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Wednesday 24 November 2010

Mercredi 24 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2010, on the amendment to the motion relating to negotiations with the federal government on a comprehensive new agreement to provide funding, planning, and governance for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be here this morning.

I seek unanimous consent to wear the daffodil, which is with respect to the Canadian Cancer Society, to work today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was going to say it's lonely at the top here on this side, and leave it at that. There's a lot of work to be done.

I've been waiting anxiously to speak to this particular motion by Minister Hoskins on the government side. I've been disappointed two or three times because it keeps getting pulled off the order paper and replaced by some less important issue, like tax cuts for electricity and things like that.

When our caucus reviewed this motion—under the five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, COIA, \$207 million in funding was not applied for and therefore not allocated as part of the negotiations in a new motion. Our leader, Tim Hudak, amended the motion to force the provincial government to provide a “fully-costed plan including accountability and performance measures” for the \$207 million.

That can easily be explained. When I look over the last while, they throw million-dollar bills around like we would throw feathers. They spend a million dollars a day on consultants. So I think it's only appropriate at this time in Ontario's history, when we're falling off the cliff in debt—they've doubled the debt. Yesterday, the government forced a bill through here that would spend another billion dollars a year on a program that was to fix some-

thing they had broken, which was the electricity problem. We simply feel that it's fine and noteworthy that the McGuinty government keeps promising, promising, promising, but all of that eventually has to be paid for.

All of us here want a good environment, a good health care system and safe, clean, affordable electricity; all of us want that. How we go about doing it is the issue. This is one more example that simply—respectfully, Mr. Speaker, we don't think that this government is on the right track.

It reminds me, quite honestly, of the past several years that we've been here. Every once in a while, there's a little flare-up on the eHealth scandal, the consultants scandal. On the scandal that I'm drawn to, which deals with this immigration issue, the Auditor General, Jim McCarter, slammed spending controls on the grants as among the worst that we've ever seen. In fact, it ended up with Mike Colle's resignation as the minister after giving out a million dollars to the cricket club, and some others unaccounted for.

This is very clear: When you're going to allocate money that's all taxpayers' money—I don't care what level it's from—let's start to build in the controls of accountability. This isn't intimidating or critical, really. What it's saying is, “Let's slow it down here.” Don't make so many promises that you can't fund and that you probably have no intention of keeping. I become very saddened when I look around, because most members on all sides here want to do the right thing, and that's the time in Ontario that we can all make the turn together. We're all for it.

In fact, I've got the privilege of moving an amendment by our leader, Tim Hudak, and the motion should be amended. Now, I should clearly put the motion on the record. Here's the motion. It says, “That the Legislative”—this is the current one, what we're debating this morning, in case some of those at home aren't paying attention, because this goes on and off—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would remind the member that we're debating an amendment now.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. That's good. The amendment is that—I want to get the motion on there so I know what we're—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It is an amendment that we're debating right now. You're proposing another amendment?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, no. This one is already on the record. Thank you for that clarification. I think that's

a worthy interjection. Well, the Speaker has the right to stand at any time, so I respect that, and I respect the current Speaker as well.

The motion, originally, was: “That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two-thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension”—no, that’s not the one, either. Okay, I’ve got the wrong one.

I’m going to stick to it here. It says: “That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding \$207 million promised to Ontario’s newcomers and immediately commence negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.”

Mr. Hudak’s amendment here is, “That the motion be amended by removing the words ‘and the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding’ and ‘promised to Ontario’s newcomers and immediately’

“And substituting the words:

“‘[A]nd calls on the provincial government to’”—this is what’s really important; it’s subtle but important.

We’ve talked about this in our caucus, and we certainly have full, full agreement. I would hope that the government side will see the simplicity of this. The simplicity and sincerity of it all is like this: “[A]nd calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed”—there it is—“plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the”—and that’s the end of that. That’s implied.

What it really does—we agree. This thing should be a no-brainer. Adopt our amendment. All it does is provide the accountability mechanisms and the costing. What could anyone possibly find unacceptable about that?

This becomes the real test. If this doesn’t, then is that to say that there shouldn’t be accountability for all of the money, \$200 million? I’m looking at the young pages here. We’re tossing million-dollar bills around here like they’re feathers.

Hey, I think some of these programs are absolutely critical—do you understand?—to allow people who come to this province and this great country to assimilate, accommodate or be accommodated. I really think it’s important. There’s second-language training for them to

become part of this great province. I mean this great province under the many Premiers that we’ve had for the last 100-plus years. It isn’t political.

This is about building a country with open, accessible, accountable rules that we all respect. I can almost ask now for unanimous consent, and I think I’d get it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Go for it.

0910

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m feeling such a good spirit this morning—I’m feeling it. I’m starting to feel the spirit is alive here—honestly. That’s a good way to start the day.

I spent this morning at breakfast with the cancer society, and I actually met one of my own constituents, Kendra Chopcian—I’ve met her a couple of times; she’s very, very committed—and her biggest issue is trying to accommodate persons and families suffering with cancer. She said to me that the most important of their top five priorities, besides indoor tanning and smoking cessation and all that, is access to drugs.

Quite honestly, Minister Deb Matthews was very respectful; she thanked the volunteers for being here for MPP education day. But I was so impressed: Our health critic is not as new and experienced on the job, but you could just sense her compassion in her remarks. The member for Whitby–Oshawa—Christine Elliott, if we’re allowed to say that—was very good. It does tie to this, because it’s accommodation of people and settlement grants and other things.

Our key concerns here are: Yes, we agree; yes, the agreement should be for the \$207 million; it should be a fully drawn up program with accountability mechanisms. That’s what our leader is saying here. The money is there. It has been allocated, in the budget sense. It needs to be spent appropriately.

We do not need another cricket club or another boondoggle. We don’t need the Auditor General to come in here and say, “You’ve squandered another \$1 million.” That’s not what we want. We need settlement programs that both respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario. That’s important. Just rethink that again. This says, “. . . respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario.” That’s pretty straightforward. I can’t find any implied edginess to that.

The second point: In 2007, citizenship and immigration minister Mike Colle was forced to resign during the slushgate scandal. We don’t want any more of that; that’s for sure. I don’t say that—that’s been dealt with; the minister had to be removed from cabinet, and it’s too bad. He’s a nice fellow, but there you have it.

Number three: Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak proposed an amendment to the motion that would help create programs for newcomers and provide accountability measures so that scandals like slushgate don’t happen again. All of us would agree with that—all of us. I think we’ve learned our lesson. I know it’s unacceptable on our side; I retain the right to be suspicious about the other side.

Newcomers to Ontario believe in a level playing field. They believe they will get a fair shake based on their

skills, not their connections to a particular government. That should be completely expunged from any access to government programming at any level for any reason. That being connected has its privileges is simply wrong. We need a level playing field. We need everyone to come here with the right opportunities: the right programs in the right place at the right time for people who are trying to become strong contributors.

Our recommendation speaks only to the amendment and not the motion, and accepts the motion as amended. That's the whole deal. We're just asking you to do something in common practice here today: Accept our amendment, and then we accept the motion.

We put it in such a way that it really does not alter the \$207 million or the direction of the program spending. What it does is build in accountability, and that program deliverers and program recipients comply. I think that all of us would agree with that. Again, I'm feeling very optimistic.

I think about my own riding of Durham. I have quite a nice mix of people who have chosen to live in Bowmanville or wherever. I think of the Greek families in my riding. I go to their restaurants: Massey House in Newcastle as well as Zante in Bowmanville—very excellently prepared food, family-oriented. When they came here, they had a pizza place called the Three Brothers—there were three brothers. They came to our community and made our community a better place. I'm also very familiar with Derek, another new Canadian who settled in the culinary arts field. His restaurant is Chanterelle. This fellow is a marvellous cook. I think he was trained in Toronto, but he and his family work hard and have a wonderful restaurant, which is now under construction.

In fact, that's why I bring—Mr. Speaker, you probably do as well. Next to my riding office, which is on King Street in Bowmanville—my riding is quite large; it's about an hour to get to the other side, and yours is probably the same. Next to me there is a St. Vincent de Paul, and we are often accommodated with them. St. Vincent de Paul is—people of faith work there; it's mostly staffed by volunteers. They accommodate new Canadians, new Ontarians and new citizens in my riding of Durham with clothing and furniture and stuff like that. I commend those people who work through the churches. In fact, just this past summer we moved and a lot of our stuff went to those places so that it could be picked up. That's the kind of accountability that this bill and this program does.

Now, here's the deal. It would be nice to be able to assign some of that \$207 million as part of the accommodations of new Canadians, along with those volunteer groups that might provide language training or help them do the job search thing and skills training and help them through what I'd say is the labyrinth or the maze of all these red tape things that become barriers for people to get on with their lives with their children and perhaps other members of their family. It's very easy for us to think about it in our ridings in terms of real, practical things that would help them and make it easier for them to become productive residents, and hopefully citizens, of

this great province and this great country. But that's just a couple. There are more that I could take my time for.

If I move down the little shopping strip on the main street, King Street, where I am, right next to it is a 7-Eleven or a convenience store. This is another success story. There's a young family there; I think they came from Vietnam. I speak to Paul all the time; this fellow works like no one I've ever met. I always tease him. I say, "You and I are the only two guys who work 365 days a year." That's what I tell him. The only time he gets a day off is Christmas.

Now, here's the irony. My wife just retired from teaching. Their son, who was born—I saw him in the convenience store with the mother and the father, running the store. I've been doing this for 16 years; you've been here longer, so you see these stories. This young boy is now in grade 12. This young boy, who basically grew up in the convenience store, is the top student in school. This is a story about accommodation, but they didn't really ask for much. I believe they give more than they take.

Quite frankly, I'm convinced, when I think of Paul in the convenience store next to my riding office—I've learned a few Vietnamese words, but I can't use them here because people would criticize my pronunciation. He is bilingual now, his child is bilingual, and the two of them still work. They do not have any help except their own family. It's either Paul or his wife in the store. They have their grandmother the odd time; she comes over and helps a bit.

