to worry typically about when they're going to run their dryer, their washing machine, all of those appliances in the home, and worry that it's going to blow a fuse; that everything works. I suspect too that most of us have to get a lesson quickly, when you move into a new home, as to where all the switches are, just in case you blow a fuse, and that generally is the extent. We know we have to pay monthly bills, and we sure do worry when those bills are more than they're supposed to be or more than we predicted they could be.

It's one thing for residents to suddenly get slapped with more and higher bills and the bills keep going up monthly, unpredictably so; it's quite another situation to be in business and realize that your business is very much based on electricity and you can't control that your sales will increase in that same month to account for this massive increase in the cost to deliver that service. So we heard from businesses across the board. They could not afford these new electricity prices.

At that time we said, "Look, the market is deregulated. The government's deregulated the marketplace." But after eight years of being in government, we the consumers, we the businesses, we the other MPPs in the House would think that the government's done some kind of long-range plan to see that we are going to have the supply that Ontario requires to meet its needs.

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I marvel at the number of the times that ministers stand up in this House and want to go back to the NDP and blame them, and go back even further to blame the Liberals because somehow it was their fault, when this government's been around eight years. Eight years you've been at the helm, eight years you've been in charge to see that we have enough supply, that it might be at a price that we can afford and that someone actually could do some prediction over what would happen if you deregulated the market.

You went to the local utilities and you said that in order to prepare for deregulation you would have to do these number of things, which in the end cost millions of dollars for local utilities. It cost my own utilities in the Windsor area millions of dollars to prepare for deregulation. When the government changed its mind and re-regulated the market, our utilities were stuck with tremendous bills, tremendous deficits that they cannot recoup from their consumers. Consumers don't want to have to suddenly have to pay millions of dollars for things that don't directly benefit them.

So here they are today, hat in hand, saying, "How do we manage these millions of dollars?" at a time -- in particular for communities like mine, communities like Hamilton, that have old centres, that perhaps have industries that have been around a long time -- when taking care of the system is just as important to us.

I have a unique perspective, living across the river from Detroit and the power that's generated over there

through Detroit Edison. When they have a terrible storm or something that causes a blackout, when they have regular brownouts in Detroit, what we marvel at on the Windsor side of the river is just how long people go without power. Mostly because of the infrastructure in place and the maintenance that's never been kept up to the standard that it ought to be, they are scrambling in Detroit to get their system back up and running.

In Ontario we had some sense of that when we had the ice storm in the east of Ontario, when we saw what happens when you do without power for days upon days upon days. We're not used to that here; we're used to utilities being able to manage their infrastructure and keep it humming all the time.

I can tell you now what utilities are having to decide. Thanks to this government, that's been around for eight years, that has caused millions of dollars to utilities virtually across Ontario, they are now making decisions about the kind of infrastructure projects they can move forward with. We have transformers so old they should have been replaced long ago. They can't keep to their schedule of infrastructure maintenance that they should because they will not have the money to afford it. Nor will they be able to go to their consumer and say, "Let's tack on another \$100 this month because we have infrastructure we need to care for." We all collectively say that it's imperative that we can offer reliable, low-cost power to the consumer. Everyone agrees with that.

So then it comes to the how. How will we produce all this power? Often every party in here has gone to the California experience and either quoted it, lauded it, blasted it or something. But we have to remember that one significant reason that California got out of the mess that it was in when it too suffered massive supply issues. It went into red alert when it came to conservation. All of a sudden people in California saw that there are ways not to use power when we've been so used to using power. One of the reasons they could get out of the pickle they were in is that they dramatically dropped how much and when they used supply.

I believe a significant cornerstone, a foundation of any policy of any party in this place has to be centred around conservation. Who is talking about conservation here? Any of us who have been in the school system in the last three decades, say, would remember that they used to use icons in the classroom, little cartoon characters to make the point in the classroom about safety. We remember Elmer the Safety Elephant and how he would teach us as kids in the classroom about safety around a whole myriad of issues. What we need in our province is someone to teach us, in this new day and age when everything is electronic, how to use power efficiently, how we can go forward through our children in the school system and parents who run the household, how to use appliances efficiently and the kind we can buy.

Frankly, I don't believe -- and I remember the commercials and the press conferences that Ernie Eves had over these matters -- that just offering a tax incentive over the purchase of a certain type of refrigerator is going

to do it. I think it's going to take a much more massive public education approach to teach us how to conserve energy so that we don't need the volumes that we've been used to using. Frankly, you could call North Americans gluttonous over the level of power we have to use.

Having said that, we know supply is an issue. What, in eight years, has the government done to get the supply side moving? We know that the NDP cancelled the contracts it was about to enter into with Manitoba to have links to Manitoba power. Just recently -- literally this week -- Premier Eves is once again talking about re-establishing some connection with Manitoba and its power.

That's fine. But I have to say that the people of Ontario realize already that you've been at this for eight years. You can't just arrive at a point eight years into governing and say, "Oh my gosh, we've got a major supply issue here." We've been telling you. Organizations out there have been telling you that we have a supply issue. We have lots of issues around the environment that call for a particular way to deal with the supply issue; namely, I believe Ontarians want clean supply. That means we don't want coal-fired generator plants. We complain -- and I heard the members across the way, even today, when we talked about the clean environment and someone yelled out, "Oh, 50% comes from the Ohio Valley." Why would that be? Because they're still using coal-fired plants in the United States. So any winds that are blowing our way are being blown right through those coal-fired plants, and yes, some of it comes to southwestern Ontario. That certainly doesn't allow us to put ourselves on a pedestal and say, "We are producing from clean fuel," because we're not. This government still hasn't found a way to look forward to shutting down those coal-fired plants and turning to other types of clean fuel and the kinds of incentives that will bring people into the field to deliver clean fuel.

Hydroelectricity is one of the cleaner fuels that's on the market. What are we doing? People like the member for St Catharines, people who are in the area of Niagara Falls, have long known that Beck 3 was out there and had potential for us. In eight years the Conservative government never turned to that source. Even though all of the reports and commissions -- Macdonald and Burger King writing reports about energy -- you never moved on the supply side. Now here we are in a crunch.

So the minister wants to talk today about how innocuous Bill 23 can be. Well, it's not. Bill 23 is supposedly about consumer protection. The number one reason that the chair of the Ontario Energy Board, a gentleman named Floyd Laughren, a finance minister in the NDP government, resigned was that he didn't have the ability to control the fact that there were going to be retroactive price increases sent on to consumers from Union Gas. So the response to that massive problem that frankly the Liberals brought up in this House repeatedly -- and we had petitions from our constituents when they got those bills from Union Gas about fee increases that

went back the previous year or more. We said to the minister, "Surely, you're not going to allow these kinds of retroactive price increases." Their answer to all that, miraculously, is Bill 23. He says it's innocuous and non-controversial. The bill does nothing to address those retroactive price increases that were in fact delivered to the consumer. So the very thing that created -- the bill in fact never solved the problem.

What strikes me as so interesting is that this is not the first time the government has completely bungled and put out of order the delivery of services of the Ontario government. You're a repeat offender. You are constantly doing things only to realize that you should have gone back and done something in a different order. As the health critic for the Liberal Party, I have followed continuously the health issues across Ontario, and the system is the same. You pushed Ontarians along in health service restructuring, only to discover well after the fact that there were things you should have done before you cut funding to hospitals. You had to bolster the community services, because people would be pushed out the door sooner.

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The worst offence for this government is that you were told, that you knew it would happen. I remember standing in this place and sending messages to my colleagues of all three parties to say, "Eleven days to go," and then, "Ten days to go," to the emergency room closing in my riding at the Windsor Western site. At that time I said, "When that emergency room closes, the remaining emergency rooms in my community will not be able to withstand the pressure of the closures. There's no room. There aren't enough beds. There aren't enough gurneys. There's not enough staff. There isn't enough room for the ambulance to pull up into the opening of that emergency room for the number of ambulances reduced to the sites they could now attend."

We said that in advance, but the government pushed along anyway. It shut down the emergency rooms, and there we were with ambulances literally parking at the top of the hill and rolling the patients down the hill on the gurney into the emergency rooms, where they waited in hallways because there was no room in the hospital for them.

There are so many instances where the government has completely bungled the order of things. I say to the public of Ontario, is this a government that deserves re-election? I marvel at the Premier of this particular government. It's not like he just got here the other day. He's been here since the 1980s. He was part of the Bill Davis government. Years ago he was the minister of social services, of all things, for a brief period of time in a previous Conservative government. It's not like he just showed up here. You'd think he would have had some history around this place to know that you've got to have a little bit of foresight about what's going to happen when you bring in legislation to do something. There are just innumerable examples.

When we talk about the utilities, the utilities said, "We're going to incur millions of dollars," and they did. You put the price caps on them because you knew the consumer could not sustain the new prices, yet you did nothing for the utilities to combat enormous debt that you put them in. You brought in legislation that forced them to become their own companies with their shareholders being their residences. You've left them in this mess. Now, how do we cope? How does Windsor deal with the enormous amount of money required for infrastructure for transmission? You give them absolutely no place to turn.

When we talk about health care and bungling, it's always the same pattern. This is the government that brought in community care access centres and legislation that was going to create them. Then you took their money away. Here we had a system where that's the group that's going to deal with home care, and you changed the policy for hospitals, threw people into the home care sector and didn't ever give them sufficient funding to deal with the enormous increase in volume. So today, also on the docket at some point we'll be discussing the budget and how this government is going to choose to take money and show how they're going to give seniors that rightful tax break that they're due. Have you said in the same breath that you've eliminated 115,000 seniors from receiving home care services? Did you forget to tell them that all the way along you forgot to mention that you increased their fees in long-term-care facilities? If it's not the senior actually in the bed, it's her family that's paying for it, and you chose to increase their fees by 15%. When we went around and said, "Hey, these people can't afford 15% increases," you decided to do a retread. You said, "Oh, well, we won't do this increase all at once. We're just going to slowly bring the increase in."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Ms Pupatello: These people did not just fall off the turnip truck, with all due respect to the members here. These people see what's happening. You took money from the left pocket, and now you're going to tell them you're going to take part of it and put it back in their right pocket. They're still out the money. You are still making it difficult for seniors to live in this province.

