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Monday 27 February 2006

Lundi 27 février 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 février 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY CONSERVATION
RESPONSIBILITY
ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ
EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION
DE L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2005 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act / Projet de loi 21, Loi édictant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et apportant des modifications à la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, à la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I'm just going to speak very briefly on this bill. I think everyone in this Legislature is in favour of conservation and conservation matters and, actually, measures and steps which would lead to conservation.

This particular bill, however, deals with smart meters in individual residences, and the real problem that many of my colleagues and I are having is that this is a huge program which would require the installation, for instance, in the city of Toronto of 4,000 of these meters each week for the next I think 15 years in order for them to be put into individual homes.

The other interesting part of this is that it's not an optional program. In other words, the individual does not have a choice of saying, "I want a meter," or "I don't want a meter." It's obligatory. Therefore, the power distributor is going to come into the home and say, "You must take this meter; you must swallow costs between \$800 and \$1,000 in your electricity bill." The payback just isn't there, because the greatest savings for a resident would occur somewhere between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. the next morning. Most of us who are working do not have the choice of doing our washing or cooking or doing any-

thing consuming electricity during that period of time. So while I support, and we support, the use of smart meters for multi-residential units, I have a great deal of difficulty supporting it in terms of individual units, because the savings just aren't there.

1850

In terms of multi-residential units, I'd like to inform the Legislature about a great company in the riding of Lanark-Carlton called Triacta Power Technologies. They have a smart meter called PowerHawk; this is put into multi-residential units. As Rob Brennan, the founder, explained in the Ottawa Citizen in October, when they were interviewing him about his company and the tremendous success they were having to date, that success isn't because they're installing these smart meters because some government regulated their installation. They're selling smart meters to people who own multi-residential units because then the individual apartment dweller chooses to use their power prudently, and each of the tenants is billed for the amount of power that they use.

Traditionally, in a 20-unit building, for instance, he points out that about six of the tenants use up more than half the power, and the other fourteen residents subsidize it. So, in terms of multi-residential use, it makes a lot of sense because you're playing one tenant off against the other in terms of saying, "You use more power, you pay for more power." As my colleague Mr. Yakabuski, the energy critic for our party, has pointed out, people will act judiciously when they're spending their own money.

Anyway, Mr. Brennan and his company have sold their PowerHawk to a number of different kinds of companies across Ontario, who have been able to save a significant amount of money and bring conservation to many corporations and many apartment buildings.

In summary, I wanted to say with Mr. Miller, who is sharing his time with me, that I can certainly support conservation, I can certainly support smart meters in multi-residential buildings, but smart meters in residential buildings are dumb.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): We're sharing the time.

The Acting Speaker: You're sharing your time? Okay, I'm sorry.

Mr. Miller: Yes, we're sharing the time on this debate on Bill 21. I was pleased to participate in a day of hearings on this bill in the Thunder Bay area.

Bill 21, just to quickly review—and we have had a number of days' debate on this bill—has to do with really

two things, the smart meter initiative and also energy conservation plans. I would say, on the big picture issue, energy conservation, that's really a motherhood issue; it's motherhood and apple pie. I think it's safe to say that we all support that in theory.

Let me first deal with the smart meter as part of this bill. The idea of smart meters, of course, is to lessen demand on the system by shifting the use of electricity to off-peak hours. In theory, you'll install a smart meter and you'll shift some of your consumption activities to the middle of the night and thereby get a cheaper price for electricity and save the system the peak load demands and also save the individual some money in terms of the cost because you get a cheaper rate when you use electricity in the middle of the night.

The question is, has the government done their homework on this initiative? I heard the leader of the third party up in Thunder Bay saying that this initiative is going to cost \$2 billion. Is he right?

Mr. Sterling: It sounds like the gun registry.

Mr. Miller: That's a good point the member from Lanark-Carleton brings up: "Sounds like the gun registry." Is this just another Liberal boondoggle? As I say, we all support conservation in theory, but the way this is being implemented, have they done their homework?

The federal government's long gun registry is reported to have cost over \$1 billion. What other things do we spend \$1 billion—\$2 billion—on, if Mr. Hampton is correct, to have more benefits in the energy sector, especially when you look at the government's policy to do with energy? It's basically a supply-and-demand system. Right now, the government is going ahead with blinders on, planning on shutting down coal-fired generation—25% of the production of electricity. And it's supply and demand, so if you take 25% of the supply away, what do you think is going to happen to the price of electricity? I certainly heard that up in Thunder Bay and Atikokan.