I've heard—I can't confirm this—that they actually own the building now, after 16, maybe 20, years; these people are so focused on sustainability and their own sense of responsibility. This ties in to this small amount of money spread among the right people at the right price in the right programs to accommodate them to come and live in Ontario, and in fact in Durham region. It's remarkable.

0920

All this amendment from our leader Tim Hudak does—it's quite a practical, non-intrusive, non-combative kind of suggestion—is build in a mechanism of accountability. That's all it does. We agree 100% with the request, with the condition that the \$207 million is handled appropriately.

Let the viewers and listeners here today think for themselves. This is not meant to be in any way edgy, belligerent, any of those things. This is about having the right rules for this amount of money in this time in our society, when Ontario is falling off the cliff in debt, so that these people actually get the \$207 million—not some consultant, with all due respect; not some red-tape bureaucrat.

I see the minister on the other side there, Mr. Murray, the Minister of Research and Innovation, with his \$30-million program, a huge program, to accommodate Ph.D. students. Even there, I agree, quite frankly, that we need to attract the brightest and the best, but we also have to accommodate those people who choose Canada for a lot of other reasons. We don't need just elites all the time.

What we need is to help the people who are here today. I'd put that down as priority number one, and I believe our leader, Tim Hudak, is saying the same thing.

This is \$207 million. This is to accommodate people, through all the legitimate means, who are coming here. We need to find ways to accommodate them. All we're asking for is to build in the one little condition. Some will criticize it. The amendment is entirely based on control—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I believe it's questions and comments, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, this is a resolution, so there are no questions or comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Fair enough. I'll get right to the meat of the matter.

It's always a pleasure to follow the member for Durham, no matter what he's speaking about, because he's entertaining, doesn't read his notes and makes some extremely valuable points.

Let's be frank: This is a government, the McGuinty government, that is failing in the eyes of the electorate. Seventy-six per cent of Ontarians say they want somebody else to govern this province.

One of the files they're failing on is the newcomer/recent immigrant file. I'm privileged and honoured to be the representative of Parkdale–High Park, where many of the recent immigrants and newcomers come when they immigrate to Toronto or Ontario. It's one of the first places they come. In fact, Jameson Avenue, where all the high-rises are, is called the landing strip with some endearment, because a huge share of the refugees of the world comes to the south end of Parkdale when they first land in Canada.

I can tell you that I've been out speaking to them in various functions, and I hear a recurrent theme. It's a recurrent theme whether they be Tibetan—we have about 5,000 Tibetans in south Parkdale—whether they be Roma, and we have about 3,000 Roma; whether they be Tamil; whether they be Hispanic, from a number of Hispanic nations etc. The recurrent theme is this: "We came expecting that our international designations, our work experience in our home countries and our schooling experience in our home countries would count for something."

They're not unrealistic. They also realize, as generations of immigrants before them realized, that we are all immigrants in this place. Only First Nations people do not come from immigrant stock. We all know from our grandparents, our great-grandparents, our parents—whoever was the first-wave generation that brought our family to this country—that the first generation expects to do less than their expectations for at least a given period of time.

But we've moved way beyond that now. We've moved way beyond that. When I hear from an Iranian surgeon in his 40s that it's going to take him at least 10 years to get accredited even as a GP in this province, and he has to travel back to Iran for six months of the year,

and work as a baker here for now \$10.25 an hour to be able to sustain his family when a million Ontarians don't have a family doctor, you know there's a problem.

When we see Tibetans who have postgraduate degrees come here whose only chance of making a living that will get them out of an apartment and into a home is to open their own business—and that's a precarious venture in a recession—because they can't get jobs in their professions without putting in eight to 10 years, which is the average that I hear, in my riding, to be accredited in anything like their chosen profession, we have a problem. When, for the first time in Canada and in Ontario, we're looking at a situation where our children are going to be worse off than their parents, this is a shock. This is a shock because immigrants come here expecting that their children and grandchildren will be better off than they were when they came, and now we are looking at a generation that will be worse off.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, not the whole generation.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And we don't have to look very far. I know that I'm getting some—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Minister of Consumer Services is heckling me on this. But let me point out to the Minister of Consumer Services, who doesn't want to wait for his turn to have his say in this place but would prefer to shout down, yet again, a woman—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, come on. It's not—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's say to the Minister of Consumer—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay, everybody's going to sit down and relax now. We're going to have a nice debate.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Don't you shout down a man.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm not going to go there.

Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As I was going to say, in my parents' generation, and I'm a boomer kid, it was not uncommon for the second generation—that is, children of immigrants—to own their own home, to have a car in the driveway and to do it on one salary. Those who were very lucky would have cottages or camps as well. In my generation that's less common and for my children's generation, good luck, if you live in the city of Toronto, if even two people working full-time can afford a house and a car in the driveway. They can only do it in debt up to their ears. God bless their children, who will be saddled with the highest university debt in Canada. We're 10th out of 10 in per capita funding for university for our students. So you're saddled with huge debt just to get a BA, and what does a BA grant you now? Virtually nothing, unless you go on to a professional degree. That is the economic reality into which immigrants come in this province.

Yes, we will support the amendment. Yes, we'll support the meat of the matter. But very clearly, what the PC Party is speaking about here, and what the member from Durham himself spoke to, is that this government, when failing on a file, invariably points an accusatory finger at the federal government. Because what do you do if you're failing yet again, when you're in free fall in the polls? You try to point the blame somewhere else, and really, that's what this original motion does. The PC correlative to that motion, the amendment to that motion, simply brings accountability back to where it belongs, certainly in parts, and that is with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the minister himself, and asking, what is the provincial government going to do about this? What is the McGuinty government going to do about this problem?

There are a number of recommendations that have been made from a number of stakeholder groups to this government that they could act on immediately. I spoke to an ESL class. There were about 40 students crammed into a space designed for about 20, and they barely were holding on to that space. I spoke to them and they talked about the lack of English-as-a-second-language classes, how difficult it is to get into them, how difficult it is to get out of them and into well-paying jobs. I know that the fairness commission has pointed out, in their study of 2010, some of the problems faced by new immigrants that this provincial government could do something about. Certainly, internationally trained applicants need to be better informed prior to arriving in Canada; that's unquestionable. But once they get here, the requirements of some of the regulatory bodies for Canadian work experience and for increased course requirements are incredibly difficult, in fact often insurmountable. This government could do something about that.

0930

This government could take steps that are absolutely necessary to make unionization more possible. Right now, this government has made it impossible, made it outside of the law, for at-home caregivers to organize. We remind those who are watching that the number of at-home caregivers has tripled in the last number of years, many of them women, many of them from the Philippines. They're not allowed to organize; they're not allowed to unionize.

What about the scandals that have plagued our migrant farm workers? We heard a question in the House just yesterday from our leader, Andrea Horwath, about that. A scandal—just now, on the CBC this morning, I heard about Trinidadian workers who weren't even paid by their farmers, who are going to be flown back to their home countries, to poverty yet again, and they're not even going to be paid at all for the work they've done. Farm workers are not allowed to unionize. Clearly, if there was ever a group that needs the protection of organized labour, it's them.

We witnessed the deaths of Jamaican farm workers—again, a serious problem, a serious lack. The Minister of Labour deflects this. We need action on that file.

We need in this province card-check certification and anti-scab legislation. That would help those who feel they don't have a voice to have a voice.

We know that with unionization come benefits, better living standards—comes, in fact, a middle class, which is what we're losing in the province of Ontario. We're losing those good, above-\$30-, above-\$40-an-hour jobs, those good manufacturing jobs that helped pay our recent immigrants—who couldn't speak English very well, many of them—a living salary, a salary they could buy a house with, put a car in the driveway with, pay for their children's university education with. Where are those jobs? Certainly, the ESL class I spoke to the other week weren't looking at jobs paying anything near that. They were looking at house-cleaning, part-time, fast food, labour. These jobs will never pay them enough to have a house, to have a car, to have that middle-class lifestyle we promised immigrants from the time of Confederation. It certainly won't allow them to pay for their children's university education. If those are the only jobs open to them, then we're looking at generations of poverty, and poverty that has a colour to it.

I want to quote just a few stats from the Colour of Poverty report, which speaks directly to the immigrant problem. Between 1981 and 2001, the number of immigrants who are poor in Toronto—largely people of colour—grew by 125%. Every agency that works with immigrants—and I want to give a shout-out to Culture-Link and Parkdale Intercultural Association, which was here yesterday—and many in my riding who work with immigrants all the time find they can't keep up with the demand and they don't have enough funding. They spend a lot of their time applying for funds when they should have stability of funding for what they do.

Certainly, we're looking at about 200,000 to 300,000 immigrants in Canada, and many in Ontario, who aren't legal; who are working on illegal construction sites; who are working under the table; who are, again, a problem that this Ontario government could do something about.

We still live in a province that will not extend OHIP coverage to the children and the refugees who come from other countries, who aren't yet citizens or landed immigrants, for their first three months. This is dangerous, in fact. It's a dangerous situation, where people might come without medical care and live in our communities, and, luckily, because of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in our schools, can send their children to school, but those selfsame children can't see a doctor. This provincial government could do something about that.

Certainly, where small business is concerned, we know, as you heard the member from Durham speak about, that many of our recent immigrants go into small business. It's an option for them. It's a precarious option but it's an option. Small business: When we had a small business delegation here from the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas that came representing some 30,000 businesses, this government would not meet with them to discuss their concerns over the application of the HST. Many of those store owners on our main streets are recent immigrants. They work, as you heard,

with their families, and they work hour after hour after hour. They just wanted a hearing; they didn't get it. In fact, there is no ministry for small business anymore under the McGuinty government.