These are the same seniors who got astronomical electricity bills. They are the ones who are in their homes still, lost their home care and are paying copays for drug fees. Of significant importance to seniors is how much they pay for drugs, because they are the largest group that uses drugs. Now you're telling them, "Oh, but we're going to fix everything, because with Bill 23 we're going to give you consumer protection."

Consumer protection for what? For the Union Gas bills that you still didn't help them with? We were giving them the 1-800 number to call when all of that was going on, and nobody answered the telephone. I don't see anything in Bill 23 that deals with the resources of the Ontario Energy Board to actually deal with an issue when it arrives at their doorstep. What are they going to get?

Sixty days for a response once the people know what the solution is? It doesn't even specify in the bill how long they're going to take to make a decision. For heaven's sake, it doesn't address real issues about consumer protection; it doesn't.

I remember when Ernie Eves was the Minister of Finance and we were debating a bill called the auto insurance stability act. Does anybody remember that bill? The Automobile Insurance Rate Stability Act is what it was called. I think that was in 1997. Fast forward to today in 2003, and look at what's happening to our auto insurance rates. The same government -- you guys -- brought in the bill, for all that your bills do to fix the issues. You never get down to fix what the problems really are in any of these industries.

But you would think electricity was one thing, I say to the silk suits who are supposed to help the ministers when they answer questions -- but the silk suit staff, who typically make more money than the ministers they're supposed to serve, are not supplying the right information here.

When we ask, "How do we get energy and supply moving in Ontario?" I say to the people of Ontario, turn to the policies of the Ontario Liberal Party -- turn. If it does not have a cornerstone that includes conservation of energy, it will not work. Tell us if you're going to turn to this significant industry in Ontario, that did rely on setting up partners for reliable, low-cost energy -- what they think of your policies and if Bill 23 addresses any of those issues. It absolutely does not.

All I can say is that the government has zero credibility when it comes to consumer protection, when it comes to producing sufficient supply --

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Ms Pupatello: As we hurtle toward a very hot summer --

The Acting Speaker: Member take her seat. I'm sorry. I didn't want to interrupt, but some members just seem to be determined to interrupt, and that includes a minister of the crown. And, if I may, the speaker's own party members are not being helpful either. So please afford the member the respect she deserves. Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.

Ms Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker. I am very pleased to allow some of my colleagues to speak to this matter. In summary, in the end, how will the government address significant supply issues for electricity? You've been here eight years, and we do not see a fulsome plan of eight years' worth, when we knew what the problems were. We knew what the Macdonald commission said, and that was years ago. If we think we have consumer protection for Ontarians because of this bill, once again you are laughing at the people of Ontario.

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

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hang on. I hadn't recognized you yet. I just wanted to see -- OK, fine; they're going to

pass around. Again, the floor is open, and I recognize the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure to speak on the time allocation motion. The former Minister of Energy is here, and I know he knows the background of how we got to where we are and where we go forward. I think Bill 23 clearly outlines what is needed to induce a strong dose of consumer protection in this climate of dealing with the debacle, if you will, with the old Ontario Hydro. The Macdonald commission said it, as well as many studies and very high-level academics. I have to remind you that the author of the report, the Honourable Donald Macdonald, was the Liberal finance minister, so he was not a servant of the Conservative government. I don't lay the blame at his feet. I lay the blame on all three governments, all three parties. I would say that it has been clearly stated here.

I think the member from Windsor West made it clear that there was a role played by the Peterson government. During that time when Ontario Hydro was struggling, the debt did grow, and it grew to the point where in fact many would say the company was bankrupt. The debt load was some \$38 billion at the end. They did a debt-equity analysis, and they found out that clearly in that analysis there was more debt than equity and/or the ability to generate revenue to pay off the accumulated debt.

I wouldn't present myself as a financial expert or an economist by any stretch, but I am genuinely interested. I could say that when I was taking courses in economics at the University of Toronto, one of the professors was Professor David Drinkwalter, who was the chief economist for Ontario Hydro at the time. They did a rather questionable job in terms of forecasting the demand needs. In fact, they had to scale back the Darlington project.

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In my riding, just outside the boundary, there's Wesleyville, which was, I think, a fossil plant that was to be completed. It was never completed. They built the rail siding, they built the 401 siding called Wesleyville and they built all the infrastructure. I think almost 2,000 acres are assembled -- Mr Parsons would know the location well; he probably drives by it every Friday -- and yet there it sits. It's a huge asset. I believe that it is part of the solution in the future. I think there are more generation requirements known.

I know that Steve Gilchrist, who was a member of the alternative energy committee, of which Mr Parsons was a member -- they all realized that we have to find new, sustainable forms of energy.

Going back to the premise here, I think the Ontario Energy Board certainly is required, going into the future, to be stronger and to protect the marketplace to some extent in a product that at this time -- and I say that with some caution, because at this time, there's no way of storing it. So if you have a ramped-up capacity to meet maximum demand levels, you're actually carrying a fair amount of capital cost to satisfy about a 5% need.

I'd be happier to see programs come forward which encourage things that Mr Gilchrist speaks to: conservation. In fact, I think that Mr Hampton, respectfully, is on some of the right pages here. Who's really lacking in policy, of course, are the Liberals once again. They're kind of sitting on that white picket fence.

Really, what we need are the right kinds of policies that encourage conservation. I think if you look at demand-side management, that is, giving consumers the right to -- one of the things I liked was the time-of-rate metering. This is metering that would occur at the time of the day when you used the power. It would also relate to the rate at that time in the market. You see, I think the rate changes about every hour in the marketplace. So if I was using power at an off-peak time, say at 2 in the morning, the rate might be 2 cents or 3 cents. That's the time when appliances and computers in homes could automatically turn the clothes dryer on and off. It could turn the dishwasher on and off. It could turn compressors in the home on and off, whether it's for a freezer, a dehumidifier or whatever, so that the consumption would be at the time of lowest rate. Then the consumer would really have some power to make decisions and of course to buy energy-efficient appliances. In other words, the keynote for the future, looking forward, is not more generation, it's more conservation.

I think Mr Hampton is right sometimes: if you really want to discourage usage, you raise price. That will discourage usage. People will have to cut back.

We need to also develop policies -- and I think this is going back to Bill 23's purpose here -- to protect the consumer at the end of the day and to give them the tools and resources, and I consider in that the importance of industry.

I've heard members on the other side, specifically the NDP, talk, and I listen when they speak, because they're speaking with respect to their constituents, whether those constituents be the mining industry, which is a large consumer of energy, or the logging and timber industry, which is a large consumer of energy. They need to be heard, and they need to have a rate going forward. There's more to be said on what I'd call the rate mitigation agreements that are part of the legislation.

I have to commend Minister Wilson, because when he was there, he took the difficult steps of bringing forward what I thought were the right decisions to abandon the old Ontario Hydro. Some people viewing might take exception with that breaking with tradition. The truth is that the old Ontario Hydro, by every account I've read, starting with the Macdonald commission report -- and there were PhD economist types writing it; they weren't some political bureaucrats. As I said before, they basically said that there was a problem. In fact, I think the rate when the market was scheduled to be opened -- several times it was delayed -- was about 4.3 cents a kilowatt. So we opened up the market or we froze the rate basically at where the market was or should have been. Some are saying the 4.3 cents a kilowatt is too low.

I would put it to you this way. One of the two committees I've sat on was the select committee on nuclear affairs, which looked at how much money could be spent to retune, retube and revitalize the nuclear industry. It was called NAOP, the nuclear asset optimization plan. Floyd Laughren, by the way, was on that committee, along with Sean Conway, a fellow who knows a great deal about the whole energy debate for the last two decades. We basically had a unanimous report, and I respect the members on there. I think Minister Wilson was the minister at that time. They really did make a very unanimous attempt to say, "How do we revitalize nuclear energy capacity?"

Nuclear is about 40% of the generating capacity of electricity in Ontario. How much nuclear is and isn't supported is a whole different debate. That debate was held in the 1980s, and it's the power source of choice, I guess: highly technical, highly capital-intensive and highly controversial to some extent. But I have to say that there's a plant, Darlington, in my riding, and that plant is a very good citizen in terms of working with the community. They are highly respected, and I think they are open and transparent to the public, more so than they ever were, and are now called OPG Darlington. They are trying hard to be a good, safe, reliable source of power for this province.

There's no source of power that doesn't create some adverse impact. We should all recognize that whether it's water power, which is known to create some environmental impacts, whether it's wind power, which has the visible blemish on the landscape and the danger to the bird population, or whether it's fossil fuels, natural gas or coal, all of them, including nuclear, have problems. We as consumers and as a society who are so dependent on large amounts of energy have to look to the future for more sustainable forms of energy that are more friendly to human health.

I would only say about Bill 23, as I said, that the Ontario Energy Board was established over 40 years ago. It has evolved and expanded and has served us well, but it has to change to adapt to the times. There is room for improvement at any time with any legislation, I believe.

Members on both sides of the House have heard the concerns of their constituents on energy matters, so again I urge all members to vote in favour of this time allocation motion to ensure that this bill to protect the interests of consumers is passed swiftly. At the end of the day, I understand that there will be some tone of disagreement, but I expect, for the reason that this is the last week of legislative proceedings, that we'd get on with the business. Certainly on this side of the House, our commitment to consumers is paramount. Consumer protection was key to the decision, action and overall strategy of our government in bringing forward an action plan to lower hydro bills.

I just want to stop and sort of break the tension, make sure some people are listening. It's a real privilege for me in my riding of Durham -- we all experienced some wonderful weather this weekend. There hasn't been any

real drain on air conditioners and other heating-ventilation systems. It may be starting today, perhaps. But I was out and about to a number of events, and I just want to mention a few.

I was out to the Fabulous '50s event in Bowmanville. I'm surprised, Mr Speaker, you didn't take time out of your busy schedule in Hamilton to attend. It was sponsored by the BIA. I always have to respect Garth Gilpin and Ron Hooper, who are instrumental in putting this together on an annual basis.

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The second place I stopped off at was the Massey family farm show. The Massey family, as you probably know, or should know, originated really from the community of Newcastle in my riding of Durham. This show was made up primarily of farm implements and farm memorabilia. It was a very beautiful day at the Massey hall in Newcastle. Myno Van Dyke was one of the organizers who spent a lot of time, along with Francis Jose. I met a couple of interesting people there, I can tell you. Jack Gordon has the most phenomenal collection of Massey-Harris farm equipment and memorabilia that I've ever seen.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): In Brantford?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, unbelievable, David.