I was at the forestry announcement made by the government last week, which I supported. In fact, many times I asked, in this Legislature, the Minister of Natural Resources to follow the recommendations specifically of his council on forest sector competitiveness and to implement the recommendation of that council, which asked for the government to assume 100% of the cost of primary roads and 50% of the cost of secondary roads. I was pleased to see the government finally, after many times being asked to implement that—I would just say, what took them so long? In the north we've been seeing mills close and forestry jobs going week by week. In fact, there was another one announced—Columbia Forest Products—last week, the day before they made their announcement—another 100 jobs because of a layoff.

Last week I think the forestry sector was generally very pleased, as I was pleased, to see the announcement. However, I was going around the room, talking to them, and they said, "The next problem we have to deal with is energy." The cost of energy in the north is costing jobs big time. I sat in on the Ontario Forest Industry Asso-

ciation meeting. They were talking about the prescriptive nature of all the forestry regulations. There was a speaker there from BC who talked about how they've just gone through four years of terrific change in the BC situation, going to more of a market-driven model, and how they had the BC forest code, I think it was called, that was costing \$15 per cubic metre to get the fibre out of the bush, more because of this prescriptive code. They're working towards more of a results-oriented code.

I would say, with Bill 21, the thing that worries me is that I see that sort of prescriptive nature to it. I hear every day about businesses working under very prescriptive regulations. I had a constituent running a sawmill—not in my riding but from the Timmins area—calling me last week about the very prescriptive nature of the Ministry of Labour regulations that they're working under and how the government isn't helping. They're policing; they aren't helping industry. They aren't working with industry. They're acting like they're the police. I think we need to change the culture of government. We need to get government working with industry. Sure, we want to have safe places and we don't want to pollute, we want to do the right things, but we also have to make sure we have industry left to survive. We need to get government, whether it's the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of Energy, working with municipalities.

When I was up in Thunder Bay, I heard from the municipality of Atikokan, and I come back to the question, does this make sense, having to do with smart meters? We're hearing varying estimates as to the cost, but we've heard estimates that it might cost as much as \$8 a month on the individual residential household electrical bill to pay for the smart meter, and the government, as I understand it, is requiring them as mandatory in all residences. If you're using a small amount of electricity—we had a guy here recently who had a \$13 electrical bill. His electrical bill is going to just about double because he gets a smart meter, no matter what he does. So that's not going to make a lot of sense.

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I personally feel that they should be optional. We had Atikokan Hydro coming before the committee up in Thunder Bay giving the example of a situation where they had a rural area, and I'll read right from their presentation. They said, "A case in point is we have one distribution area that has a substation and six customers, three of whom are seasonal. It would take a 400-foot tower to do a wireless interrogation of these meters. Landlines will require significant upgrades. This is going to be a different cost and perhaps will need a different approach than in a more populous subdivision."

They go on to estimate the cost of smart meters: "My estimate would put the cost at closer to \$1,000 per meter by the time the dust settles. We have 1,700 customers. So the cost will vary from \$340,000"—they used a couple of different estimates—"to \$1.7 million," or up to a possible 80% of the cost of their whole existing plant of that local delivery company in Atikokan.

So there are going to be cases where it just doesn't pay for the individual and it can be very expensive, especially in northern and rural areas. So I do have a lot of questions to do with whether the government has really done their research on this. With the high energy prices we're seeing, perhaps the government's plan is to stimulate the forestry sector with all the demands in paper that will be required to do all the conservation plans that are part of this bill.

In closing, the main question I have with this bill is whether it makes sense, whether the government has done its homework in terms of the costing of these smart meters. I also have questions to do with a requirement for conservation plans that won't necessarily make any difference, other than requiring a lot of people to do a lot of reports that are not necessarily going to benefit us in any way in terms of saving electricity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to have a chance to speak to this bill in a few minutes' time, approximately eight to 10 minutes' time.

I think it's incredibly important for us to understand that there's been some pretty thorough critiquing of the bill by opposition members. At the end of the day, the bill is revealed to be little more than the proverbial window dressing. There's nothing whatsoever in this bill that provides for, supports, initiates the broad-based, extensive, deep conservation program that we know we need if we're going to address the ever-growing need for more and more electricity generation.

The government uses permissive language over and over and over again in terms of its so-called conservation effort: "The Lieutenant Government in Council may, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may." There's nothing law about that. "Law" means when "you shall," and if you don't, then you've got to pay the consequence. Nothing whatsoever—nothing to create a strong and mandatory conservation program.