These are all areas where the McGuinty government, the provincial government, could act to help recent immigrants. Instead, what they always do, it seems, when they fail on a file—and they're failing on this one; just ask anybody in my riding who has come from another country and is trying to get work—is they point their fingers at the federal government. We in the New Democratic Party say that there's enough blame to go around. There's no doubt that the federal government should do more, could do more, particularly in whatever they're telling immigrants before they begin the immigration process. Certainly they could do more, but we are not in Ottawa; we're sitting and speaking and debating at Queen's Park, the heart of the Ontario provincial government, and the Ontario provincial government has a responsibility to hold up its end of the bargain to make life easier for new immigrants and to listen to their demands. In every report that has come out, there are demands to do better.

Recently, for example, in my community, we've had an influx, as I've said, of Roma folk, who have been driven out of their home countries by a combination of economic issues and racism. They've decided to land in Toronto. We're delighted by that, because we are an inclusive place—Toronto and Ontario. We welcome those who are unwelcome anywhere else. Here's a case of a community that is unwelcome just about everywhere else, who have come here, but they're a very high-needs community. Most of them don't speak English. Many of the parents and the grandparents never had formal school training. They were sent to special schools in the countries that they emigrated from, completely because of racism. And what do they find here?

First of all, on the good side, they find incredible social service agencies that are working above and beyond the call. They're finding some phenomenal public schools, some phenomenal high schools, that are trying everything they can, working after hours, to meet the new need. But the schools and the agencies don't have what they need. They don't have enough ESL teachers. There's a huge waiting list. They don't have enough social workers to work on issues that plague new immigrants, particularly high-needs new immigrants. At the Roma festival that we were pleased to hold in Parkdale, we heard all about the failings of the provincial government, not the federal government, in meeting its educational, its health care and other requirements, which only this government can address, that directly speak to immigrant workers.

In the few minutes I have left, I just want to recap what we're calling for in the New Democratic Party. First of all, we're calling for this government to step up on the labour file where recent immigrants are concerned. We've seen Jamaican and Trinidadian farm workers be absolutely abused in their jobs. Some of them died. We are asking the Minister of Labour to extend the ability to organize, to unionize, to them. It's a simple Canadian

right. To facilitate this, we need card-check certification. To facilitate this, we need anti-scab legislation.

We're also asking that this government, through its power, speaks to the regulatory bodies so that new medical staff, new engineers, new accountants don't have to wait for 10 years to be able to get accredited in this province but can very quickly get their feet on the ground. We need them. We're desperate for them. Why aren't they working in their given fields? We ask for that as well.

And, of course, we ask for some recompense for the small business owner. Many new immigrants are small business owners, who provide, by the way, 90% of the new jobs in this province. We're asking for the government to at least listen to their demands around HST burdens and around other tax and regulatory burdens they face. This government isn't listening to them.

We ask that this government read the Fairness Commissioner's report done in 2010 and the Colour of Poverty report and address those issues, and they are myriad—from housing to social assistance to health care.

We ask this government, the Ministry of Health, to step up and provide health care for recent refugees, and we ask the Minister of Education to step up and provide the ESL and social work guidance that new immigrants and their children so desperately need.

0940

That is provincial, all of it; that is provincial. That is something this government doesn't have to wait on the Harper government for, doesn't have to go pleading to another level of government for. That, they should be doing now.

In conclusion, does the New Democratic Party support the amendment put forth by the official opposition? Absolutely, yes. Absolutely we think that the share of the responsibility of delivering to new immigrants should be provincial as well as federal, and that it should be accountable. Do we also support the amended motion, the original one, by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. Hoskins? Yes. Amended, yes, we do. Will we vote for the amendment and the original? Yes, we will. But come on. Will that make the life of even one immigrant in this province one iota better, if passed? The answer is a resounding and deafening absolutely not. Will it help? Absolutely not. Does this government have so much more it could do? Absolutely so. As the granddaughter of immigrants, as the daughters and sons of immigrants, which we all are, who came at a better time to better circumstances and to better assistance, I say we can do much better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on a very important motion. I think all members in this House will agree on how important immigration is, how important immigration has been to Canada, to the building and the development of our country, and how important immigration has been particularly for Ontario in its progress.

There is very little debate, at least in my eyes—I think there are those out there who will disagree with me, and

fairly; we live in a free country and we can take our positions. But in my eyes, there is very little debate as to how important immigrants are going to be for the future prosperity of our country, and our province in particular, how important they are going to be—and I'm speaking purely from a labour force perspective—in terms of the kind of economy we want to develop, moving forward in the 21st century.

The numbers are very interesting. Let's look at some numbers in terms of what immigration means to Canada and what immigration means to Ontario. Ontario, as we know, generates about 39% of the national GDP, produces 43% of total merchandise exports and is home for almost 50% of all employees in high-tech, financial services and other knowledge-intensive industries.

Successful immigration integration is linked to Ontario's economic and social outcomes. Here are some more numbers. Immigrants account for approximately 30% of Ontario's current labour force. In Toronto alone, nearly one in two—48% to be precise—of the labour force participants are immigrants. The aging population—and that, I think, is the key here—here in the province and across the country and the slowing pace of growth in the working age population could lead to slower economic growth.

That's a very important point I always like to make. As many members know, I myself am an immigrant. I came to this great country 21 years ago—

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you—and I am indebted not only to this country for every opportunity it has given me to grow, flourish and give back in my current position; I am also thankful to my parents, who made that very critical and important decision of emigrating to Canada when they were professionals growing in their professions and in their social circles and whatnot in the country they lived in before emigrating. But they decided to move to a freer, more just and equal country so that their children, my siblings and I, could have an equal opportunity to grow as well.

One big reason we attract immigrants to this great country of ours is because we are such a great country, because we do have the rule of law; we do provide freedom, equality and justice, which in many, many parts of the world, especially where our new immigrants come from today, is something that exists in concept only but not in reality or in practical terms. But we are lucky to have those freedoms available to us. We are lucky to have a Constitution, rule of law and a Charter of Rights and Freedoms which are extremely integral to us.

Saying that, another very important reason that we have such an open immigration policy in this country, another important reason that we welcome immigrants to Canada, to Ontario, is because we need them. It is important for our economic longevity. It is important for our economic prosperity. It is something which is a necessity for us, because we do have an aging population; we do have a situation where—and I think we've debated this in this House—we are not producing enough babies to sustain our population. So we have a significant

demographic challenge that we need to address. If we take immigration out, our demographic line is this way: It's going down. By bringing people in, what we're doing is barely keeping the line straight. That is a big reason why we need immigrants coming to Canada and to Ontario: to ensure that we can continue to grow an extremely viable economy in Canada and particularly in Ontario. Something we need essentially is to maintain the quality of life we enjoy so much.

Let me just share some more numbers quickly, before getting to the other substance of my comments in relation to this motion. Ontario is the destination of choice for immigrants to Canada. We in Canada bring in roughly 200,000 or 250,000 immigrants per year—I think it's closer to 200,000. In 2009, 106,867 immigrants coming to Canada landed in Ontario. This represents 42% of all immigrants; the total was about 250,000. So 106,000 of the 250,000 came to Ontario, chose Ontario as their home. If you look at the number since 1980—and I will be part of that number—three million immigrants have arrived in Ontario since 1980. That's very significant, which means that it is extremely important and incumbent on us to work hard to provide the necessary service when it comes to language services, when it comes to other settlement and integration services, to our newcomers so they can adjust quickly and well in our society.

It is only in our best interests—let's be selfish for a minute; there's nothing wrong with that—that those who choose Ontario as their home are integrated as soon as possible. The sooner they are integrated into our society and into our economy—they're going to start working right away. They will start their businesses, as the member earlier was talking about; they will start paying taxes. If they have an income or if they have a business, that's what they will do, and they will be contributing to our economy and meeting the labour force needs we have in our economy. These are very important elements. We need to make sure that those things are met by supporting and helping.

Let me inject a little bit of my own personal story. As I mentioned earlier, I, along with my family, came to Ontario 21 years ago, back in 1988. I was 15 years old. My parents, as you can imagine, were at their prime earning age. Both were lawyers by profession. In 21 years in Canada, they haven't practised one day as lawyers in this province and in this country. And they were at their prime earning age.

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When they were deciding to move from Pakistan to Canada, their friends thought and told them that they were being silly. I think they had kinder words than that, but they told them, "Why would you leave such a good life behind when you guys are doing so well and flourishing?" and they said, "No; we want to move somewhere where our sons and our daughter are equal. We want to move to a country where they have all opportunities available to them." So they sacrificed their own careers in order to do so when they really didn't need to do that. They could have come to this great province and been part of the economy.

Now, they found other ways to be part of the economy. They got into business, which was not their line of work. Were they successful doing so? Not really. But they still stuck, and they made sure that their children got the necessary education to prosper.

Here's the effect: I like to consider immigration as brain gain. I think we spend too much time thinking about the brain drain of Canadians leaving for the United States and how we are losing the best of our talents, and we don't think enough about the brain gain, the 252,000 people who came to Ontario in 2009. That's a brain gain to our country. What we need to do is find ways as to how best to help them, to integrate them socially and economically and to make sure that they are contributing to our economy. It's a selfish thing to say, but I think it's absolutely the right thing to do, and that's what immigrants want to do.

Most of the immigrants who come to Canada are not political refugees; most of them who come to Canada are economic refugees. They come to this country because they are seeking a better life to live. They are coming here because they want to do better than the society they left behind.

Nobody likes to leave home. Anybody who has immigrated in this room will know it is a very difficult process to go through. You're just turning your life upside down and building brand new. It's like learning how to walk again. I do remember my very first winters; it's not easy to walk on snow or ice. It is literally learning how to walk again. But it's a decision people make because they want to be part of a better society and they want to be part of a better economy, and they want to contribute.