Anthony Turnbull is one of the donors, one of the local businesspeople who donated, and I was able to present a recognition gift to Jack Gordon. Again, it was just my honour to be there.

There was another really interesting event -- at many of those events, I heard the electricity question. I heard other questions. That's part of all of our duties on the weekend. I had six events this weekend, all of them very enjoyable but we're always playing 20 questions. One of them at Hampton, which is a small community just north of Bowmanville, a little bit north of the 401, really close to the proposed technical route of the 407. They had an open house with local politicians. The mayor, John Mutton, was invited. I'm sure he's busy somewhere. Alex Shepherd, the MP, was invited. He was starting his holidays, I guess. I shouldn't say that because I was surprised they weren't there. Don MacArthur, a local councillor, was there. He's a good guy and a very strong advocate for community, along with George Krohn, Wilma Kantor, Vivian Barrett, Alice White, Celi Dickson and Grace Moores. All of these people, of course, are volunteers trying to build stronger communities. That's really what it's about -- trying to build safe communities. I can say that Hampton is a community that's got lots of threats but it has a great core of people, all volunteers, that want to make their communities safer and a better place to live.

The last one I went to was more social and more enjoyable. It was with friends of mine from the Knights of Columbus council 6361. They had a barbecue where they invited other volunteers. It's my understanding that in the last 20 years or so, they've contributed over \$1 million through their local bingos and all that kind of stuff. I was quite impressed -- all volunteers, all or very

worthwhile inter-denominational groups. I commend Joe Jeronimo and Richard Van Den Wildenberg. Richard was actually the former Grand Knight. Joe is the current Grand Knight, and Richard was recognized as the Knight of the Year. Al and Marilyn Arsenault are two people who make that whole organization go round. They work hard.

At each one of those, I'm out meeting people and I have assured them on energy -- and the energy question does come up -- that by passing Bill 23, the whole focus is to strengthen the aspects of consumer protection. I'm happy to support it myself, and I know that other members on this side are of the same opinion -- at least I assume. I'm actually waiting for the member for Scarborough Centre to speak. She's eminently qualified to express the views of the urban landscape, for sure.

I would only say, though, that along with reliable energy the Consumer Protection Act also provides the Ontario Energy Board -- and this is very important -- with enhanced enforcement powers. There are also clauses in here dealing with the retroactivity which was mentioned by the member from Windsor on the opposition. That is important, that the retroactivity discussion will protect consumers again. The legislation that was in place, as I said, was 40 years old. It needed to be updated, and now is the time for the opposition to stand to voice their concerns but certainly to support this time allocation motion so that we can get on with protecting consumers in this province.

There's more to be said because the energy issue is a huge issue in my riding of Durham. It is my responsibility, working with and for both consumers and employees of Ontario Power Generation, who are great corporate citizens, as well as the Veridian Corp, a local distributor which is really wholly owned by the municipalities in place. It's got a great board: George Van Dyk and Pauline Storcks are from my riding. They're good people. I know that they also want a fair and reasonably regulated marketplace. I believe this bill puts the Ontario Energy Board in the right position to do the right thing for the people of this province, and I'll certainly be strongly supporting it.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm very pleased to join this debate. I'm sure I reflect all the ridings when it is a major issue to constituents both in their personal lives or in their employers' lives, which has a very profound effect on them.

Once again, we have another time allocation motion. I really wish I'd been here at a time when we had democracy working in Ontario and bills were introduced and debated and committees reviewed them, and they went across Ontario and they listened to people and they brought them back and made changes. That must have been a delightful era. The shame is that it's not here right now. I believe this is the 123rd time-allocation bill since 1995, 1995 being the year that this government took office. It's a tragedy that people have really lost their input into it.

However, the government has identified an issue, and it's an issue that I think has been brought to light by media and by consumers. The question that was asked of me quite often over the last five or six months was, "The Ontario Energy Board exists to protect us from the industry, but what exists to protect us from the Ontario Energy Board?" The highlight of it was their approving a two-year retroactive payment -- absolutely unbelievable to the average Ontario citizen that a company is able to get an increase dating back two years. There's no store that would say, "I guess we didn't charge you enough for the refrigerator. We're sending a bill for that fridge that you bought two years ago," but the Ontario Energy Board allowed the gas company to do that.

So now we've reworked the Ontario Energy Board and everything will be better. Certainly that's what they want us to believe. But again we see that in some sense the Ontario Energy Board will continue to be a device for the minister to use, because there's an advisory group that will give advice to the Ontario Energy Board and the advisory group is appointed by the minister. I doubt very much whether the minister -- or any minister; this is not this minister personally -- would appoint individuals to it who do not agree with his or her viewpoint.

So the Ontario Energy Board is going to protect us from energy gouging. It's difficult to envision things getting much worse than they are now. If we look at electricity, bills continue to be a major issue for homes. I know there was the announcement last fall in a house and the Premier indicated that electricity prices would be frozen at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour -- I wish. I wish they really were frozen at that. To the people of Ontario who are watching this, take your total energy consumption and divide that into your total bill. You're not paying 4.3 cents; you're paying 8, 9 or 10 cents a kilowatt hour because, although this government froze the actual energy costs at 4.3 cents, they also froze the delivery costs at the highest level in history, and we will not be experiencing cheap electricity. If you look at your bill, you can understand that we in Ontario are experiencing the illusion of cheap electricity, but in fact it's not.

We're extremely high-priced, and at the same time -- and certainly in my role as critic for persons with disabilities I am contacted by citizens who through no fault of their own are recipients of the Ontario disability support program, which has been frozen since 1992. They are being asked to pay ever-escalating bills with not so much as a cost-of-living increase from 1992 until now. The absolute maximum a person on ODSP receives is just about \$11,000 a year. Try to find accommodation, buy food and clothing and then pay electricity bills. I have literally had calls from constituents saying, "Do I buy food or do I pay my electricity bill this month?" In spite of the rhetoric it continues to be very, very high.

That's only half the picture. For the electricity that goes to large industries -- and when I talk about large industries I'm talking about industries that employ a lot of people -- they are facing dire straits with these bills. They don't have that 4.3-cent cap. We have companies in

Ontario that have been in business here for 40 years and 50 years. Now they're being forced to put up a deposit in case they leave town, which is not going to happen.

In actual fact, I think Hydro One should be required to put up a deposit to guarantee the reliability of supply to these plants, because they're worried about brownouts. For many industrial processes brownouts aren't a matter of the lights going off. It's very expensive equipment and it's very expensive product that will be destroyed. The worry from large industry is twofold, but certainly reliability is a key factor in it. We've had a whole series of incidents across Ontario where insulators at Hydro One have been breaking, and Hydro One knows they're defective. Hydro One's response is, "We don't guarantee reliable supply and we're not responsible if one of our insulators breaks."

Industry needs to be worried that Hydro One will be able to deliver the power to them when they need it.

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In terms of rates, for a government that has preached rhetoric about jobs, jobs, jobs all the time, jobs are being put at risk in this province by the electricity costs that large users are being forced to pay. For them it presents the problem that it's a very competitive environment. An industry, whether it be located in Prince Edward-Hastings or a riding in Toronto, is not competing with industry in the next block or the next city or the next province; it is competing with industry in the rest of the world. Our electricity costs have increased to the point where the plant managers are saying to me, "We are concerned that we're no longer competitive with plants in the United States." We're not talking a Third World country; we're talking plants in the United States. They say, "Their costs are now lower than ours, and every two years, every three years, we have to put in a bid against the other plants to ensure that we are the low-cost bidder. We think we've lost our competitive edge because of these electricity costs." Maybe the Ontario Energy Board is going to act, but it's like shutting the barn door after the horse has got away. It's an absolute fiasco.

There was a comment made earlier by a government member that a good way to discourage usage was to raise the price. Well, it's working. We are going to have less usage, not because of conservation but because of plants having to shut down, unable to be competitive because of the hydro price.

We were the jewel of the world. Sir Adam Beck was a hero who brought in the concept of public electricity at cost. In fact, I believe it was a Conservative government that touted that concept of electricity at cost. How they have turned and destroyed the concept, and now there is no number of middle organizations in place to grab it up.

All of this was done in the name of lowering the debt, but have we in fact lowered the debt, or are we increasing it? The reality is, for all of these people in Ontario -- I'm included, and everyone here -- who write a cheque each month for their electricity, there's a debt retirement charge in it. There is also GST on it because this government hasn't got the courage to say, "This is actually a

tax. It is a new tax on Ontario's levy." If they admitted it was a tax, there wouldn't be GST on it. But they just can't say the words, "We've implemented a new tax."

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment): It's not a tax.

Mr Parsons: It's a tax. When you pay your money to pay down a debt that the government has incurred, that's a tax.

Hon Mr Wilson: It's not new.

Mr Parsons: Call it what you want, it's a tax. The people in Ontario know it's a tax and that we're paying more money for GST than we need to because you can't say, "It's a tax." But it is a tax.

The total bill for the debt continues to increase because we're buying electricity at more than we're selling it for -- simple as that. So for all the pain that every individual citizen in Ontario is experiencing, it's getting worse instead of better.

The explanation was also given to us that we need to break it up because Ontario Hydro is bankrupt. They don't have the money and they can't borrow the money to build a new plant. They can no longer borrow the money. Well, interestingly, Hydro One went to the market and said, "We want \$500 million to buy all the local utilities." They got their money just like that because the financial world said, "Hydro One is in good shape. They owe money but they also have tremendously valuable assets." Hydro One had no difficulty at all raising \$500 million to buy up local utilities.

Did it improve service? Let me tell you on behalf of the citizens of Ontario, we're not sure there is anyone at the other end when you phone Hydro One for a complaint. Interestingly, I had contact from an individual who said his father is getting up in years, is going to move and had tried to contact Hydro One. His father, being retired, had the opportunity to phone about every hour. He called Hydro One every day for a week and a half and all he got was a message that his call was important and "Please wait." It went on and on and on, so finally in frustration he said, "Can you do something?"

We called Hydro One and said, "We have a constituent who is unable to reach you," and the response was, "Tell him to call us." Well, that poor gentleman had been trying for eight days straight, not counting weekends, to get through to Hydro One.