The smart meter, at the end of the day, ain't that smart, because it's going to cost consumers, households, hundreds of dollars per household, when in fact that same household is still going to consume the same amount of electricity. It's going to need X hours of air conditioning a day, X hours of furnace motors running, X hours of refrigerators running. There's nothing about a smart meter that tells you when to unplug the fridge, because there ain't no such thing, and the government just doesn't understand that. Talk about a bait and switch. Smart, my foot.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's delightful for me to listen to the member from Lanark-Carleton and my colleague the member from Parry Sound. It's really interesting that the most detailed pilot study in the province of Ontario was done in Chatham-Kent with the Chatham-Kent LDC. The general manager of that LDC appeared before us when the committee visited Chatham. It's interesting that the two opposition parties push that

detailed study aside, because what did that study tell you? In 1,000 homes in Chatham, Ontario, the LDC in that area retrofitted the existing meters at an all-in cost of \$1.29. As I said last week—but I don't think anybody was listening—that study was verified by a very distinguished accounting firm, Deloitte, who went through the whole Chatham-Kent study with a fine-toothed comb to verify that the all-in cost was \$1.29.

I keep hearing this nonsense—\$7, \$8, \$9, \$10—and I hear this \$2-billion figure. I think that when you start looking at the details of that most comprehensive study done in Ontario, it sheds a lot of light on the smart metering initiative. When you look at the profiles that were shared with us that day—maybe the members were out having a coffee or whatever, but when that general manager of the LDC shared detailed information with us at committee that day, he certainly indicated to us how each individual, as part of that 1,000-home study, saved substantial amounts of electricity through the smart metering initiative because they were shifting their uses to off-peak hours. That was certainly put to them in detail.

I'm somewhat frustrated that this most detailed study seems to be ignored by the opposition parties. So I think it's important that we take the time to look at that study, because I think that has implications for smart meters across the province of Ontario.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It's refreshing to hear tonight that the government of the day didn't blame the opposition for this problem they've created. Maybe they're finally going to live with it.

We also heard from the member who just spoke that it's only going to cost \$1.29. Would there be any way that we could put that in the bill as an amendment? Maybe we're too late for that now, but if the government was so sure of themselves with that, maybe they'd like to add that to the bill. We could add that right in there, because there have been estimates of up to \$8 a month. What are you going to say to the person for whom it costs that? Are you going to say, "Oh, well, we thought it was \$1.29, but I guess we were misled"?

As mentioned by Mr. Miller down here, a person had \$13—something like that—for their monthly bill. If they pay \$8 for their metre, they're almost going to double their bill. This doesn't sound too smart. As the member from Welland says, it doesn't sound look a smart meter when that happens. But maybe we can get this \$1.29—I'm sure that the member who just spoke would put that in a private member's bill. He could come up with that, saying that in the future it will only be \$1.29. That would be a good private member's bill for him, and hopefully somewhere along the line he could do that.

If they talk about conservation, no one is against that. We all want to see that happen. But I was also in Atikokan not that long ago and was at the coal-fired plant. It's unbelievable what the government wants to do to them. It just doesn't make a lot of sense. And now they're coming up with these meters that are going to cost people money rather than decreasing costs.

It was nice to hear Mr. Sterling mention that he was going to do the washing and so on, but he just couldn't do it at night. So it's nice to see that he's going to do that now.

What we'll be looking for in the future is a private member's bill coming out of Liberal benches that it will only be \$1.29.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): There are three points that I'd like to make on the particular comments made by my two colleagues from the Conservative Party. On the first one, I'll pick up where my good friend Mr. Murdoch left off. I think we need an ironclad guarantee signed by Dalton McGuinty saying, "If it costs more than \$1.29, you're going to get your money back." Oops, hang on. Dalton McGuinty signing a promise? I don't think it's going to work. No, Dalton McGuinty breaks promises: "We're not worried about that." If you guys are willing to put it in the bill and put it in the law, as my good friend says, then maybe, but don't do it as an ironclad, guaranteed contract signed by Dalton McGuinty, because we've found out that doesn't mean a heck of a lot.

The other thing is that in this bill the government is giving itself the regulatory powers to require public agencies to develop energy conservation plans in accordance with criteria set out in a regulation. Well, whoop-de-do, as Ralph Kramden used to say on *The Honeymooners*. You can do that now. The government basically has the power, because it funds public agencies. So if the government says to public agencies, or to itself, "You will do X, Y or Z when it comes to energy conservation," it can do that already. Now, you've put it in the bill. Is it a bad thing? Of course not, but you can't go trumpeting as if you're doing something wonderful here, because it's something you can do already.