We've got this great opportunity to get in there and to start working with these newcomers, with new immigrants, and get them integrated as quickly as possible in our economy. Instead of losing the brain gain, as was the case with my parents and many others, we have this great opportunity to capitalize on the brain gain. That is an opportunity, especially in this century where the competition is extremely tough and we have to be at our best when we are looking at the competition globally. We do not have the luxury of missing out on the talent that is coming to this province.

Therefore, we need to make the necessary investments. We need to work with the federal government to make sure that we've got the investment—call it whatever agreement; the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement—so that those services around language training, around settlement services and around bridge training and economic integration are available, no ifs and buts about it.

Look at it: One of our biggest challenges that we're constantly dealing with is the shortage of family doctors. We have this great opportunity—and again, all members in this House have spoken about this in the past, about how we can get foreign medical graduates who are choosing Ontario as their home and make it as easy and quick as possible for them to practise medicine here so that they can serve patients, who happen to be our family

members, neighbours and friends. A lot is being done in that regard, but more can be done.

Of course we want to make sure that standards are maintained. Of course we want to ensure that patient safety is paramount. Therefore, nobody is saying that any doctor who comes from another part of the world should just be given a licence to practise medicine and that's it; of course not. We need to make sure that they've gone through some basic training to align their skills to standards that are offered right here in the province of Ontario, but for that we need bridge training. We need programs which we can sort of—I like to think of it sort of as a pipeline, where we can get them from one side of the pipeline, get them trained; an assembly line is probably a better analogy—and get them out as quickly as possible on the other side so they can start performing their task. Again, dual benefit here: Not only are they serving the community—they're helping in a significant challenge we have, which is ensuring that all families, all Ontarians, have access to a family doctor—but on the other hand, they're improving their lives. They do well; we do well—right? They're better fully integrated right from the get-go.

I see this work taking place in my community, in Ottawa Centre. As you know, I represent a downtown part of Ottawa. My part of the riding attracts a lot of new immigrants who come; therefore, a lot of the immigration settlement agencies are located right in Ottawa Centre, and I have a really good working relationship with them. When I see the work of the Catholic Immigration Centre, led by Carl Nicholson, in terms of various bridge training programs they do; when I see the work of the Immigrant Women Services organization, led by Lucya Spencer, the work they're doing in terms of making sure that immigrant women have all the opportunities available to them—very, very important work. I was recently at their gala, talking about the example of my mother, who, as a lawyer, didn't practise law when she came, but spent her time making sure that her kids were doing well and succeeding through school. When both—

Hon. John Gerretsen: And she succeeded.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Well, she succeeded, no doubt, Minister. She did succeed in that way. But I kind of look at her—she never got to pursue her career, right? And she was trained for that. We can achieve both.

I look at the work of the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre, led by Sharon Kan—on Saturday they just celebrated their 35th anniversary—serving 8,000 clients a year, primarily of Chinese origin. It's incredible work they're doing, in terms of economic integration. They have a really successful program dealing with information technology professionals, those who may be coming from China, helping them integrate into the IT sector in Ottawa. Ottawa, as you know, is a very significant hub for that.

It's the same thing when I see the work of OCISO, the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, led by Hamdi Mohamed, in terms of various programs they run, especially language training programs and mentorship and menteeship programs, helping to integrate

immigrants who come to Ottawa into the broader community. Also, LASI World Skills, under the leadership of Mengistab Tsegaye, is doing very similar work when it comes to bridge training.

All these organizations in Ottawa Centre rely on the funding from the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, and they're all quite anxious. I've got to tell you, I speak with them quite regularly. They are quite concerned as to what is the future of that agreement and whether the federal government will be providing the necessary funds to ensure that all the important programs they provide are there.

Of course, we, the provincial government, will continue working with them, because it is our responsibility, but we need all partners at the table. It is not just the responsibility of one government over the other. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we are providing the necessary services to our newcomers. Like I said earlier, it is in our best interest. It is in our best interest.

I say to CIC, OCISO, LASI World Skills, OCCSC and IWSO that we're working really hard, and we need their help as well in ensuring that the federal government comes back to the table, renegotiates the agreement and provides the necessary dollars we need to continue their good work, because if you look at the results which have come out through the investments so far, they are very encouraging. They are extremely encouraging. We are helping our newcomers to integrate, because if we don't do so, if we fail to do so, we are failing ourselves. Forget that we are abdicating our responsibility—of course we are abdicating our responsibility—but we are going to be failing ourselves. If we fail to help the newcomers, we are not going to be putting ourselves in the competitive position we need to put ourselves in; and it's not really help—I use the word “help” loosely—it's to work with them. They're all coming to this province because they want to work hard and they want to contribute; and we need to make sure that we enable them, that we assist them and make it happen for them to meet those challenges.

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I can speak personally. It is not easy, and that is why it's important—we've talked a lot about the international scholarship—that we get the best and the brightest talent from around the world to come and make Ontario their home.

I am extremely disappointed with the position the official opposition has taken in terms of the international scholarship, and it actually hurts personally. We need to make sure that the destination of choice for the Ph.D.s of the world is Ontario, because when they come here and finish their education, that's where they will be contributing and benefiting society. That's where their inventions are going to be on the front pages of the world. Who knows how many Nobel award winners will be within that group?

We need to support programs like that. We need to support our newcomers through making sure that we have enough investment through—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm really pleased to rise in the House today to speak to motion number 29, which has been presented by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Immigration is a topic that's very near and dear and very personal to me. Some 57 years ago, not unlike the member for Ottawa Centre's family, our family immigrated to Canada. The circumstances, however, were very different. We lived in Shanghai, China, where my parents had a business, and after the Chinese revolution there was no place for westerners in Shanghai or in China. So it became an almost impossible task to leave China as late as my parents left it, which was in December 1949, on a freighter in very choppy wintry seas, and we landed in Israel.

My dad was a Jew, and Israel was a place where he still had some relatives. It was a place where we could go and live in a refugee camp. We lived in that camp for three years. I can't even imagine the hardship my parents endured. They had their children later in life, so they were well into their 40s when we were in the refugee camp in Israel. My mother actually had a baby, a son, who died right after being born, because I guess the conditions were so harsh there and at her age the pregnancy was tough.

So what I'm trying to say is that when immigrants come to Canada, they come with a story, they come with experience. And when they come to Canada and Canada embraces them and gives them opportunity, it is the most amazing light that's shone down on these individual families, which is what happened in our case.

We had relatives and friends strewn all over the world, and my mother had her choice of picking San Francisco, where my father's youngest sister was, or Toronto, where my father's nephew was. Both could sponsor us. My mother picked Toronto. She had heard about Canada, she had heard about the opportunities and she wanted her daughters to have those opportunities. So we came to Canada 57 years ago. The rest is almost history.

My parents came with some challenges, because they came with very little, they were well into their 40s, but we had the advantage of speaking the language and understanding a bit more about the culture than perhaps people coming from places that didn't have those advantages. So my sister and I integrated into school; my father, finally, was able to get a job. However, he did have to change his name, as a lot of immigrants did, because he couldn't get a job with a name like Isaac. So we changed our name to Davies, and life went on.

We have learned from that experience that it's really important as immigrants, as Canadians, first, to give back, to integrate and to have a personal responsibility for how life works in our communities, in our province and around the world. So I'm grateful that my parents provided my sister and me the opportunity by coming and settling in this absolutely amazing country. How fortunate that we actually live in Ontario. They provided a better life for my sister and me, and this gave me the opportunity to raise my own family now here as well, and they are raising their families in this wonderful province.

Times have changed, though, for new Canadians, and they're faced with far more difficult challenges. This government has talked time and time again about how they will remove the barriers for new Canadians with respect to the credentials being recognized and allowing them access to the skilled labour market. As my colleagues have already pointed out, this motion is asking for more money. It's asking for more money to be spent in Ontario but it doesn't say where, it doesn't say how, or it doesn't say in which particular programs. It also doesn't say what the results should be.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has proposed an amendment, and the motion would read:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the \$207 million that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper."

I think that adds that extra little credibility to what we want to do here in Ontario. This proposed amendment would help Ontario to focus on what is needed in order for newcomers to actually succeed here in our province.

Additionally, this proposed amendment would help the federal government to understand the programs it should be looking to provide. We need settlement programs that both respond to the needs of the newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario communities. We need this to ensure accountability.

I'm pleased to have been able to speak to this motion today. I hope that the amendment passes, as does the motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've been listening quite intently to the stories that various members have brought to this debate here in the Legislature. I think what is clear is that we, like everyone else, were immigrants to this country at one time or another; some as recently as a generation or two ago, some others of us more than that. I think we recognize that there needs to be something in order to deal with how we better integrate and how we better support those who immigrate to Canada into our communities because, if not, not only is it an injustice and a travesty to those individuals, but I think it's also, from what I'm hearing from the stories told, quite difficult on them and what it means to them as human beings and individuals.

I was quite taken aback by the comments just made by the member from—

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Burlington.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Burlington—I'm sorry; we're not allowed to use names. I always have to point, Speaker, because I don't know the ridings—and I didn't know that of her history.

It is always a little bit humbling in this place to hear other members talk about what their history is because it tells us that people have had to deal with fairly traumatic episodes in their lives or the lives of their families. I think it says a lot about who those people are, about how they overcame and about how they've been able to move on and try to do what they can in order to make life better for those who are here and those who will come after. I just wanted to say to the member from Burlington that I thought that was quite interesting.

In northern Ontario, people would think, "Well, you know, immigration: That's really a big-city issue. That's something we see in London or Hamilton or Toronto or Ottawa and those places." But I've got to tell you, there are more and more people immigrating into Ontario and more and more of them are coming to northern Ontario. I am quite surprised at the degree that our offices, both in Timmins and Kapuskasing, deal with immigration cases, not only because I'm co-located with our two federal members, both Charlie Angus and Carol Hughes, but also, I've been dealing with immigration issues since way back, when quite frankly I was on my own and it was a Liberal member who was holding that seat federally. As you know, it has now been redistributed federally; there are two seats up in my riding federally, and there's one lone provincial member carrying the weight by himself, but that's a whole other story.