I just found out that at Hydro One, in order to improve the service to the public, they actually hired back 20 laid-off customer service people. What in the world prompted them to lay them off? Every time Hydro One says they're going to give me better service, I know I'm going to get less. They hired back 20 individuals to respond to the phones. These people were already trained because they worked there. Interestingly, with the 20 new individuals there now to respond to the 1-800 phone calls, productivity within the customer service area has gone up zero. There are still the same number of hang-ups, still the same number of people not able to get through. That isn't a reflection on the 20 people they brought back. That

means the volume of people trying to get through to them is so huge that 20 more people aren't going to do it.

This government's mad craze to consolidate everything in one place and to have one call centre do it -- the people of Ontario reminisce with me how nice it was when there were local hydro offices that knew the territory, knew the community. You could either drop in and pay your bill or you could phone them. Customer service is absolutely zilch with Hydro One. I give credit totally to this government with the restructuring: Hydro One's problem, Ontario Hydro's problem, was the debt. You've taken and destroyed a system that worked and you've managed to increase the debt at the same time. That's quite an accomplishment for you.

We should be concerned about conservation, and that really doesn't exist.

I'm trying to recall. In the terms that we're setting up for this new Ontario Energy Board, they list the objectives for this new board. It says, "to protect the interests of consumers." That's number 3. The Ontario Energy Board is being touted as being there to protect consumers, and you're setting the priority of protecting interests of consumers as number 3. Number 1 is "to facilitate competition in the generation and sale of electricity and facilitate a smooth transition to competition." Your mantra of privatize, privatize, privatize still continues to be the number one objective in all your dealings with Hydro One, and customer service is number 3. I guess we should be grateful it's at least on the list, but it is not a priority.

Your number one objective as a government is to serve the interests of people. Forget your rich friends, forget Bay Street and forget the market you want to play to, and think about the average Ontario citizen just this once, because this is too important to play your little games of trying to privatize and see if it works or not.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I was sitting here this afternoon contemplating another closure debate. I've been here now for 20 months and I don't think there has been a single bill, maybe with one or two exceptions, that has not ended up with a closure debate.

I started to think about my political life over these last 15 years and how often I have seen this type of closure. Certainly it was unheard of in the times of the borough of East York council, where everything was debated. Even though it might have seemed long and tedious, we listened to what all people had to say.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): The sex offender registry and the Sergeant Rick McDonald bills.

Mr Prue: We got two. OK. I've been reminded there have been two in the last 20 months. I thank the honourable minister.

I was thinking back to the times when we actually listened to what our constituents had to say, when we invited people at each and every meeting to come forward and have an interface with their politicians, to talk to them about the issues of the day. Then we had a very lively debate among our council colleagues and we came

to conclusions sometimes late into the evening, but we heard every single thing and looked at every single possible avenue.

Then I looked at what happened in the city of Toronto after amalgamation. I looked at that too, and that was sort of somewhere in between what I found here. Closure would often be used, but certainly not to the extent it would be used here. It would be used on one or two debates --

Interjection.

Mr Prue: It would be used on one or two debates on every council meeting, one or two items that would come up that would take a long time; there would be closure called by someone and it would occasionally pass. But the overwhelming number of items that were before and are there every single week would be the subject of a full debate, although unfortunately they would not take the time too often to listen to what their constituents had to say, or in committee or anywhere else. Then you come here and you see that closure is the norm. Closure is not something that is used on a rare occasion because the debate has taken too long or it's too late into the process; it is used on every single -- every single -- bill.

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I have to tell you that for a democrat -- not a New Democrat, but a democrat, someone who believes that the public needs to be heard, someone who believes that all aspects of every piece of legislation have to be explored to make sure that the bill is whole and complete and proper -- the use of closure can never be said to be a good thing. Here I am standing up again with another closure debate and another bill.

There are some who will think that this bill is a good thing, like my friend from Scarborough Centre, who natters on and natters on. I try not to listen to her, because usually what she's saying makes very little sense. I'm sure that others would share that comment.

We have another bill here, which I'm sure some people on the opposite side think may have some relevance and that it may be a good thing. But I would suggest to you that this is another bill that is trying to fix something which is badly broken and it's not going to fix it. The problem here is not that the OEB needs a new Consumer Protection and Governance Act; the problem here is that the entire deregulation of hydro has been a disaster -- the deregulation has simply not worked, and this is but another bill trying to staunch up and stop that which has gone so terribly wrong.

When I first came here, I remember one of the first weeks -- it was the time when Mr Harris, as the Premier, was about to resign. He stood over there in his seat and he announced the privatization of hydroelectricity. I had seen a great many things in this province over the last several years with him as the Premier. I saw people being attacked: the poor, the welfare recipients. I saw people being attacked because they were in unions, because they did not agree, because they were special interests -- whatever special interests -- because they were teachers, because they were doctors, because they were nurses,

because they had the temerity and the unmitigated gall to disagree with this government. They were attacked and attacked and attacked. I want to say that I believe the greatest attack that ever took place by Mr Harris probably took place on that day. Because what he did was he turned around and attacked his own party. He hoist them, literally, on their own petard; with their own mantra of privatization he gave them this whole hydro fiasco.

They've been trying to recover, quite literally, from that statement he made in this Legislature on that day, throughout the last two years. I don't believe that they have succeeded. Because they have gone from crisis to crisis to crisis: they have gone from deregulation to partial deregulation; they have gone from soaring prices to even more soaring prices; they have gone to layoffs; they have gone to towns like Wawa in terrible economic straits; they have gone to lakes and our environment, where Brascan takes the opportunity to empty an entire lake in order to make money. We have seen all of that in the last 18 months.

I want to talk about a bit of a hydro rip-off that happened to me but on Friday. It happened to me. I got home and got my hydro bill. We all get hydro bills and we all think they're way too high. I looked down at my hydro bill and I saw that it was three times as much as I had ever, ever paid before. This was at a time when until today, we didn't even have any real reason to use a lot of hydro over the spring. I looked down at that bill and it wasn't for any hydro that I was using these days, it was for hydro that I purportedly used last August. I wondered, "Why am I getting a bill from last August?" I went back and I looked at all of the bills -- because my wife has a very good filing system. I looked: \$200; \$220; \$210; \$190 -- through every couple of months when we got the hydro bill, they were always the same. It was true from last August too: it was a couple of hundred dollars and I never really thought too much. Because it's very difficult to read the hydro bills, even for someone who deals with it every day like I do in this Legislature; even for somebody who knows that the hydro bill contains a lot more than the electricity you actually use.

So it was a bit of an education for me over the weekend to go down in my hydro bill and just look at how much we spend and how much the consumers are asked to spend for the delivery of electricity. I got my bills out and I looked down them, and there are really six charges. The first charge is the customer charge. You are charged simply for being a customer. That charge can be quite significant. I look down on the bill -- here's this month's bill -- and for being a customer, I am charged \$28.06. I'm sure if I'm charged \$28.06, there are those who are charged both more and less than what I am charged. But just for being a customer I'm charged \$28.06.

For distribution -- the fact that they have to take the electricity from the grid and distribute it to my house -- I am charged \$28.65.

Then there's the transmission charge. I guess that's because it has to go on a wire somewhere. I am charged

\$23.07 for the fact that they transmit the electricity from Niagara Falls or Pickering -- no, they don't do it from there, because that doesn't work -- or from wherever, maybe the windmill on the waterfront. They transmit it to my house, and that's \$23.07.

Then I looked at the wholesale operations charge. I don't really know what that is, but that's \$13.75.

Fifth is the debt retirement charge. Now, this is the only one I understand, and I think all Ontarians understand it and recognize that the Hydro debt has to be paid down and it has to come from somewhere. At least I acknowledge that that debt belongs to me as a member of the community, as someone who uses hydroelectricity, and that I have a responsibility to pay down that debt in due course.

Then comes the actual energy. The first bill was for \$108.50, for those five items. Then the actual energy I used is \$95.39. So it works out that 55% of my bill has nothing to do with the electricity I used; it has to do with customer charges, distribution charges, transmission charges, wholesale operation charges and debt retirement charges. And how much I used came to \$95.

But then the smacker and the beauty was, there's a new thing here that they call the final government true-up to 4.3 cents, and this month my bill was \$379.68 for a final true-up to 4.3 cents. Well, of course I was quite incensed. What is a final true-up to 4.3 cents? I had no idea what this meant. Then, on Friday afternoon, from my constituency office, I started to make a few phone calls. I was kind of naive as to what this was, but my constituency people were not, because they have had dozens of similar bills come into our office in Beaches-East York in the last few weeks. As people are getting their hydro bills, they're looking down and seeing bills for \$200, \$300, \$400 for true-up charges going back to the year 2002.

I started to make some phone calls to find out what these were all about. I have to tell you I was a little hot under the collar. I phoned Ontario Hydro. I phoned Toronto Hydro. I phoned just everyone, trying to figure out what this was, until I finally got an individual who was able to tell me that this was because last August the electricity company forgot to add some monies to the charge. They told me last August was one of the key times when they forgot to put that actual money down and that last August I had used some \$200 worth of electricity that they had forgotten to tell anyone about and had forgotten to tell me about.

So I went back to my bill from last August and looked down all of these customer charges, and I found an August bill of \$211.96, which I thought was a pretty normal hydro bill for me until I realized -- and you look at the bill, in the fine print, and you see that there is no energy charge. Somebody forgot to charge me for the energy last August, and they're getting around to it now. This is just one of the two bills -- last August and last October of 2002 -- and they're getting around to it now. So now I have been trued up. I have been trued up by the

great energy system that this government has created. I have been trued up and told to pay this extra \$379.68.

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I would acknowledge that maybe I should be paying this. But I will tell you that no other company that I have ever dealt with, that I can remember in my life, has sent me a bill 10 months after the fact because of errors and their own sloppiness in making it. No other company has taken me hours and hours and hours of phoning, trying to get an explanation, as they did. They seem to think it's quite normal and natural.

I would suggest it is just another example of the frustration of the people who are out there. If I was frustrated and understand the system at least a little, you can think about the pensioners, you can think about the people with limited education, you can think about the people who do not understand the hydro system, what they must think, what they must feel and how they cannot possibly be expected to understand a new bill of \$379 plumped on them just like that for no reason at all. I would suggest that this whole experiment has gone badly, badly askew. Not only do they send out bills like this, but everything else in the electrical system has gone wrong.