1910

On the last point on the smart meters, I just want to pick up where my good friend from Welland–Thorold left off; that is, what smart meters are really going to mean. When are the peak loads? Around supertime. So you come off the freeway, walk into your house and you want to cook yourself a steak or make yourself a bowl of soup, and you go, "Oh, I can't turn on my stove because this is a peak time. I'm going to stay up until 2 o'clock in the morning, when it's not a peak time, in order to save myself a grand total of maybe 30 cents." I say to you that it's not going to do anything toward conservation. What it's actually going to do is charge people more for electricity during peak times when they've got to use it.

The Acting Speaker: Response. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Miller: Thank you to those members who made comments.

The member from Timmins–James Bay talked about the government bragging about what they had done. I note that in the minister's speech to the committee she was taking credit for things that were done before the current government was even formed. I specifically mean

the use of deep lake water cooling technology in downtown Toronto.

I spoke to the engineer, who is from Muskoka, a number of years ago when we were the government, and he was telling me all about how it was just about finished. Yet in the minister's speech she says, "The initiatives we have undertaken to date have moved us well toward meeting these essential commitments. By undertaking energy-efficient retrofits and upgrades to government buildings and making use of deep lake water cooling technology at Queen's Park, we are well over halfway to meeting our promise." I guess that means the past government was responsible for half of the advances in meeting the energy conservation targets.

I would also like to bring up the situation of small energy users again, because I think they won't benefit. I say to the member from Peterborough that Chatham is different from most of rural Ontario, and certainly from northern Ontario, where the cost will be much more than \$1.29. I would like to see Dalton McGuinty make another promise; of course, we know what his promise is worth. It's the small electricity users and whether this is going to apply to apartments or condos. In the apartment I live in, in downtown Toronto, I have had the heat off for the whole winter, so I don't know how I'd save power. It seems to get enough heat from all the apartments around it that I have to have the window open and the heat off. I don't know how I'm going to save any money in terms of installing a smart meter. So there's going to be the small electricity users whom this just simply will not benefit.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There's been some mention about me doing the laundry. I want to tell everybody here that I did a laundry load on Sunday and, worse still, I did it during a peak load time. I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order, but I'm sure everyone out there understands that you are domesticated.

The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: This is feckless and undoubtedly ineffective; mere lip service to the cry for a sorely needed, extensive, broad-based, deep-reaching conservation program, to repeat what other observers have said over and over again.

At the end of the day, most of anyone's electricity consumption is relatively inelastic. You don't plug in and unplug the fridge; the fridge is left plugged in all the time. In the wintertime, you turn the heat down but you can't turn the heat off, because the pipes will freeze, then they'll burst and you'll have water damage, and then you've compounded your problems. If you're a senior citizen, you can't even turn the heat down, because you're home throughout the course of the day as well as in the evening. That meter spinning outside your house is not going to be particularly instructive as to when your cost of electricity will have dropped during the off-peak times.

From a conservation perspective this bill is a bust, and from the smart meter perspective is going to put additional load on consumers in terms of, they're the ones who are going to have to pay for it—end of story. To suggest that you're talking about a \$1.29 is downright silly. Just not credible, is it? Balderdash. What silliness, what horse feathers, what unadulterated and, again, erroneous, incorrect and inaccurate information to be given to an electricity-consuming public that's already been gouged over and over again. Look, the real problem is the ever-growing privatization of electricity supply and distribution here in Ontario and the fact that the profiteers are passing those costs on to electricity consumers.

I'm grateful to NDP researchers for some of the materials they put together in response to this bill, because one of the things they draw our attention to is the key report, the Pembina report in May 2004, titled *Power for the Future: Towards a Sustainable Electricity System for Ontario*. This invaluable report laid out a set of interconnected initiatives designed to wean us off both coal and nuclear power. And, you see, although schedule A of this bill is called the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, ironically it fails to lead Ontarians anywhere, never mind towards any meaningful reforms in terms of electricity conservation and energy efficiency.

The Pembina report indicated very clearly that the largest single area for potential savings in terms of electricity consumption was improvement to building shells and heating, ventilation and air conditioning in the commercial-institutional sector, with potential huge annual savings. So does the government respond? Does this bill have any amendments on the Ontario building code? No. What Ontarians need, rather than a silly bill that plays words with the language of its title like so-called smart meters, are reforms to the Ontario building code for new structures and renovations that will keep the heat inside in the winter and outside in the summer. Did Ontarians get this from this government? No.