But my point is this: There is an increasing amount of people who are moving into northern Ontario who have emigrated from different parts of the world, and it's not as in the past where it was only particular parts of the world. For example, most of the immigration that we saw in northern Ontario back in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s were mostly European immigrants—people from Italy, England, Scotland, Wales and from various countries in and around Europe, and the big immigration after the Second World War. But now we're seeing it from almost everywhere—from India, Pakistan, China, Indonesia. We have people coming from all over the world because people are choosing Canada. Why? Because it is one of the best places in the world to live.

Even in places like Timmins, Kapuskasing or Hearst, people do have problems trying to integrate into society as far as understanding how our democracy works, understanding how our system works, providing the type of support they need in order to get second-language training as far as English.

I notice the Speaker is sort of leaning over and getting ready, because it's almost that time.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got two minutes? Okay. I was trying to time it in time for you to not cut me off.

My point is, there's more that needs to be done in order to deal with how we properly support people once they do come back in and they do immigrate into our country. For example, for a lot of the people who I've

dealt with in Timmins–James Bay, it's an issue where their professional accreditation has not been recognized in Ontario and Canada. We have people who are physicians, electricians, engineers. I've dealt with various professionals over the past number of years who had studied in their home country and gone to university or college, got their trade certifications, got their professional diplomas, and here they are, trying to get work in Ontario. They're not able to get work in their own fields because their accreditation is not being recognized.

There's good reason for that, I understand, because in some cases, the training in Ontario might be superior and our standards may be higher, but we should do something to upgrade those skills quicker and allow them to be able to get that certification they need so that they can go on with their lives. If we're going to allow an engineer to move from Europe or from India or wherever it might be and say, "It's good for you to come to Canada and use your engineering skills," the least we should do is try to find a way to allow them to get their accreditation in a way that is a lot more user friendly when it comes to the ability of doing so.

The other issue is that of second-language training. There are a lot of people who immigrate into my particular riding who have English skills but they're somewhat limited, or have French skills and they're somewhat limited, and who certainly have a lot of work when it comes to the literacy that they need to be able to integrate into our society, either in French or in English. And, yes, there has been some progress—I know the francophone alphabétisation—I don't know how you say that in English; the literacy community—but there is still a lot that needs to be done in order to properly support those groups so that they're able to deal with trying to build up literacy skills with people who need to have stronger literacy skills so that they can get on with getting their accreditations and getting certified and whatever it is that they might have to do.

Being about that time of the clock, I will adjourn at this point and pick up this debate at another date.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8(a), this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to introduce Sarah Mistak, the sister of Tony Mistak, one of our pages. She's sitting in the west gallery.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please join me in welcoming two Richmond Hill firefighters in the east members' gallery: John Shillinglaw and Derek Hofrichter.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming a well-known, hard-working, dedicated constituent of mine and a person we truly love, my mother, Rose Ouellette.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a privilege for me to introduce Anita Record, who is in the members' east gallery today. She is head of the Peterborough branch of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: This is not an introduction, but I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of this Legislature be permitted to wear daffodil pins in recognition of Cancer Prevention Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to recognize the executive board of the OPFFA and representatives of professional firefighters from across the province. Members of the executive include: Fred LeBlanc, president; Barry Quinn, secretary treasurer; and seven of the district vice-presidents. From St. Catharines, we have firefighters Terry Colburn and Ryan Madill; and from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Debbie Conrad and John McBeth.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'd like to introduce Brad Grimwood and John Jetter from the professional firefighters.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce, in the west gallery, our president of the firefighters' association, Mr. Jim Holmes. Also, I believe you'll be introducing the top people there in a few minutes.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to introduce to the House Fida Oleiche, who is the mom of our page Alexandra from Hamilton–Mountain. Welcome.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I am delighted to introduce Andrew Rogerson, Kevin Aitcheson and Brad McCann, who are part of the Stratford Fire Department. We are delighted they're here for OPFFA Day.

Mr. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two individuals from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Welcome to Queen's Park Alexi White and Meaghan Coker.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a number of guests as well: Steve Barkwell, Paul Konarowski, Craig Baird and Peter Dyson from the Oshawa fire department. Welcome, gentlemen.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm very pleased to introduce to the House today the president of the Brantford OPFFA, Mr. Tom Smith, who's a great firefighter as well. Tom, thanks for being here today.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you today members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association: Michael Gagnon from the Midland fire service, Glenn Higgins from the Orillia fire service—and I believe Kevin White is here somewhere as well from the Barrie fire service.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to introduce, from the Kingston firefighters, Ann Bryan and Jeff Olejnik. As well, I'd like to introduce Paul Gilmore, a former reeve of Loyalist township and Brian Pitts, who are here at Queen's Park today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome all the Ontario firefighters but also, more importantly, I suppose, Kendra Chopcian, who is from the Canadian Cancer

Society. We're here today educating MPPs about cancer in Ontario.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to introduce to the assembly today, visiting from the Thunder Bay Professional Fire Fighters Association, President Eric Nordlund and Phil Dzuba.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a great pleasure to introduce some guests from the Canadian Cancer Society in the east gallery: Jeff Brace, Sterling Johnston, Heather Gray and Carolyn Bourassa.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to introduce today the president of the Waterloo firefighters' association, John Deitrich; and also Steve Mayer.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to introduce Colin Hunter, who is here today from the Guelph fire service.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I also want to welcome Eric Nordlund and Philip Dzuba from the Thunder Bay Professional Fire Fighters Association, who I had a chance to meet with this morning. Also, I want to welcome Barry Quinn, who gave me some very good advice this morning.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Speaker, it gives me, indeed, real pleasure to introduce to you the convenor of the Canada India Foundation, which is engaging Canada and India through trade. His name is Aditya Jha. Let's welcome him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Ellard Beaven from the Timmins firefighters, who's here visiting with us today. I would ask everybody to welcome Ellard.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm just awaiting the valiant members from the Mississauga Fire Fighters Association, who should be arriving any moment now: Mark Train, Chris Varcoe, Dave Rutka, Rob Ward and Ryan Coburn. Welcome to Queen's Park, wherever you may be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from York West and page Mahir Malik, we would like to welcome his mother, Farhat Malik; his father, Tahir Malik; and his sister Mahira Malik to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would like to welcome today in the Speaker's gallery Phil King of the London Professional Fire Fighters Association; my good friend Warren Scott from the St. Thomas Professional Firefighters Association; Barry Quinn, the secretary-treasurer of the OPFFA; Ann Bryan from Kingston; Eric Nordlund, 7th district vice-president; Philip Dzuba from Thunder Bay; Fred LeBlanc, the president; and Jeff Olejnik from Kingston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. You have made an absolute mess of hydro policy in the province of Ontario, and Ontario families are stuck with

the bills. Rates are going through the roof and you come up with some new plan every other week. Now your latest, you claim, is going to cost \$87 billion a year. You say it's going to double hydro bills, but even your own Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, your very own task force, says that you have grossly understated what Ontario families are going to pay for your expensive energy experiments. Premier, if your own advisers don't believe you, why should Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to begin by thanking the thousands of Ontarians who helped lend shape to their plan. It's a long-term plan. It's the first of its kind in Ontario. We refuse to hide the details from the people of Ontario. We're going to be very upfront with them in terms of the shape of the plan, the values that inform that plan and all the costs associated with that.

I would encourage Ontario families to take the opportunity to become more familiar with the plan. They can do so by seeing it online. I can tell you, it's all about ensuring that over the course of the next 20 years, both our families and businesses have access to a clean, modern, reliable electricity system that will help us enjoy good-quality lives and help our businesses thrive. That's fundamentally what this 20-year electricity plan is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Oh, no, Premier. Ontario families have already seen what you're all about. They've seen their bills going through the roof: Rates are up under Premier McGuinty by 75% already, and 100% or more if you have one of Dalton McGuinty's smart meter tax machines. Premier, even industry observers do not believe your plan. They say, quite frankly, that your plan cannot be trusted to reflect the price tag you claim. It has not been accurately costed.

We all know that Premier McGuinty once said that bills will only go up 1%, and then he said, "Oh, I'll correct the record, Speaker," and the Premier said, "They're only going to go up 3%." Premier, they've gone up 75%. It's bordering on incompetence, and families are stuck with the bill. How much more are rates going up in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If my honourable colleague wants to argue figures, I would argue that he has to put some up. We've done that in our plan. We've been very specific, very straightforward and very honest with Ontarians.

We've also indicated that over the course of the plan, over 20 years, there is a real cost associated with this. It is, in fact, 3.5% a year that it'll go up on average. I think it's important to put that into some perspective. During the course of the past 20 years, our electricity costs went up, on average, 3.6%. So that's 3.5% per year on average going forward and 3.6% during the course of the past 20 years.

In addition to that, we're helping families. We're going to give them a clean energy benefit that will last for the ensuing five years to reduce the cost of their

electricity bills by 10%. We also have a seniors' energy and property tax credit; it's \$1,025. Two thirds of Ontario seniors are in a position to qualify—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's your problem: Quite frankly, nobody believes you anymore. You told them bills would go up 1%. You told them bills would go up 3%. Now, they're some 75% and climbing.

Even your own task force says that your expensive energy experiments, your sweetheart deals with foreign multinationals like Samsung or IKEA, cost way too much. The task force says that you are lowballing what families are going to pay for your expensive energy experiments. They say that you wildly overstate the number of jobs you claim you are going to create.

In short, Premier, you have a massive credibility problem when it comes to energy in the province of Ontario, and your mismanagement borders on absolute incompetence.

How much more are you going to raise energy rates for hard-working families who are saying, "Enough is enough"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague again, it's time for him to put up. He's been offering critiques and commentary from the comfort of the sidelines, but sometimes in life you actually have to put up.