We have a bill here called the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, which is supposed to, I guess, somehow fix a little bit of this. I don't know what needs fixing. I doubt very much what's in this bill is going to fix anything. In reality, the system is terribly broken. What it needs is not a little bit of tinkering, as this bill will do, but a complete change to how we see electrical production, transmission and usage.

For a period of some five years, I actually sat on the East York Hydro-Electric Commission. As the mayor, I sat there with two wonderful individuals, Mr Jack Christie and Mr Bob Currie, who certainly knew the electricity system a lot better than I. I don't remember ever having these kinds of discussions with any of the people who lived in East York who had hydro delivery. I don't remember anyone ever thinking that they were ripped off by the system. I don't remember ever sending out bills 10 months after the fact. I don't ever remember having people have to come and make explanations and stay on the phone for hours and hours, because they were open and accessible. The hydroelectric commission was right in their neighbourhood. They could walk through the door Monday through Friday from 8 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock at night and get a representative who would deal with them immediately. Certainly we don't have that luxury any more. We have companies that we don't even know who are out selling door to door, and who, I would suggest, are ripping people off. We have companies that are run by the Ontario government that are at arm's length but are miles away and hundreds of phone calls from actually being received.

I'm kind of surprised -- or maybe I shouldn't be -- that all of this has transpired in the last two years. My first opportunity to actually see this face-to-face came in the by-election in late August 2001. There were a number of

all-candidates debates in Beaches-East York. I was quite surprised to see the positions of the various parties at that time in terms of privatization, or whether or not it would be a good thing. It was of no real surprise to me that the Conservatives and their candidate, Mr Penney, were totally in favour of privatization, saying it would be the panacea for all of those people who wanted to vote for him and for the Conservative Party to have hydro privatized, and that all of the profits would go back to ordinary people and how wonderful it would be because private industry could, of course, as they opined, always do it better than the public sector. It was equally surprising for me to see the Green Party and its candidate, Mr Elgie, say just about the same thing.

Mr Bisson: That is amazing.

Mr Prue: That is amazing. His view was that this was going to help green Ontario, because the private sector would be far more attuned -- I can't believe this -- to coal-fired generation and wanting to shut it down, and far more attuned to green energy. That was their position.

Then, of course, there was the Liberal Party position with their candidate, Mr Hunter. Mr Bob Hunter also wanted to privatize electricity, and said so at the all-candidates debates. He said so for reasons which I still do not totally fathom, but he was talking a little bit like Mr Elgie, that this was an environmental thing. He also said those same words that we hear from many Tory cabinet ministers and many of the backbenchers, that it is the private sector that can do it the best. Therefore, leave it to the private sector.

Hon Mr Wilson: Pollution Probe wants to privatize energy.

Mr Prue: Well, Pollution Probe too. There you go; another misguided group.

These three gentlemen, I would suggest to you, were totally misguided as to what was going to happen. It was only me, and I stood up there and said -- and I still maintain that -- for all of my life living here in the province of Ontario, for the 53 years, as I was then, or the 55 that I'm about to be now -- I have never had difficulty with hydro. When you turned on the lights, they went on. When you had a problem, you could contact somebody and they would come. When there was a problem with your bill, you could pick up the phone or go in person and have it dealt with. That has started to change, sadly. That has changed in the last two years. I would suggest that people in this province have come to look for the best in hydro services, and we are now starting to deliver something which is far less than the best.

What we're delivering today -- take a look at it, just for a minute. We are struggling with skyrocketing prices -- prices that started out at 3.8 cents, when I first arrived here. Then they were capped at 4.3 cents, but they're actually costing us 5.6 cents, or 5.8 cents or 6 cents. That's just the energy costs. Remember, we are also charging all those poor people, those consumers, those small business people, those industries, all of those other whacking charges.

Again, just to go over those whacking charges: we are charging them for being a customer because we have to distribute the electricity, because there's a transmission charge, because there's a wholesale operations charge, and because there's a debt retirement charge. So because they are our customers, they will pay not the 4.3 cents, but probably closer to 10 cents when you actually calculate it all out. It's going up and up and up.

Today is a very hot day. I will guarantee you that you are going to see an awful lot of use today. I'm glad that the lights are still on, and I hope they stay on throughout this summer. The skyrocketing amounts of electricity that are needed, coupled with the costs of producing and buying that electricity, will make sure that there will be problems, as sure as I'm standing here.

We're looking at cost overruns in places like Pickering. Pickering and the whole nuclear thing -- I was never opposed to nuclear as being unsafe, and I still am not. I believe that nuclear energy can be every bit as safe as other forms of energy. If you do it correctly, if you put the safeguards in, if you have trained personnel, then it can be every bit as safe. There is, of course, the final product, the end product. What do you do with the uranium waste? What do you do with it? How do you get rid of it? How do you make it safe for the public? That will continue to be a problem.

But the one thing about the nuclear industry is that it is expensive. It is expensive to run and it is expensive to maintain. We have seen in Pickering the cost overruns. Not only is it the cost, it's the lengthy delays that take place each and every time something needs to be refitted. We're hearing now about a June opening, then a July opening, then an August opening, and then maybe a next summer opening. This keeps going on and on and on. We have failed quite miserably, I would suggest, in terms of Pickering and nuclear.

If we as a society want to continue to go down this road, then we have to make sure that we understand that it is going to inevitably cost us a great deal more for our electricity than what those in the past have told us.

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We have the whole problem of expensive imports. Every time we can't produce enough electricity, there's always someone willing to sell it to us at a pretty hefty cost. I notice some of the electrical imports last summer from the United States were particularly horrendous. The costs of those imports were just enormous. What other choice do you have when you don't have the capacity yourself any more, when you've allowed the stations to run down and when you've drained the last of that lake near Wawa so that the fish are all floundering around and there's no more water in it to pump out? What do you do when it's just not possible to do it any more? What do you do with the shutdowns -- because you have to have shutdowns all the time in all of the facilities for maintenance? What do you do with all the shutdowns in the little towns?

Hon Mr Wilson: The plants fell apart under the NDP.

Mr Prue: Nothing fell apart as much as it did when you were minister, with the greatest of respect -- nothing at all.

Hon Mr Wilson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Ten of the 20 nuclear plants fell apart and went off-line under the NDP. Maybe he could get his facts --

The Acting Speaker (Mr Wayne Wettlaufer): That's not a point of order, Minister.

Mr Prue: We are now starting to see, very sadly, what is happening in small-town Ontario, particularly in the north, as industries such as mining and pulp and paper are shutting down. We are starting to see people become unemployed. We are starting to see the whole northern economy, which is resource-based and based on electricity and power and generation, coming into decline.

We have here a bill which, if anything, is misguided. Is it going to make a great deal of difference to anyone if it's passed? Probably not. Is there anyone out there who understands what this bill does? Probably not. But it is not going to solve the basic dilemma of what this party has brought to us in the last two years. The final shot of Mike Harris against his own party is something to be truly amazed at. Of all the things he ever did, the final shot was the best one. Here we have a misguided bill that's basically going to do nothing.

It reminds me of somebody who leaves a little meat out too long. You leave it out too long and it gets kind of rancid and putrid and rotten. Then what do you do with it? This bill is like attempting to put it back in the refrigerator and thinking that is somehow going to make it good again. It's not. It's still going to be that same rancid, rotten piece of meat when you take it out. You can do lots of things to it. In the Middle Ages they didn't have refrigeration. That's when they started to try to find spices. They would load all this stuff full of spices so you couldn't taste the rotten, putrid meat. I don't think spicing this up is going to work, and neither is refrigeration. This bill is simply not going to do anything.

What it is going to do is make a couple more people rich. There are two things I note from this bill that are not good things, because the rest is quite benign. The first one is that OEB staff are not regulated in terms of how much money they are going to make. We note that the new chairperson is going to make three times as much money as Floyd Laughren did before he left. This all harkens back to Eleanor Clitheroe. This is all the same thing. People will remember those huge salaries that she gave herself, the yacht, the car, the driver and all of those things. And here we have a lovely bill that is going to put that in writing, so these people can set their own salaries, starting with three times as much as the former head of the OEB. I tell you, when the public finds out about this, they won't even think this is a benign bill. It is really quite crazy to start off on a tangent like this and let these private enterprisers, these people who know how to get money from public funds and say it's private enterprise at the same time, to make such enormous salaries.

The second thing is that within the contents of this bill is pay for performance. This is undoubtedly the only

quasi-judicial tribunal in all of this country that is going to get pay for performance. There's no pay for performance at the housing tribunal, at workers' compensation, the Immigration and Refugee Board, any of the federal boards, any of the provincial boards, or even, I think, any of the municipal boards that are quasi-judicial in nature. This will be the first one -- pay for performance. I would suggest this again goes down the wrong path. People who are there to judge an issue must be fair to all sides on the issue. They can't be rushing to get the job done fast so they can do another case, so they can make more money. They have to give sober second thought and real fairness to all of those who are before them.

In conclusion, we have a mess. We have a hydro system that is in a complete mess. We have here a bill that purports to do something to change it, but the reality is, the bill does little or nothing. Those parts of the bill that one can single out in terms of setting one's own salary and performance pay are, I think, objectionable. The balance of the bill -- it's just not going to work. It is simply not going to work. When the brownouts and blackouts come this summer -- if they do -- when the price of electricity starts to rise and when the \$100 million is spent for all those special generators, remember that this bill did nothing to help it.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I am particularly pleased to take a few moments to speak to the time allocation motion for Bill 23, which is called the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act.

I believe that I speak for pretty well everyone in this House when I say that energy is among the top concerns for our constituents. In fact, I believe it's absolutely imperative that this bill be given swift passage, which is why we're all here today. Whether it's through our riding offices or conversations that we have with people or as we travel across this province, I think it's clear that energy prices, energy supply and energy regulation are on the minds of people in Ontario. That is why this proposed legislation, Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act, 2003, is so important.

The people of this province need to know there is a place they can turn to that will help them to make informed energy choices, that is watching out for their interests and that will act on their behalf if they have a problem they can't solve on their own. The Ontario Energy Board, or OEB, is that place, and this legislation, if passed, will greatly enhance the board's ability to protect consumers -- something I think we all want in this place.

The OEB was established more than 40 years ago. It is run by talented, dedicated people. But I think last year it became fairly obvious that changes were needed. The Reliable Energy and Consumer Protection Act, 2002, went a long way to make some of the needed changes. That legislation enhanced the protection of consumers by including reforms to strengthen the OEB's powers to take action against unfair marketing and retailing practices.