As well, New Democrats were very clear. Howard Hampton and the NDP have been consistent and very clear in advocating reforms that Ontarians could use to upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes, programs like the Power Smart residential loan program in Manitoba. But does this bill do anything to help Ontarians upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes? No.

When it comes to making appliances more energy-efficient—fridges, stoves, water heaters and dishwashers, things like that—what does this legislation say? Absolutely nothing.

So McGuinty and the Liberals are missing in action when it comes to updating energy-efficiency standards.

There is some incredible technology available that will assist homeowners in very dramatically reducing their electricity consumption. Over and over again, Howard Hampton has been explaining to people the two biggest electricity consumers in your home: (1) your furnace motor; and (2) your refrigerator. The two largest single electricity consumers in the home are not spoken to at all by this bill, nor are they spoken to by any variation or

form of so-called smart meters, which we're increasingly becoming aware are simply not that smart.

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There would be bona fide, legitimate savings, and not just the dollar-and-cent savings, but the actual reduction of the utilization of nuclear and coal-powered generation, if this government were simply to have listened to people with history, background and expertise in conservation areas and embarked on some of those very specific programs ranging from soup to nuts. It's so obvious, even a modest or cursory overview, everything from the refenestration of your house to enhanced insulation or the support of purchasing contemporary and energy-saving appliances. It could have been done and could have had real payback, and would have not only reduced the invoice cost to the consumer and provided some real, dramatic relief, but also served our environment well by reducing the reliance upon coal-powered generation.

It remains to be seen where all of the permissive sections in the bill will lead us, because even the most generous observer is sceptical that they will take us anywhere near meaningful levels of conservation.

My concern, again, is how electricity is becoming increasingly unaffordable. Take a look at your own home electricity bills from this last winter, Speaker, notwithstanding all the best efforts on your part to reduce electricity consumption. I know you're a conscientious person in that regard; I know that. But all of your best efforts and you've still been opening up that bill at the end of the month and darn near swallowing your bubble gum when you see how expensive it's been. When you do turn the heat down during the day because there are just two folks living there and they've gone off to work and they're not home until 6, 7—look, tonight, you're not going to be home until 9 o'clock or so. Take a look, Speaker, at your electricity bill and then think about a family with four or five kids, where notwithstanding the best efforts, that back door, that side door in the middle of winter is swinging open, shut, open, shut, open, shut, where you don't have any choice about having a freezer in the basement. You've got to have a freezer because you don't feed four or five or six kids unless you buy bulk meat, packaged food. You go to the butcher, you go to Billy Murdoch and get yourself half a steer and—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Well, that's how folks do it. It isn't downtown Toronto, "Oh honey, are the ice cubes ready yet for the martini shaker?" No, you need the freezer because you've got to buy the side of beef or half a pig, otherwise you don't eat much meat that season.

So I say to the Speaker, take a look at your electricity bills, where you have two adults, very conscientious about controlling the temperature in the house, turning the heat down in the morning when you head off to work, waiting until you get back home at night to turn it back on. You don't need a smart meter to tell you you don't use your washing machine at 5 in the afternoon, unless you have no options, unless you literally run out of clean clothes, but you wait until 11 at night. But if you're a

mom with four or five or six kids, you're washing clothes all day. That's the reality of it. Don't tell her about smart meters. That washing machine is going every day, three, four, five hours a day, especially when there are the little kids, before they're trained. Don't tell that mom of four or five kids about smart meters. She'll smack you upside your head if you suggest to her that she should get up at 5 in the morning to get the family off and then spend from 1 in the morning until 5 in the morning washing clothes so she can get her electricity cheaper. Come on. Don't tell the folks at the little mom-and-pop corner stores and the little delicatessens who have their chest freezers that they should somehow crank the temperature on the cooler up to 45 degrees Fahrenheit, they'll save a few dollars on the cooling. Well, come on. Nobody buys mortadella that has been stored at 45 degrees Fahrenheit. It gets pretty gamey after a few hours. So you see, smart meters are irrelevant to those small entrepreneurs. We have them in all of our communities, hard-working people.

But I'll tell you what. You help families that are cash-strapped because their property taxes have been rising, rising, rising, because electricity costs have been skyrocketing, because natural gas costs have been going right through the roof, you tell them—because they're working harder, working longer and making less because that Dalton McGuinty minimum wage increase—oh, yeah, that really threw money into the old wallet, sure. You tell them that you'll help them buy a current refrigerator that passes the ratings for electricity efficiency and then you've started to make an investment. You tell those folks that you'll help them replace the 20-year-old Whirlpool washing machine in the basement with a new energy-efficient washing machine, you support them with programs like interest-free or low-interest loans to do that and you'll have made a difference.