I'm going to say this to Ontarians by way of reassurance: Not only have we put in place a thoughtful, responsible, 20-year plan, but I'll tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to be experimenting with deregulation and causing electricity price hikes to the tune of 70%. We're not going to be putting an artificial cap on rates which cost our children \$1 billion, as they did. We're not going to be putting diesel generators into the hearts of our cities.

We're going to deliver clean air. We're going to deliver reliable electricity. We're going to deliver thousands of new jobs. We're going to become a global powerhouse in an exciting, revolutionary clean energy industry that's good news for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. We have many guests here today who are very interested in hearing the questions and the answers.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: It is obvious, Premier, that you have no clue whatsoever how to get

Ontario out of the incredible mess you've created in our energy system.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Education, Minister of Agriculture and a number of other ministers will please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And community and social services, and energy, and economic development.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've made an incredible mess of Ontario's energy system, and senior citizens are paying for it with higher bills. Middle-class families are feeling the sting because of your incompetence. Small businesses are struggling to get by because of your expensive energy experiments. The Premier's solution is, when he's dug a hole, to keep digging it deeper and deeper.

It's time for change in the province. It's time for change in energy. The Ontario PCs will put consumers, the families and the businesses first in every decision we make.

Premier, why are you on the side of special interests who are getting fat and rich off these massive subsidies paid by Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've got a plan out now. It's 68 pages in length. It's very detailed, very comprehensive, very honest and very forthright.

They've been the official opposition for seven years. You would think that at some point along the way somebody over there might have said, "You know what? We think we owe Ontarians. As a matter of respect for Ontarians, we need to put forward a solid proposal when it comes to public policy." All they have put forward to this point in time is a blank piece of paper. I think that's unacceptable. We'll let Ontarians be the final judges in that regard.

The other point I want to make is this: Their plan—and they're not prepared to talk about this openly—is based on coal. It's a fuel that we've been burning as a species for centuries. We didn't move beyond the Stone Age because we ran out of stones. We're not going to move beyond coal under them, because apparently there's going to be still more coal coming. The plan that we're putting forward is clean, modern, reliable, and it's exciting.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean will withdraw the comment she just made.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I don't think you know what "forthright" means anymore. You may as well take your so-called plan and put it on the fiction shelf at the local library like your last two campaign platforms, where you told people you'd do one thing before the election and you did the complete opposite once you were elected. We're seeing this pattern over and over again.

You're saying that bills are going to go up to \$228 a month, on average, per family, that they're going to double; and you know and I know that you're lowballing these figures. Premier, \$228 a month could be a car payment for some families. I know that you've lost touch after seven years in office, but do you ever pause to think about the impact this is having on average, hard-working Ontario families, who are saying that enough is enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Our plan is all about ensuring that we meet the needs of families, today and during the course of the next 20 years. We believe—and our plan has been informed by that belief and their values and their aspirations—that they're looking for reliable electricity, they want a modernized system that they can always count on and they also want clean electricity. We don't believe in burning coal anymore. We think that belongs to the past. I think we're too intelligent a population to continue to burn coal in Ontario. They see things differently.

My friend says he's concerned about the cost. Again, we should put these things in perspective. Electricity during the past 20 years, as I mentioned, has gone up 3.6% a year; natural gas during the past 20 years, 4.7% a year; cable TV during the past 20 years, 5% a year; fuel oil during the past 20 years, 5.2% a year; the average resale price of a home during the past 20 years has more than doubled. I think it's important to put that in some perspective. We're being honest; we're being forthright. Let's see their plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here is the difference between the Ontario PCs and the McGuinty Liberals. We believe energy policy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Planless in Seattle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I can find a flight to Seattle for someone.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's the difference: Ontario PCs believe energy policy is economic policy. It's about attracting jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I apologize. I just sat down, the honourable member just stood up, and suddenly the ministers start opening up.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Show some respect.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, no. The member from Halton should show some respect too when the Speaker is standing and speaking.

This is an issue that is of importance to the opposition, it's of importance to the government, and that being case, it's obviously very important to the citizens of Ontario. The citizens of Ontario want to hear this debate, the Speaker wants to hear this debate, the guests want to hear

this debate, and let's show some courtesy and allow good debate to take place in this chamber. Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, here is the difference: Ontario PCs believe energy policy is economic policy. It's about attracting good, well-paying jobs to the province of Ontario; and it's about ensuring that Ontario families can pay the bills, can stay in their homes, can start spending again. Premier McGuinty believes energy policy is all about social policy and massive subsidies to multinational corporations and sticking Ontario families with the bill. Premier, when did you get so out of touch that you don't understand that hydro bills are going through the roof and people want a change in direction—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have a solid plan. It's before the people of Ontario. We look forward to further discussing that with them. It's about clean air, it's about thousands of new jobs, and it's about the peace of mind that comes from knowing the electricity is going to be there when you need it.

I would argue respectfully to my honourable colleagues opposite that the price of admission to this debate is that you've got to have a plan. You got to move beyond rhetoric. This is a matter of important public policy. You can't just continue to offer criticism and commentary from the convenience of the sidelines. At some times you've got to step up; you've got to get into the game. You've got to put forward a plan.

We have a 68-page plan. It's thoughtful, responsible, comprehensive and honest. It's about building a bright electricity future for Ontarians. It's about clean air, it's about thousands of jobs, and it's about peace of mind that comes from knowing you're going to have electricity when you need it.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the government announced that they will be "proceeding with two new units at Darlington on a cost-effective basis." How will the government determine what cost-effective is?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, I can say something for the two opposition parties: They're very consistent. They are both plan-free when it comes to electricity. At some point in time—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's a plan-free zone over there.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's a PFZ: a plan-free zone. There's not a lot of thought going on over there, just lots of rhetoric.

My honourable colleague, the leader of the NDP, believes that we should eliminate nuclear generation in Ontario. That's irresponsible. One half of our electricity that is generated today in the province of Ontario comes from nuclear. More than that, there are tens of thousands of jobs that are associated with that industry. We believe

that it's important to continue to maintain our 50% capacity.

More than that, we think there are some exciting global opportunities when it comes to Canadian nuclear technology to create even more jobs for Ontarians. I've been to India, I've been to China; they're interested in our technology and we should get with the program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the energy minister seemed to be pulling numbers out of thin air. But for families that were just told that they're going to be paying \$700 more a year for hydro within the next five years, this isn't make-believe. Who will be determining whether this government's nuclear plans are actually cost-effective, and when will they be doing that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will be working as hard as we can when it comes to ensuring that we get the lowest possible cost for our nuclear investments. We're doing whatever we can to place as much of the risk as we reasonably can on to those of the private sector.

But I think the point that I really want to make, and I'd encourage my honourable colleague to accept, is that there's a cost associated to building new electricity generation. There's simply no escaping that. I think we need to be upfront with Ontarians about that. Because they have no specific plan, I'm guessing that they believe that we can actually supply ourselves with clean electricity during the course of the next 20 years on a cost-free basis. That's not reasonable. That's not responsible. It's hardly thoughtful. I think we owe more to Ontarians than just that. That's why we put out a very thoughtful, responsible 68-page plan. It details everything. It's about doing what Ontarians want us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier may not want to answer these questions, but they matter to the people who will be stuck with the bill. The Bruce refurb has cost \$2.4 billion a unit so far and it's not complete yet. The government's new nuclear plan calls for 10 refurbished units. Where is the government's evidence that those 10 refurbished units will cost less than \$25 billion in total, and will it share that evidence with the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me tell you about one of the ways that we're doing new business when it comes to the nuclear industry in Ontario. Bruce nuclear centre is refurbishing two of its nuclear units. There are some pretty significant cost overruns but, because of the contracts we've entered into, the private sector is responsible for all those overruns. I just think that's the responsible way to go. That's what we're talking about now when it comes to investing in the nuclear industry.

The other thing I'd encourage my honourable colleague to remember is that there are some 50,000 to 55,000 jobs today tied up in the nuclear industry. What does she say to those families as she remains committed to shutting down the nuclear sector in Ontario? Those are a lot of families and a lot of taxes that are paid to support

our schools, to support our hospitals and to support our quality of life.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Ontario families have seen the cost of everything from private sweetheart deals to donations to the Ontario Liberal Party slapped on their hydro bills. They don't want to write any more blank cheques. Does the government have any evidence whatsoever that all the 10 nuclear refurbishments are going to cost less than \$25 billion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would encourage my honourable colleague—because we're waiting here with bated breath on this side of the House for a specific proposal. It doesn't have to be a concrete plan, just even a hint—something that might entice us or excite us to a modest extent to gain a better understanding as to the workings of the NDP brain when it comes to electricity. We'd like to better understand that.

Again, we've put forward a very specific, thoughtful, responsible plan, and it's designed to ensure that over the course of the next 20 years, Ontario children have clean air to breathe. We think it's important to shut down coal and move beyond the fuel that we should have stopped burning, frankly, a long time ago.

We also are very excited about the prospects of becoming a global powerhouse in the clean energy technology industry. We're number one in North America when it comes to cars; we want to be number one when it comes to clean energy technologies.

Finally, we want to give Ontarians the peace of mind that comes from knowing that when you flick on the switch, the lights will come on because we have a reliable supply of electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's some free advice for this government: When a contractor offers an estimate that's too good to be true, it's probably too good to be true. Right now, the Premier sounds like the guy promising to fix your leaky roof for half the price. It sounds good until he's almost done; then, all of a sudden, the estimate goes way up.

Can the Premier break down the \$33-billion nuclear estimate? How much of that is going on refurbishment and how much to build new units?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd love to be able to enter a more specific debate with my honourable colleague, but she doesn't have any proposals. There's nothing that we can compare our plan to.

She says that she's not happy with the \$33-billion figure we put to our nuclear investment, but she's not telling us how much she'd assign to her nuclear investment.

She says that she doesn't like the fact that we continue to burn coal in Ontario, but on the other hand, she says she doesn't like the cost associated with clean energy technology.