The act also increased the OEB's enforcement powers and strengthened the surveillance powers of the Independent Electricity Market Operator's market surveillance panel.

Through last summer and fall, I think it became fairly clear that more needed to be done. That is when Premier Eves, in a step that should be applauded, ordered a 100-day review of the OEB and entrusted the Minister of Energy to conduct that review.

1700

My colleague the Minister of Energy has proposed legislation which is the result I think of a lot of hard work and, it should be added, included an impressive consultation process, Mr Prue. The minister invited comments from the public and from industry. He spoke to a large number of stakeholders. He listened and he acted. I want to offer my congratulations to him for a job well done. This consultation was important. It meant that this was not change for the sake of change. The consultation process meant the people, associations and companies that use the OEB had a key voice in the changes outlined in this bill, something which comes as perhaps a little bit of a strange phenomenon for people like the speaker from Beaches-East York.

This proposed legislation gives the OEB new purpose and will make it a much stronger organization. Bill 23, if passed, creates a strong, independent and well-resourced Ontario Energy Board, an OEB that can make the decisions that ensure the people of this province are treated fairly. The legislation, if passed, will also improve the effectiveness of the OEB. Bill 23 will improve the governance and accountability of the OEB, while ensuring that consumer protection remains its prime objective.

In preparing for today's debates, I did some checking. It was easy for me, as someone who has listened to many debates on energy, to recognize the importance of the OEB, but I was astonished at just how vital the OEB is to the people of this province. Did you know, for example, that last year the OEB received close to 100,000 calls at its call centre? These calls came from consumers who wanted to know about energy prices. They wanted to know about energy contracts. They wanted someone to listen to their concerns and answer their questions. To me, this shows quite clearly that Premier Eves and the Minister of Energy showed tremendous foresight last fall. They clearly understood that the people of Ontario wanted and needed a stronger, more dynamic Ontario Energy Board, and Bill 23, if passed, will do just that.

In the meantime, in the time I have left, I would like to note some of what I see as the key elements of Bill 23, the proposed Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act.

The proposed legislation will make sure that the OEB has an enhanced communications role, something I think we heard from all sides of this House. I think this is an important step. The OEB did a good job of communicating with the public before, but this legislation, if passed, gives it a much clearer mandate to do so. 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, to be kept up to date on board decisions and, even more importantly, to be told why the Ontario Energy Board makes the decisions it does. This proposed legislation will ensure that all these things happen.

And 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, this legislation, if passed, will address the issue of retroactive decisions. Having to pay retroactive charges is difficult for consumers. If passed, Bill 23 will effectively eliminate charges that sit and accumulate month after month. This is an important step for consumers in this province, and we know that they are looking for the members of this House to give this proposed legislation swift passage.

The proposed legislation would ensure that the OEB is accountable. Accountability is what taxpayers expect. The legislation would establish an advisory committee of stakeholders, industry representatives and consumers to review the board's performance. If passed by the Legislature, this bill will allow the OEB to be self-financing and will also allow it to attract the best possible people to the industry and in the industry.

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

In introducing this proposed legislation, the Minister of Energy noted that he had used recent changes at the Ontario Securities Commission as a model. I think that this makes a lot of sense. The changes the Ontario Securities Commission implemented created a much stronger and a much more effective operation, and I am confident that if this bill is passed, the changes outlined will do the same for the Ontario Energy Board.

I'm here today to say that I am proud of the proposed changes this bill will bring to the OEB. I want to congratulate the Premier for ordering this review, and I congratulate the Minister of Energy for listening to what stakeholders had to say and for making sure that the energy interests of the people of Ontario will be protected for many years to come.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): Yet again, it's a time allocation motion that I speak to, in the form of Bill 23. I guess it is becoming customary for us to deal with most bills in this Legislature that this government brings forward by way of time allocation motions. That goes without saying. It is unparalleled and unfortunate, and we are constantly forced to remind the government that it's no way to run a Parliament.

If you look at the past year, the House did not sit in January, February, March and April, and then this government decides to sit in May and June. Of course, I'm assuming now from the information I have that this is the last week the House will be sitting. Is it any wonder, then, that the government is forced to use time

allocation motions for everything it puts through this House?

There's simply no interest on the part of the government to allow for bills to be thoroughly debated and, more importantly, for the public to have input while the debates take place. I think that is lamentable in the extreme, because most people, in the fast and furious pace that they lead their lives, really don't have the time to keep track of what goes on in this place, unless of course there's enough time allocated for that.

Let me go on with the bill. Let me just say that with respect to the Ontario Energy Board Consumer Protection and Governance Act -- that's the title -- of course the government is attempting to act well after the fact, even with this bill, which does not nearly go far enough to deal with some serious problems that consumers are facing when it comes to energy in Ontario.

1710

Let me just quote what the act sets out as the number one objective of the OEB: "to facilitate competition in the generation and sale of electricity and to facilitate a smooth transition to competition." Yet this is a consumer protection act. Guess what? The number one objective has nothing to do with protecting consumers and everything to do with facilitating competition and a smooth transition to competition. In fact, it's only when you reach objective number 3 that there's any mention about the protection of consumers.

Furthermore, last week we found out that the government was allowing marketers to pursue negative-option billing. How much worse can it get for consumers? Negative-option billing was unilaterally opposed by everyone when the cable companies tried to bring it in. It's detested -- and I'm sure you too found this out, Mr Speaker, in your riding -- by all consumers as one of the slimiest things a company could do to a consumer. It's just absolutely outrageous that this government would allow negative-option billing to take hold when it comes to this marketplace. I see the Minister of Energy just passing me by and I hope he's listening, because everyone has renounced this negative-option billing as just detestable.

None other than the National Post, which regularly supports this government, has an article with comments regarding negative-option billing. The Consumers Council of Canada was criticizing the new regulations that were brought in. It says, "The government has no plans to inform and educate consumers about this change in the regulations. It is relying on retailers to provide clear guidance and information to consumers in their bills." Can you imagine? This is a government that purports, in Bill 23, to want to protect consumers. They're doing nothing of the kind when they allow for negative-option billing. The consumer must put in writing that they're not interested in continuing or renewing their contract with the energy marketer. The onus is on the consumer. I ask, how is the OEB protecting consumers? Where is the interest of the consumer placed in terms of priority by

this government when it's creating this bill? It's simply not anywhere to be seen.

Another matter is of importance for consumers, and this I take from the Toronto Sun in an article on June 20, last week, reminding customers who signed contracts with energy companies that if their contract is automatically renewed, they are on the hook for the higher price. In other words, customers who signed contracts with these direct marketers are not subject to the 4.3 cent per kilowatt hour cap. They'll pay the full freight for whatever they signed for. Again, it's not acting in the interests of consumers to allow for this.

I say to the government that if it was really interested in assisting consumers, the best thing, bar none, that this government could do is to bring about a full conservation plan, because by reducing demand we would certainly go a long way to stabilizing the price of energy in this province, most particularly when it comes to electricity. Yet this government is doing absolutely nothing when it comes to putting in place an energy conservation plan. I would hope the government would take the bill that I brought forward, Bill 87, which would require the broader public sector -- institutions like hospitals, school boards, schools and the like, transfer recipients of this government, the partners -- to conduct energy audits to ascertain where energy savings might be had in terms of implementing an energy efficiency plan. You do an audit and then an energy efficiency plan is put in place, and this would certainly reduce the amount of energy that's required.

In fact, we know that the state of California, among other jurisdictions, but the state of California in particular, which was facing an enormous electricity crisis just a few short years ago, put in place an energy conservation plan, and in the first year alone was effectively able to reduce electricity requirements by 9%. If that were to take place here in Ontario, that would amount at peak demand points to about 2,500 megawatts of power, which would be like eliminating the equivalent of two Lakeview coal-fired generating plants.

Imagine what that would do in terms of benefit for the environment: eliminating at least two coal-fired plants immediately by reducing the amount of demand for electrical power, two plants spewing and emitting the worst and most foul kind of pollution. This is the first smog day, I would remind people. When the temperature goes up over 30 degrees Celsius, we start to get smog days. Today I believe is the first smog day. The first alerts were issued today for southern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. Of course we know the seriousness of all this with respect to those who suffer from asthmatic attacks, respiratory illness, the untold number of lives that are lost -- well, we know in fact that 1,200 lives are lost each year directly related to smog and air pollution.

It's a horrendous cost to our society. We could do something about it immediately by bringing about a conservation program. This government has refused to do anything in that regard. In fact, it was the select committee on alternative fuel sources which recommended

that the government bring about an energy conservation program in this province by the end of this year: December 31, 2003. It is recommendation number 50 which calls on the government to implement this plan.

My bill did receive support in the House. It is going to committee, but we know what happens to most private members' bills: they go to committee and they never see the light of day. It is a shame, because frankly this government, if it were re-elected -- God forbid -- does not plan to do anything about these dirty coal-fired generating plants until 2015, if you can imagine, some 12 years from now. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker? We won't be able to breathe at all by that time if we allow these coal-fired plants to continue to operate.

It's because we are so dependent, the string is pulled so tight in terms of the demand-supply relationship. Supply barely meets demand, and it most likely will not meet demand. It could even happen this year where we have blackouts or brownouts. As a result, we will be faced with a very dire situation in terms of an energy crisis in this province. I believe we're facing one. I think it is for that reason that this government should act with urgency, should bring about the energy conservation plan I talked about in my bill, and perhaps there are flaws in my bill that should be corrected, but let's have a full debate on that.

1720

Our party, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, plans to phase out coal-fired plants by the year 2007, and we have a plan for doing that. Part of that plan has to be conservation that is taken seriously. We have a few short years in which to do that, and this is why I hope the government is going to call an election sooner rather than later, because we need to debate this with the broader public. They deserve to have the right to decide what should happen with regard to energy usage and energy consumption in this province, and whether or not a conservation plan that calls for the government to act more quickly should be put in place sooner rather than later.

The government is being completely irresponsible when it says it's protecting the interests of consumers with regard to energy in this province. It is certainly not doing that, as I've pointed out, with negative-option billing. But it's not doing that with respect to other areas as well. They sold the 407, and what did we get? Five toll increases immediately after it was sold. That's protecting consumers? Hardly. What about insurance rates? They've gone through the roof -- double-digit, 19% on average insurance rates have gone up. That's protecting consumers? Hardly. Wherever you look -- and I'll not even get into user fees of all kinds that have gone up because of the downloading that's taken place over the last eight years. It goes on and on. Consumers are not being protected by this government.