Let's talk about apartment buildings. You saw it as well as I did. The reality is that the installation of electronic heating is dirt cheap; the maintenance of it is sky high. That also, mind you, points to the fact that there are whole chunks of Ontario that don't have access to natural gas the way we do in southern Ontario. Sorry, the province isn't piped by Union Gas or whoever the gas supplier happens to be at that point in time, so you're left with propane or with electricity. Again, lower- and modest-income people are inevitably, if they're in condominiums or townhouses, in condominiums or townhouses that may be heated electrically because the builder kept the price down by using electric rad heaters. Well, that's where the observations about meaningful building code changes come into effect. We could do some real important stuff right off the bat that not only won't hit consumers in the pocketbook, in the wallet, but will put money into their wallet in months and years to come.

Is that what this government offers up? No, it offers up pap around so-called smart meters, and somehow suggests that some mom should be up at 2 in the morning washing clothes, even though she's got to get up at 6 in

the morning to get her kids ready for school—or to the daycare if she can find one—and then maybe get herself off to work. If she's like many moms, she can't contemplate or worry about doing the wash at 5 in the afternoon, because she's off to her second job at that time of day anyway. See, a whole lot of people don't have the luxury of the flexibility to say, "Oh, let's see, I'll wait until 2 in the morning to do that load of wash, because the electricity is cheaper and the smart meter will say so."

The real core observation here is that this government's privatization of electricity agenda has created the skyrocketing electricity prices that critics predicted from the get-go, from day one. And I suggest to you, sir, that the real debate should be about the restoration of a publicly owned and regulated, publicly controlled, non-profit hydroelectricity production, generation and distribution system. I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts right here and now that there are Tories who'd stand up and advocate for that, knowing full well the error of the privatization agenda.

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There's nothing wrong with having learned from one's errors, is there? The pursuit of privatized electricity production was a serious error. Man, that monster, once it got uncaged, was uncontrollable, untameable. It was inexhaustible and it was ever-voracious; it ate everything in its sight. That privatized electricity regime was like one of those great big asphalt peelers—you see them on the four-lane and six-lane highways—that peel off the top, and they just keep rolling along, and the steam and the smell of tar follows them for a good half-kilometre. But nothing stops them; they just keep going. You're sure it would take you a good day and a half to even get it slowed down, never mind shut down. Privatized electricity in the province of Ontario is like one of those great big asphalt-peeling machines: It just moves ahead, and more and more people suffer at the end of the day.

Look at the casualties that we've had, the jobs lost: not 1,000, not 5,000, not 50,000, but 62,000, 65,000, 66,000 in the course of a year and one month. Those were good jobs. They weren't McJobs, they were jobs in the manufacturing sector, and they were unionized jobs that had good pay for people who worked hard at good jobs. Are there new jobs to replace them? Oh yeah, minimum wage jobs, service sector jobs. When you make minimum wage, you don't pay a whole lot of taxes, do you? When you're making minimum wage, you don't buy a whole lot of the products that your family and your neighbours and the people in your community put together, manufactured and built. When you're making minimum wage, you don't take trips on spring break. When you're making minimum wage, you don't go to the car show down at Skydome because Sam's Car Lot, with the 10-year-and-older models, the ones just barely making the mechanic's safety check, that's where you do your car shopping.

This government's electricity policy has destroyed scores of thousands of jobs in this province, jobs that we may never well get back. It continues to eat away at the

pocketbooks of hard-working Ontarians, their retired parents and their children, who are losing all hope of ever getting ahead.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I like to listen to the member from Niagara Centre on this issue because he comes to this issue and he speaks from history. He makes good points; he makes some good recommendations. I remember not too long ago when I did the first demonstration in Davenport against what he speaks of: the monster of privatization. On the corner of St. Clair and Dufferin Street, the first demonstration with big signs saying, “Don’t sell hydro,” “No to privatization,” and “No to selling hydro lands.”

Applause.

Mr. Ruprecht: I’m glad that we’ve got his support because, at the end of the day, he will support this legislation. Yes, we hear him huff and we hear him puff, and sometimes we hear him say good things. I’m a fan of his and so are you, because we all like this theatre, we all like your points of view. But I remember, Mr. Peters Kormos, that the NDP bus rolled up when Tony Ruprecht had his demonstration against hydro privatization. The big NDP bus, Howard Hampton’s bus, rolled up in front and tried to block the sidewalk. And guess who jumped out of this bus? It was Mr. Kormos, Shelley Martel and a host of reporters with their cameras flashing everywhere, saying, “What are the Liberals doing here?” That was great.