Again, we've put something out here. We're proud of this plan. It has been informed by the values and the thinking of thousands of Ontarians. What we're now asking on behalf of all Ontarians is, if we're going to enter into an informed and intelligent debate, it's time for the opposition parties to put up. They've got to put forward their plan so that we can have a good conversation about this. But until that point in time, we stand very much behind our plan. We're very confident in our plan, confident it's doing the right thing for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This province has a long history of nuclear cost overruns, and Ontario families are still paying for it.

Darlington was supposed to cost less than \$3 billion. The final bill was more than \$14 billion. The Bruce refurb was supposed to cost less than \$3 billion. The bill is now at almost \$5 billion and counting.

The government says their nuclear plan will be cost-effective. Who will determine that? And before they proceed, will people get a chance in this province to compare the real cost of this plan with more affordable alternatives?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Ontario.ca/energyplan. That's where Ontarians can find our plan. I would refer them to plans put forward by the official opposition and the NDP if there were such plans, but there are no such plans. I would have offered to advertise their plans here today for the people of Ontario, but those plans don't exist. I say again, when it comes to the opposition, there is consistency there: They are a plan-free zone.

1100

I think the price of admission for entering into this debate now, after seven years, is that you've got to have a plan. They don't have a plan. I think they lose their credibility. I think they lose their capacity to comment intelligently, because we've got a plan and we're proud of our plan. It meets the needs of Ontario families. It meets the needs of Ontario businesses. It's about clean air, thousands of jobs, an exciting new industry and reliable electricity.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would remind the honourable members from Her Majesty's loyal opposition that the comments that I directed at the government members do go both ways. We do need to be respectful.

New question?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday I raised the sweetheart deal that you signed that pays Ikea, the Swedish furniture giant that had profits last year of 2.5 billion euros, \$700,000 a year to produce power for maybe up to 100 homes. For Ontario seniors and busy families, that works out to \$5,000 more per year than they pay for hydro at current prices; a \$5,000-per-home subsidy for Ikea.

The plan that you released yesterday confirms that you have signed 16,000 contracts as part of your expensive green energy experiment. How many Ontario seniors and families can expect to overpay \$5,000 a year or more to turn on the lights because of your expensive plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague talks about these sweetheart deals with some apparent revulsion. Let's talk about these thousands and thousands of sweetheart deals.

John Sauve farms 2,000 acres in the Essex area. He grows corn, soybeans and wheat. He currently has one ground-mounted 10-kilowatt solar generator. That's one of the sweetheart deals he's talking about.

Stan Gillier farms 1,500 acres in Chatham-Kent. He grows tomatoes, peas, corn, soybeans and wheat. He has one ground-mounted 10-kilowatt solar generator.

Steve and Alice Uher operate a small farm outside of Blenheim with sheep and horses. They also run a successful Purina feed dealership for the area. They have constructed a 10-kilowatt solar generator on the roof of their barn.

Those are some of the sweetheart deals that he opposes in the province of Ontario, which is strengthening rural Ontario and is helping our farmers supplement their income. What has he got against farmers? What has he got against supplementing their income?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm hoping that if I let you keep going, you will shout it out of yourselves.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It might be more fun just to let the clock run.

Just imagine what our guests are thinking, what these students who are sitting up here, likely grade 5 students studying government right now, are thinking?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Premier talked about three. I talked about one that pays a Swedish retail giant that made over \$2.5 billion in profit last year a subsidy of \$700,000 a year out of your green energy plan.

The 16,000 contracts you've signed so far are 20-year deals. Ontario families will pay power producers up to 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour for power that costs five to six cents.

Ontario seniors and families are already getting up early to shower or staying up late to do laundry as a result of your smart meter/time-of-use experiment. They cannot afford to pay more than 10 times as much to turn on the lights generated by your expensive green energy experiments.

Will you give Ontario families a chance to catch up? Stop signing these deals that give away these massive subsidies to giants like IKEA, which makes \$2.5 billion in profit a year.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand why my honourable colleague doesn't want to speak to rural Ontario and to Ontario farmers specifically, because they

stand to benefit a great deal from our Green Energy Act and our electricity plan.

I talked about John Sauve, who's growing corn, soybeans and wheat; about Stan Gillier, who's growing tomatoes, peas, corn, soybeans and wheat; and about the Uher family, who have sheep and horses and are running a successful Purina feed dealership. There are thousands of farmers like them around the province who are benefiting under our plan. It provides them with a modest supplement to their farm income. At the same time, it's providing all of us with clean energy.

I think it's a win-win. I think it's something that rural Ontario has been looking for for a long time. I think it's something that our farmers in particular appreciate. So I'd ask my honourable colleague to stand up and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Campaign 2000's new report card shows that child poverty has increased to over 15% in Ontario, and it's growing and rising as I speak.

When the McGuinty government designed its 25 in 5 poverty strategy, was it intending to increase child poverty by 25% over five years? If so, you've succeeded brilliantly.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To the minister responsible for poverty.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to speak to this issue. We thank Campaign 2000 for their report and for being one of the groups whose input helped shape our government's poverty reduction strategy.

Ontario's strategy is the country's most ambitious and aggressive poverty reduction strategy. I want to quote, if I can, the report today, where Campaign 2000 acknowledges the reality of the worldwide global economic recession. They say: "Despite tight fiscal times the 2009 and 2010 provincial budgets included a number of measures that have benefited low-income families, including increases to the minimum wage and the Ontario child benefit, stimulus spending on affordable housing, funding to save child care subsidies and implementation of full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds."

Campaign 2000 gets it. They understand that these initiatives are helping Ontario families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Michael Prue: Campaign 2000 also told you that you're doing nothing on housing, that you're doing nothing on the poverty rate, that you're doing nothing to help the poor. They also said that. Quote that part.

Last week, we learned that food bank usage is up 28% in this province. Today, we learned that more Ontarians are falling into poverty. Even with the Ontario child

benefit, a single mother with one child lives \$10,000 below the poverty line.

Campaign 2000 says that the McGuinty government must implement a housing benefit and provide a healthy food allowance for social assistance recipients. When? Please tell us, when will this government do something, anything at all, to help the poor?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud of the aggressive plan that we've put in place to reduce poverty.

I've learned a lot of lessons in my life from my grandmother, and one of them is: Actions speak louder than words. You voted against our six increases on social assistance, you voted against our creation of 22,000 new affordable child care spaces, you voted against stabilizing the rent bank and providing over 30,000 rent supplements, you voted against raising the minimum wage, and you voted against taking 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls.

Everyone needs to be part of the solution. When will the NDP start being part of the solution, work with Ontarians and help Ontario families have a better future? That's what we're doing on this side of the House. We're two years into a five-year plan. We'll continue doing that work.

There's a lot more work to do, but we're proud of the steps that we take on this side of the House every single day. They're action steps; they're much louder than those words.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Energy. Ontario's energy system presents a number of challenges, many of them due to the absolute shambles the system was found in seven years ago. A well-thought-out overhaul of the way electricity serves Ontarians is no small undertaking. It takes careful planning. Oakville and Ontario families want clean air, they want to stop burning coal, they want an economy that supports jobs and renewable energy, and they want to be sure the lights come on.

You presented Ontario's updated long-term energy plan. It touches on a number of critical issues, but my question to the minister is, can Ontarians be assured that this plan fully addresses the issues of coal, jobs and reliability that I've just mentioned?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. I'm pleased to be able to answer "yes" on all three of the items that the member has raised.

Our updated long-term energy plan fully addresses the concern of shutting down coal by 2014. In fact, I can tell the member that we'll be shutting down two additional units before the end of 2011. That's three years ahead of schedule. Further to that, just to give you an idea as to the impact of doing that, shutting down Ontario's dirty coal-fired plants is like taking seven million cars off of Ontario roads.

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Tories are interjecting. The Tories don't support us doing it. The Tories don't respect the fact that taking seven million cars off the roads of Ontario—that's almost all the cars in Ontario—would improve the quality of our air.

I haven't run into an Ontario family yet—an Ontario mother, father or grandparent—who doesn't want a cleaner, brighter, more healthy future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member from Renfrew that we need to hear these questions, and the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That's the kind of certainty that we need in this province. Representing Oakville and the southwest GTA, I can tell you that the last thing that my constituents need is more coal pollution in the air that we breathe.

It astounds me, though, that planning for the future and consulting with Ontario's industry, environmentalists, First Nations communities, organized labour and others is a relatively new process in Ontario.

I mentioned certainty of direction through planning at the beginning of my question. So, to the minister once again, will Ontarians be able to count on this certainty through open and thoughtful energy planning and consultation as we move forward?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very proud to be part of the only party in this province that's being absolutely straight up with Ontarians when it comes to planning for our shared energy future.

What Ontarians need to hear from the Leader of the Opposition is, what is his plan? What is his plan for a strong, modern, reliable, clean energy system? I can understand why he doesn't want to talk about his record on energy. Clearly, he left this province in an absolute shambles when he was sitting in cabinet—not enough power to meet demand and the use of coal going up by 127%.

The Tories have absolutely nothing to offer Ontarians except a trip back to those dark and dirty days when our energy system had to rely on cheaper—yes—but dirty, unreliable coal.

Ontarians need to know where the Leader of the Opposition stands. Ontarians deserve to know. Right now, we know where he stands. He will kill the thousands of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health. York Central Hospital has had a chronic deficit problem, running a \$4-million deficit last year and an \$11-million deficit this year. Despite the mismanagement, \$50,000 was diverted from front-line health care to pay the former CEO a bonus, and another \$93,000 was

diverted from front-line health care for a raise and bonus for her chief of staff. The bonuses were handed out by none other than Tony Genco, the former treasurer and chair of the hospital and current federal Liberal candidate for Vaughan, and they were approved by you.