I also introduced a bill to deal with credit reporting agencies and correcting people's credit history. The government has failed to act on that very important aspect of consumer protection, which is to give people a

clear and direct way to correct their credit histories. In this day and age, when we depend on credit, consumers must have a direct right to clean up any discrepancies in their credit history, and yet this government has done nothing about that.

I say to the government, you are sorely lacking and if you want to stand up as a champion of consumer rights and consumer protection, it's not washing with anybody. The evidence is clear: you have failed to act, particularly in this bill, when it comes to protecting consumers' interests.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Just a couple of remarks: first of all, I oppose strangulation motions. This government has strangled debate on so many bills it's hard to keep count. They do it --

Mr Cordiano: It's 123.

Mr Marchese: You see, other people keep count. How many?

Mr Cordiano: It's 123 or 124.

Mr Marchese: It's 124 times. That could really hurt after a while, couldn't it? How many times can you pull that string before your neck just gets short of breath and you can't speak any more on these strangulation bills?

The public is tired. The public wants debate and yet this government has forced us to be silent, has forced the public not to be able to express itself on many bills, and they have passed, over the many years, so many bills that the public can't keep track of bills, let alone how many times they've strangled debate on these various issues. The public is tired of having lost any modicum of democracy they may have had in the past. We've lost so much of democracy it's hard to be able to define it any more because the essence of a democratic society is the ability of a civic society to have the opportunity to respond to any particular bill that's introduced in this place. It's the foundation upon which democracy is built, to allow citizens and the opposition members the time to give due consideration to any bills. We haven't had that opportunity. We rarely get that opportunity.

What it speaks to is an autocratic government that doesn't give much of a hoot about whether people have their say or not. That's the kind of government we've got. Evidently, there are a lot of taxpayers out there who think this is OK. Well, it's not. Mercifully, there are a lot of citizens out there who behave as citizens and not taxpayers, who want to have their say and are demanding it in such a way that I believe they are eventually, in a couple of short months, going to get rid of this government. God bless. Godspeed. I think it's good. It's time. We are tired as opposition members and the public out there is tired. We're tired of your government. We're tired of your bills.

This is not a very good bill. It's certainly misguided. It tries to make deregulation better. This is a bit like trying to make a better typewriter instead of moving to computers. This bill does not and cannot solve the problems that deregulation has caused -- not to talk about privatization of hydro, which you try to do, even though now Ernie Eves says, "No, we're not doing it," as if he --

or the Liberals for that matter, but it's not about the Liberals at this moment -- never contemplated selling off Hydro One. The Tories were willing and happily ready to sell off Hydro One, and to sell off generation of power as well. So were the Liberals, by the way. Those of you citizens out there, so were the Liberals, at one point.

Mr Cordiano: Now, stick to the thing, or else I have to stand up.

Mr Marchese: But I'm sticking to the thing.

Mr Cordiano: Stick to the basics.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I'm sticking to the topic. That's why I'm attacking the Liberals as well.

Because deregulation cannot be fixed. It's like Peter Kormos says: it's an uncageable animal. You can't fix it. Unless you move to public power, you can't fix what's bad. Deregulation is bad; privatization is worse. But deregulation is the basis upon which you then privatize. Because that's what it's about.

Imagine giving these people the power to set their own salaries. It's nuts. As if giving me the power to set my own salary is going to make it better. Giving me the power, as a CEO, and others, to increase salaries as much as we want is going to make me more efficient? It's kind of nutty, isn't it? As if giving politicians more money is going to make them any better. It doesn't do it. The government knows that. Giving yourself more money does not make you better, more efficient or more competitive. It just makes certain that those people who are there in those positions are able to get the money and, God bless, be happy with what they're getting and what they give themselves. The CEO is going to have three times the salary our friend used to make, as if by giving himself three times the salary of the previous person is going to make him more efficient, more competitive or better. It doesn't. It just makes certain that that CEO is going to have more money in his pocket to spend for his or her own needs.

This government loves to give our money away. It loves to give your taxpayers' money, and it's not going to make that corporation any more efficient than it might have been, by simply giving money away. This government likes to talk about protecting taxpayers' money, "Because you earned the money and it's yours and we shouldn't be giving it away so easily." But when they want to give it away to their friends, they've got no problem giving money away to their friends. Their friends are good, big contributors to their fundraising campaigns. So when it's a matter of giving good salaries to their friends, it's not a big issue for them. This is the government that, after giving up the privatization of hydro and deciding to cap the prices to make certain that the citizens and taxpayers out there were not angry at them, has, as a result of capping prices, built up a debt, yes, and a legacy to those poor children who now have to keep paying for that debt, which is close to \$1 billion, or more.

I remember this government, when they used to talk about the boondoggle of other government initiatives, saying, "We are leaving a deficit for our children, a

legacy of deficit and debt that is terrible." But this government has no problem already passing on, by capping energy prices, \$1 billion to my children and, yes, your children as well.

1730

The government doesn't like to talk about that. They want to tell the citizens they capped hydro prices, so don't worry about the fact that we have hidden close to \$1 billion worth of debt and deficits that get passed down to our children. But because Tories do it, that's OK. Tories have no problem attacking other governments for passing on debt to children, but when they pass it on, it's OK. How could it be OK? It's dumb politics. It's sad politics. It's a sad legacy of a sad, tired government trying to pass more debt down to, yes, you, taxpayers and citizens.

They try to make it appear that it's not an issue or a problem. We're telling you it's a problem. We're telling you public power is the answer. We need a public system, not deregulated, not privatized, that will protect you, citizens, making certain that for the price we pay, our energy is available, reliable and constructed at cost for the needs of citizens, working people, small companies and even big companies as well, because we all profit from a reliable energy source that is built, constructed and delivered at cost and not for profit-making.

If indeed there is a profit to be made, why couldn't the government make the money and pass it back to you, taxpayers? Why couldn't we do it, instead of passing on profits to profiteers, to those who otherwise would give big bucks to the Tories to fundraise their campaigns? And, by the way, they would give it to the Liberals too. They might give \$100 less, but they would give to the Liberals in the same way. It's like going to a fundraising event for \$1,000 for the Tories and a fundraising event for \$800 for the Liberals, but it's the same group going to the same events.

We believe the answer is public power. That's what New Democrats propose and have proposed. Public power has forced this government to back away from selling Hydro One, the transmission lines and our generation plants, and has forced the Liberals to take a different position than they had taken, because initially they were quite happy to be arm in arm, in love with the Tory policies of selling Hydro One and more of the generation of our hydro power. We have resisted. We have forced the Tories back and forced the Liberals to take a different kind of position, which in the end is a victory for us all.

I just wanted to take those few moments of an opportunity to speak against this strangulation bill and leave enough time for my friend from Timmins-James Bay to complete this debate.

Hon Mr Wilson: I am pleased to rise for just a few moments to talk about the bill that the time allocation motion speaks about. I don't know why the members opposite, as the Minister of Energy said today, don't support this bill. It strengthens consumer protection. It gives the Ontario Energy Board more powers to do what

it should have been able to do all along, under both previous governments -- NDP and Liberal -- to make sure that the energy board has real teeth to deal with those people who are misrepresenting themselves as energy marketers, who are somehow ripping off society.

It has taken us a while, and we've learned a few things along the way, but I think this bill should be supported by all members of the House. It's probably the most non-partisan bill. We tried to show that the energy board is non-partisan when our government appointed Mr Laughren --

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):

Sorry, Minister, I'm going to have to interrupt. There are at least four conversations going on in the House and somebody is just starting to heckle. So could we take the conversations outside the House and please give the minister the respect of listening to his remarks? Sorry, Minister. Please continue.

Hon Mr Wilson: We tried to show that the Ontario Energy Board truly is arm's length and non-partisan when we appointed Mr Laughren to that board as chair, and I think he served well during a very difficult time.

I think what the Liberals -- and I heard members of that party speak this afternoon -- and the NDP perhaps forget to tell the public is that deregulation of the market is not deregulation of the market. Electricity in Ontario was never regulated. Ontario Hydro in the backrooms would decide on the price of the day. Cabinet could either accept or reject that. The Ontario Energy Board, as a regulator, never had the power to set prices.

In fact, under the NDP, in about 1996-97, there were extensive public hearings about a price increase that Hydro wanted, and God knows they needed a price increase back then. One of the reasons we have a problem now is the Liberals should have done something, the NDP should have done something, rather than leave us with a bankrupt company -- \$38 billion in debt -- whose assets are worth \$17 billion. Anybody that owns a house, runs a business, lives in this province would know that means you are bankrupt about two and a half times over. Bob Rae and Floyd Laughren had to go to New York one time, you'll recall very well, Mr Speaker, to satisfy the bankers down there that we were going to continue to back Hydro's debt, even though it was completely out of control.

Who owns Hydro debt? NDP members own Hydro debt. You own it in mutual funds. Who owns Hydro debt? Little old ladies in our ridings own Hydro debt. They hold bonds because they were a very good deal at one time. They were producing 14% yields, when all you could get on a mutual fund or anything else was 8% or 9%. God knows, Hydro debt -- go read the Globe and Mail every Monday, when they have to flip their bonds to try and get lower interest rates. Everybody owns Hydro debt. So you do a misservice to the people of Ontario when you threaten their savings, when you threaten those bonds that are embedded throughout our financial system, because Hydro damn near ran the financial system,

it owed so much bloody money in the province. You threaten their livelihood; you threaten their future. We hear about pension acts -- the biggest attack you will make on pension stability and retirement is when you fail to pay off debt and when you fail to properly back up that debt.

We went forward with a plan. They say there is no plan. It's on a CD. It's 290 pages. It's called the Market Design Committee. It's so big, we didn't put it out in paper, and I'm glad we didn't, now I'm environment minister; we would have killed a few trees. We put it out on CD. It's available on-line. It's an extensive plan, with one exception. We are seeing hundreds of millions of dollars, including the TransAlta plant in Sarnia, for example, which is the private sector -- 450 megawatts, a \$400-million project. There are some 30 or 40 projects going on now. They take time to come on-line. Why? Because no bank would lend us the money to go out and build another nuclear plant. Coal is not acceptable. There's not enough natural gas to do mega-projects at this point; another pipeline needs to be built. Because of Liberal and NDP mismanagement, nobody was going to lend the province of Ontario another penny to build another plant in the old Ontario Hydro system. We have to go to the private sector.