But remember this. At the end of the day we have to ask ourselves this question: Are we in favour of conserving energy or are we not? And if we are, we have to come up with certain plans of how to do it. Sure enough, we will follow some of your recommendations, but as sure as the sun will set tomorrow, we also know that we have to be in the forefront of ensuring that Ontarians will get into, and buy into, this whole idea of energy conservation because it’s necessary. The whole world is looking at us because the whole world has been there before us and we are simply following suit.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): I want to say, in regard to this bill, to put it on the record, that the government has done its homework when it comes to being able to provide customers with tools to be able to manage their electricity. I happen to know that in Europe, in Italy, they to have smart meters in every home, and the cost of the smart meters has been paid over and over again because people do manage to use their electricity when there is a cost that is less than using it during peak hours.

We’re building what I call a 21st-century approach to managing our electricity costs. It’s progressive. Other jurisdictions have shown that it works. I’m proud to be part of a government that has the courage to do this and not just to sit back and say, “Just the status quo is all we want. We don’t want to change anything. We just have the status quo.” That isn’t good enough. We have a lot we need to do so that we can help customers to conserve. It is proven when customers have in their hands an ability

to manage their electricity use and know how much it’s going to cost, and also provide tools for the future when you can have small enterprises that can produce their own electricity for small farms and so on, and that’s what smart meters do. I know that at the end of the day, the opposition supports this type of initiative and this type of direction.

Mr. Sterling: As you might imagine, I have some points of difference with the speaker with regard to privatization and those kinds of things, but I agree with him totally when he says that this bill is a shameless sham. It’s a sham with regard to conservation. It takes no real steps towards really conserving energy.

When you talk about single-family residential homes, he’s absolutely correct. He makes the same argument that our party has been making, and that is that the individual resident—the mom, the pop, the kids—doesn’t have a choice. They are working hard every week. They have to go to work at 8 in the morning. They get home at 5:30 or 6. They want their dinner. They go to bed. They wake up the next morning. Mom stays home. She does the washing. She prepares the kids’ lunch etc. She doesn’t have any choice.

This bill is a joke with regard to smart meters in homes. The other part too, as my colleague said—Mr. Leal from Peterborough cites this wonderful project in Chatham: \$1.29 a month. Well, if that’s what the government is standing on, let them put it in the bill. Let’s have a \$1.29 maximum amount that a utility can charge for the installation of a smart meter and maybe we’ll reconsider our position on this bill. I don’t believe you for a minute. And I’ve got to tell you, I’m going to quote you from time to time when these meters are going in and people are getting a bill for \$8, \$9, \$10 a month, because that’s dreaming—that’s absolutely dreaming. This is, as my colleague from Muskoka said, a little bit like the gun registry: It’s phony and it won’t work.

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Mr. Bisson: I guess a couple of things, one in response to my good friend from Sarnia, who says she’s proud to be a member of a government that is doing something so bold, so new, so wonderful. What are you really doing in this bill? You’re giving yourself the regulatory power to tell not-for-profit agencies that you fund and yourself as a government that you can direct them to do energy efficiency projects. You can do that already. You don’t need a bill to do that, so I don’t know what you’re getting up and down about in regard to being all that proud.

On the issue of meters, listen, you don’t get it. My cab driver this morning, driving from home to the airport in Timmins, said it: “I get my hydro bill and I get my gas bill at the end of the month. They charge me so much for this, deliver to you, deliver to them, transportation, transmission.” There’s all kinds of stuff on their bill, and they say, “Jeez, I’m paying more for electricity now and I’m paying more for gas than I ever paid before.” This whole deregulation initiative has given everybody an opportunity to come and sock it to me on my hydro bill, and

now you guys are saying, “Oh, don’t worry. We’re only going to put another \$1.29 minimum,” as they say, with regard to yet another charge on your hydro bill. I’m like the member from Lanark, or wherever it is, in the sense that I don’t believe it will only be \$1.29. If you open that box, you’re creating an entity that’s going to be able to install these smart meters and charge it back to the consumer. Listen, any business is not in business to lose money; they’re there to make money. If they can charge eight, nine, 10 or 12 bucks, they’re going to do it. It will be another charge.

My good friend from Welland–Thorold hit the nail on the head. Yes, people save electricity now because of what it costs, but the smart meters are going to force them to pay more during peak times. That’s what the effect of this is going to be: You’re going to have to pay more than you pay now for electricity. If you want to talk about conservation, I think there are ways of doing that. I’m not sure smart meters are the way to go.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: I want to thank all the people who demonstrated such great patience with me. Folks should know that Jim Bradley is still here, the government House Leader, and I expect he’ll be here tomorrow in the evening through to 9:30. Those are the kinds of days he works.

This bill is exactly what it is. There’s not much there. It was a little bit of spin when the government was experiencing some difficult times. It was one of those efforts to try to create some good news. Those opportunities become rarer and rarer and scarcer and scarcer as this government plods along.

I join those who call upon the Liberals to put it in writing: \$1.29 a month. Not likely. I, like others, will be reminding those Liberal commentators of their Hansard record on a regular basis once people start getting the bills for these smart meters and paying through the nose.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I have good news and bad news for the Legislature. The bad news is that I’m speaking for a bit. The good news for the people back home is that I’m speaking. I figure that’s the bad and the good news. I want to say to members up front that I’m not taking 20 minutes; I’m going to take four to five minutes. That’s the good news.

There were a couple of things I wanted to put on the debate because I didn’t get a chance to put them in within the questions and comments section. I’ve made my points in regard to what I think is going to happen when—is it \$1.29 or is it \$8 a month for smart meters? At the end of the day, as I said, it’s another charge on your hydro bill, so if it’s \$1.29 or 10 bucks, people are going to be upset nonetheless.

I made my point when it comes to the issue of when we use electricity. The reality is that peak times are those times when people use electricity the most, and that happens to be those times that are most convenient based around their work schedules. So people are still going to

be burning electricity as they do now to cook supper and do their laundry, as the member from Welland–Thorold and others said. All we’re going to end up with is that a smart meter is going to charge you more per kilowatt hour for using electricity during peak times as compared to what you pay now. So the effect of the smart meters is to quite frankly push up your hydro bill.

Here are a couple of points that I wanted to make very quickly. One of the things that I’ve always thought would have been an idea—and hopefully the government can take a look at this. There is a really good opportunity in the province of Ontario to look at how we’re able to find ways to involve people in electricity generation on a personal level, not just on the conservation side but on the generation level. For example, at Departure Lake, part of my riding, at one time there was no electricity, so people started using both wind and photovoltaic cells to charge up electricity to put into batteries. The problem is that when you’re charging electricity by those means and you don’t need it, you put it into a battery—it’s very inefficient and very expensive.

One of the answers is to have what they call a reversible meter. Let’s say you want to invest \$10,000 in some photovoltaic cells in order to transfer sunlight to electricity. Rather than storing it in batteries, you have the ability to sell back the hydro if you don’t use it yourself, the electricity that you consume, so that the meter runs backwards and gives you a credit. It seems to me that would be a smart meter. It would encourage people like me and others to say, “Maybe I’m going to purchase photovoltaic cells,” or maybe a small wind turbine could be developed on a home basis that allows you to generate even 20% or 30% of your overall electricity needs. It would go a long way to reducing the overall amount of power that we need, therefore reducing the demand to build nuclear power plants, such as the government is proposing to do. That is one of the areas that I think the government should take a look at.

The other thing I wanted to say just very quickly—and my leader, Howard Hampton, has raised this and I’m not going to go on any further. There’s nothing in this bill to create a program, or the government has not announced a program, to allow people to retrofit. Better windows, better insulation, better appliances—all of those are needed to reduce electricity.

Listen, at the end of the day it’s this: We generate about 25,000 megawatts per day within the province of Ontario. That’s our capacity. We use about 22,000 megawatts. The issue is, how much electricity do we need to generate? If we’re able to lower our consumption, we don’t have to spend big money to build nuclear plants and other types of plants that will cost the province a lot of money. Therefore, in my view we should put it into energy conservation. On the other side, I think we need to look at how we can involve people not in a private system but in an individual way to reduce their need for electricity because they’re able to augment their own needs by other sources.

With that, I certainly hope nobody's going to do questions and comments on this speech, because I'm done. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I still have to ask. Questions and comments?

Further debate? Seeing no further debate, the minister or the parliamentary assistant may wish—seeing neither of them, I call the question.

Mrs. Cansfield has moved second reading of Bill 21, an act concerning conservation of electricity. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. Miller: It's third reading, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is it third reading? I'm sorry. I'll do it again.

Mrs. Cansfield has moved third reading of Bill 21, an act regarding energy conservation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1949.

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