If they get back into government some day, they're going to have the same solution. A unanimous report in 1998 from a committee of this House said, "You must embrace private sector partnerships and you must deregulate" -- that's the term that came out of California, by the way. We were never regulated. Get your bloody facts straight. Stop threatening pensions. Stop threatening livelihoods. Pay your debts, if you ever get in government again. Be more responsible in your remarks in this House. Support this bill because, although my remarks aren't nonpartisan, this bill's nonpartisan.

Mr Bisson: There's the Jim Wilson I know and love. Didn't you see him? He was so excited. He was into it.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Yes, say it outside, Jim. Let's go, let's go.

After he was named the Minister of the Environment after Mr Stockwell had to leave, I was watching his performance in the House. Mr Wilson was being, I thought, rather reserved. He was actually being very calm in his tone, really trying to tone things down. I've just finally seen him wake up again. So I know you're well. I'm glad you're well. I was beginning to wonder that maybe you had some kind of a 48-hour flu or something, but certainly that's not the case.

I want to say to Mr Wilson, I want to say to my good friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and Minister of the Environment -- you forgot that, Mr Speaker; he is the Minister of the Environment as well. The whole discussion you just had here was about how this problem that you have now is one that you inherited from previous administrations. You failed to talk about one previous administration -- it was here for 40-some-odd years -- called the Conservative Party of Ontario. Do you remember Darlington, as a former Minister of Ener-

gy? Do you also remember, as a member of the Conservative government today, that you guys left office with \$14 billion of debt because of what you'd done on Darlington? You come over here and you try to say, "It's all the NDP's fault. It's the Liberals. They're the ones that messed everything up." You guys were in power for 50-some-odd years. You're the guys that built Darlington, cost overruns, and then governments after that tried to deal with it. Give me a break. My God.

Anyway, I thought the comments made by my good friend Mr Prue were just bang-on when he was talking a little bit earlier about this bill. He was saying that this bill's a little bit like a piece of rotten meat. I thought it was a really good point --

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Who said that?

Mr Bisson: My good friend Mr Prue said, "This bill is like a piece of rotten meat. What the government's trying to do by way of this bill is take this piece of rotten meat, open the fridge and put it inside, hoping it's going to get better." I thought that was so bang-on as a comment because that's what they're trying to do.

1740

They kind of messed things up when it came to privatization and deregulation. In the words of the minister, he said, "We're learning from our mistakes." Well, you know what? You can put that meat inside the fridge for as long as you want, Mr Wilson; it ain't going to get better. As a matter of fact, you could put it in the freezer. When you take it out, it'll still be rotten. I want to know what's inside that sandwich bag. Is that a piece of rotten meat? Is that what that is?

I've got to say to the members across: all this bill is an attempt to try to fix the mistakes that you created with the opening of the market in deregulation. What you're trying to do is cover up your mess. That's all this is all about.

What's worse is, by way of closure motion, the government wants to not allow the public, and those people interested, to be able to go before the committee, in order to talk on this bill and raise issues that they're worried about. For example, my good friend Tony Martin and I met with people in Wawa, Dubreuilville and White River, where they're having massive, massive layoffs because of energy prices. I'm sure that the people from River Gold, Riverdale and from across this province would like to come and talk to the government.

For that reason, I want to move an amendment for this particular motion so that we do allow some committee time to happen. I move the following motion: that Mr Baird's motion be amended by deleting everything after "dispose of the second reading stage of the bill" and replace it with the following: "at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government." I'll send that down through the page.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved that the motion be amended by deleting everything after "dispose of the second reading stage of the bill" and replace it with

the following: "at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government."

The member may resume his debate and speak to the amendment.

Mr Bisson: This is why I'm bringing the amendment forward, because people want to have an opportunity to have their say, not only individuals but also a lot of corporations.

In my riding, I represent Falconbridge, the largest utility customer in Ontario. They're the largest utility customer. One of the key issues facing Falconbridge last summer was that, when those hydro prices started spiking through the roof, Falconbridge had to decide minute by minute if they were going to operate their plant. Because is hydro rates spiked as they did last summer, they were in a position where they'd have to decide: "Is it cheaper for us to keep on operating or is it cheaper to shut down because of energy prices?" This year they're saying, "We're not taking any chances; we're shutting the plant down for three months." Granted, there are other issues -- the American dollar and such -- but in talking to Falconbridge, one of the key issues is that they don't want to go through what they went through last year when it comes to energy prices.

So we're saying to the government, by way of our amendment, that we want to make sure that Falconbridge, River Gold, people from various parts of the province, from Riverdale to Timmins-James Bay to Kenora to Nickel Belt to Trinity-Spadina to Beaches-East York and all other ridings, have an opportunity to come back to this Legislature this summer so that we can deal with this bill and the substantive issue, which is: what do we do about energy prices? The thing is, there's a whole bunch of people across this province, and specifically where I come from in northern Ontario, who are losing their jobs this year.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): How many?

Mr Bisson: In Timmins alone we have over 300 people who are going to be on layoff for three months. We've got 85 people who are being laid off completely. We've got the Tembec mill in Cochrane that is shutting down for an indefinite period of time. We're hoping it's going to be reopened in the fall. In Timiskaming-Cochrane, we've got the Kirkland Lake mill that's down, White River is down, Dubreuilville is down, and the list goes on.

When we sat down as part of our northern tour -- my good friend Mr Martin and I travelled around the province -- do you know what they said to us? They said, "Listen, we've been trying to contact the Minister of Energy. We've been trying to contact the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. We've been trying to contact the Premier because we have some real concerns around energy."

Do you know what they said to us? "Missing in action." Those were the words of an industry leader in Wawa. He said, "This government is missing in action. We call the ministers and they won't even call us back." They're saying, "Gilles and Tony, if you can do any-

thing, please go back to Queen's Park and bring the message to the government that we want them coming into our communities and dealing with us and speaking to us face to face."

We're saying, here's an opportunity. If you're not willing, as a government, to go and see those people and you refuse meeting them, as you have up to now, we're saying to allow those people to at least come to Queen's Park and to present before the committee so that they're able to have their say on this issue.

In fact, we need some time around this particular issue. I'll move a second amendment to my amendment in order to deal with the time on this. I move the following amendment: that the amendment to Mr Baird's motion be amended by adding the following: "for two weeks of public hearings and one week of clause-by-clause consideration."

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved an amendment to the amendment, that the amendment to Mr Baird's motion be amended by adding the following: "for two weeks of public hearings and one week of clause-by-clause consideration." You may speak to the amendment to the amendment.

Mr Bisson: I raise that point that we need at least two weeks. I would like to have more. Quite frankly, my colleagues and I know other people who would like to have more time at committee, but we know that this government has an aversion to committee hearings. In fact, they've even got an aversion to debate. That's why we're in time allocation this afternoon. We're saying that it's a reasonable proposal that we put forward as New Democrats to give the people of Ontario an opportunity for two weeks this summer to come before the committee in order to say, "Here's what we think is wrong in the hydro issue; here's what we think you need to be doing." I'm fairly confident that most people are going to come back and they're going to say but one thing: hydro deregulation doesn't work. Kill the beast. Slay the beast. Stop it. Don't go there any more.

Mr Marchese: It's uncageable.

Mr Bisson: It's uncageable, as my good friend Mr Rosario Marchese raised. Once we're done with that, then we need to have some time as a committee to sit down for a week to deal with amendments to this bill so that we can make this bill work.

We're saying that trying to put the genie back in the bottle by way of this bill is like, as Mr Prue said, the piece of rotten meat." It ain't going to work. Here we are in a situation where the minister, who used to be Minister of Energy and is now Minister of Northern Development and Mines, says, "We're learning by our mistakes. That's why we're bringing this bill here." Wow. Normally they'd make you resign for saying that. But we don't want Mr Wilson to resign at this point. We're saying that at the very least what we want to have is some committee hearings.

I want to give the government some time to think about this, and I would move --

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have a serious concern with respect to the motion that's before you. I'd like to refer you to the standing orders, the section with respect to official languages and their use in this place.

I think it would be appropriate that all members of the House, including those who are francophone, have the opportunity to have motions and amendments presented in French. I think that's an important consideration. I think the motions that we've given in advance have had the opportunity to be translated, if that's something that's required. I think it is imperative for all members of the House that we do have Bill 8, projet de loi 8. In Bill 8 is a very clear and definitive statement that the work of this chamber must be conducted in both French and English. I would ask that you look at the standing orders and make a determination whether it's reasonable that a member could require or ask that these things be done in French.

The Acting Speaker: There is nothing out of order. Since you raised a point of order, I will rule against that. Therefore, Mr Bisson still has the floor.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask you to look at the standing orders to make a determination from the standing orders if notice of an amendment is required before 5 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: No, I'm sorry.

Mr Bisson: I move --

The Acting Speaker: You have the floor.

Mr Bisson: I would move adjournment of the House.

Hon Mr Baird: It's past the clock.

The Acting Speaker: No, he still had the floor.

I have a motion to adjourn -- sorry, adjourn the House or debate?

Mr Bisson: The House.

The Acting Speaker: A motion to adjourn the House.

All those in favour, please indicate.

All those opposed, please say "nay."

It's my opinion the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1820.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Thank you. Please take your seats.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Thank you. Please be seated.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 23; the nays are 45.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Bisson has moved an amendment to the amendment, that the amendment to Mr Baird's motion be amended by adding the following, "for two weeks of public hearings and one week of clause-by-clause consideration."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.
Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1823 to 1833.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

My mistake. I apologize. The count on this one is different from the previous one. Please take your seats.

All those in favour of the motion will rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Ramsay, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Sergio, Mario
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 23; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Bisson has moved the following amendment:

“That Mr Baird’s motion be amended by deleting everything after ‘dispose of the second reading stage of the bill’ and replacing it with the following: ‘at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government.’”

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

Those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1836 to 1846.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	

Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 22; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Baird has moved government notice of motion number 55.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1849 to 1859.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 44; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent that the House do sit this evening.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for the House to sit this evening. Is it the pleasure of the House? All those

opposed? There are definitely some nays, so that is not going to happen.

It now being well past 6:45 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1902.

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