How can you justify diverting almost \$150,000 from front-line 905 health services to the people mismanaging York Central Hospital—those people being you and Tony Genco?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very pleased to say that I was actually at York Central Hospital just yesterday. I was there with four of my colleagues and we were celebrating the tremendous work that is happening at York Central Hospital. I had the honour of meeting with the new CEO; the acting chair; members of the board; Dr. Grossman, the chief of the medical staff—a number of people—and they walked me through the changes that they are making at that hospital.

I can tell you that I was enormously impressed with their focus on quality and fiscal responsibility. I think everyone involved with York Central Hospital—and that would include the board chair, Tony Genco—should be very, very proud of the work that they have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The former CEO, Minister, who received the \$50,000 bonus, was undoubtedly grateful to you and Tony Genco for overlooking her mismanagement of the hospital budget. In fact, disclosure reports revealed that she donated \$1,500 to the McGuinty Liberals.

The cozy relationship doesn't end there. Yesterday, as you point out, you swooped into York Central and announced \$12 million, clearing the hospital's deficit and Tony Genco's spotty management record just in time for a federal vote. Meanwhile, McGuinty Liberals, including the member for Vaughan, are packing the campaign office of Tony Genco, York Central Hospital's former chair, in the lead-up to the by-election.

You spent \$15 million in Toronto Centre saving a hospital the day before polls opened there. What makes you think you can buy Liberal federal seats?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the honourable member to withdraw the last comment that he made in that question.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The party opposite might be focused on the federal by-election; on our side, we're focused on improving health care. Let me tell you, I don't think it's very becoming of a member who represents a riding, who represents constituents who are benefiting from the extraordinary expansion at York Central Hospital. He owes it to the people of his community to at least get his facts straight.

1120

Yesterday's announcement: I was very pleased to be at York Central Hospital and met with the CEO, Altaf Stationwala, who is an extraordinary individual. What I announced yesterday is that we're very pleased to pro-

vide PCOP funding, post-construction operating funding, so that they can put that great new space to work for the benefit of the people of that region, including the constituents of that member.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On November 15, Nova Scotia introduced new bicycle safety legislation, the one-metre rule, which requires drivers to leave one metre of open space between the vehicle and cyclists when passing. The Nova Scotia government has taken steps to make roads safer for cyclists and motorists. Is the Ontario government also going to bring in the one-metre rule? If so, when?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite because I know that underlying her question—in fact, explicit in her question—is a concern for making roads safer for cyclists and people driving cars.

I know she knows that currently the official drivers' handbook advises motorists to allow at least one metre when they're passing a cyclist, and the Highway Traffic Act requires vehicles meeting a person travelling on a bicycle to allow sufficient room on the roadway to pass.

But I also know she's asking whether we're going to go further. I want her to know we are reviewing the cycling policy. We're doing a number of other things, including, this last summer and fall, paving a metre of shoulder along Highway 6, so that, for cyclists and drivers, that road would be safer. I'll follow up in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The one-metre rule is in place in jurisdictions across the United States and in France, Germany and Spain. The city of Toronto bicycle and motor vehicle collision study found it was the number one cause of cyclist fatalities, and "motorists overtaking" was the number two leading cause of car-bike collisions. Why is this government not acting on road safety for all people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are actually acting on road safety in a number of ways. I was just saying that we have worked on paving the shoulders on Highway 6, 23 kilometres on Manitoulin Island, 68 kilometres along the Bruce Peninsula. What we're doing is, we're working with the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Metrolinx to make sure that we have the criteria in place to make decisions about further paving of shoulders.

But, as I said earlier, we are reviewing our cycling policy. We've been working with the Share the Road folks. We're looking at other jurisdictions like BC and Quebec. We're looking at what we can do to facilitate the safe use of roads by cyclists and vehicles.

I think the member opposite is not asking a question that is really in opposition to what we're doing. We're working to increase safety on our roads for everyone.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. There are several important infrastructure

stimulus projects under way in my riding of London–Fanshawe. Some of those projects are \$400,000, \$500,000, \$1 million to widen streets, build bridges, build community centres or deal with some issues in our riding of London–Fanshawe.

As you know, those stimulus projects should meet the deadline of March 2011, but some people came to my office and raised concerns about those projects. As you know, some of them are not able to meet the deadline, so they're wondering, what are we going to do with those people who are not able to meet the deadline?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. Ninety-eight percent of infrastructure stimulus projects are on track for completion before the deadline. Sometimes there are unavoidable delays, and I've taken the issue up with the federal government, asking them to give Ontario communities the flexibility they need. In August, the Premier said, "We can't walk away from projects that are four walls waiting for a roof." No, we can't. We can't walk away from 166 projects that may not be complete by March 31, or the 9,100 jobs they represent.

I call on the federal government to extend the stimulus deadline for these projects by one more construction season, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition to do the same: to stand up for Ontarians, including the YMCA in his own riding, who need more time; to stand up and ask the federal government to be reasonable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the minister for showing flexibility, and I hope the federal government will listen to his request and approach. As you know, and as many people in this province know, we invested more than \$28 billion across the province of Ontario to create almost 300,000 jobs.

Beyond the creation of jobs, I think the minister and our government mean to support another initiative and goal. Can the minister explain to the people of Ontario and to us what he means by supporting more than job creation in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member is right. The infrastructure stimulus program isn't just about investing in the economy; it's also about making investments that will improve Ontarians' quality of life.

For example, in about 50 Ontario communities, communities including Tweed, Markham and Larder Lake, the legacy of the stimulus program will be a new or better library. In about 450 neighbourhoods, including Mountain Gardens in Burlington, Riverdale in Toronto's east end and Hintonburg in Ottawa, the legacy will be a park to help Ontarians maintain a healthy lifestyle.

We're also building or improving 11 airports, more than 700 road segments and 40 fire halls. The list goes on and on, and the point is clear: Across this province, our stimulus investments are building the kind of Ontario we all want to live in.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. Justice is being overshadowed by injustice in

Ontario. Justice Nola Garton may declare a second mistrial in the case of Erika Mendieta, who allegedly beat her two-year-old daughter Emmily to death seven years ago. Why? Paul Alexander, assistant crown prosecutor during the first trial, was making faces at the jury and Ms. Mendieta during her testimony. Today, Alexander is still working while the chief prosecutor investigates his bizarre behaviour.

Today, Emmily would be 10 years old. Justice for Emmily's horrific death has been delayed again. This is all happening under your watch, and the public is demanding answers. When will you hold Alexander to account?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Of course, our sympathies and our first thoughts are with the family, with those directly affected. We're doing everything we can to get this prosecution proceeding as quickly as possible. I have to tell you that in 30 years with the criminal justice system, I've never heard of a case quite like this. The chief prosecutor is investigating this matter and will take the appropriate action.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, a judge in Ontario threw this person out of court, and you're waiting for a bureaucrat to make a decision. A disturbing trend is unfolding in Ontario justice.

Last week, charges were withdrawn against Tzvi Erez, who allegedly defrauded Willy Tencer of \$1.2 million. Why? A lack of resources has created competition for limited trial time and this case was not deemed serious enough.

Under your leadership, crown counsel are visiting courtrooms to make faces at juries, causing mistrials, and courts have such a serious lack of resources that charges are being withdrawn. You said you don't walk away from criminal cases, but in this case, are the facts not proving otherwise?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I've never heard of a case quite like this in 30 years, and I've heard of a lot of cases—from this individual or anybody else, I've never heard of a case quite like this.

The chief prosecutor is the one who is directly responsible. He is doing what we all know characterizes every element of our justice system: He's making sure that he has the facts before acting. No matter how egregious, or not, a situation looks, we all want to have the facts before acting. The appropriate action will be taken.

1130

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Does the minister believe that private health care records of London hospital patients should be in the hands of an American corporation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do understand that there are some changes under way at London Health Sciences Centre and that there have been concerns raised about the security of that health care information. What I can say

absolutely is that anyone doing business in the province of Ontario simply must comply with Ontario privacy legislation. We have some of the toughest privacy legislation here in Ontario, and that legislation will be honoured in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: London Health Sciences' IT department not only supports the health records of patients in this hospital, but also provides support for nine other regional hospitals. By outsourcing to an American company, the front-line staff and hospitals will be forced to call the US when something goes wrong.

This deal threatens patients' privacy and hurts the local economy with yet more job losses in London. In the minister's own hometown, why is she allowing patients' privacy to be sold off to an American firm?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm afraid that the question doesn't really reflect the facts in this particular situation. All of our hospitals across the province are working very, very hard to make changes within their organization to improve patient care. That is exactly what London Health Sciences Centre is doing. It is exactly what they should be doing.

As I said in the initial question, every organization operating in Ontario, no matter where they get that support, must comply with our personal health protection privacy legislation. There is no question that London Health Sciences and St. Joe's will ensure the safety and security of their records.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Education. There is an African proverb which states, "It takes a village to raise a child." I think we can all appreciate the importance of that statement and the message it carries with it. It suggests that all members of society, including governments and businesses, have a role to play in ensuring that the next generation is equipped with the knowledge necessary to become engaged and productive citizens.

Constituents in my riding know that education can take many forms and that our communities play an important role in ensuring our youngest learners get the necessary experience in our schools, our community and the workforce. What can I tell my constituents our government is doing to help our students get the experience they need outside the classroom?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It's an important question, because I, too, have had constituents who have come to me with the same question. We have been working very hard with partners in business. Through Passport to Prosperity, an independent outside group made up largely of employers—they have also understood the benefit of working with school boards to provide students with those hands-on opportunities.

I'm happy to say that this actually marks the first-ever Experiential Learning Week. It's an opportunity for us to recognize some 40,000 private sector employers who are

looking to engage secondary school students, give them experiences so they understand the types of careers they might want to pursue when they graduate from secondary school.

This is an excellent partnership. It's working well for employers and also for students. It's enabling them to be successful and understand what careers might be available to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Like the rest of Canada, Ontario faces two trends that we must take into consideration: First, our workforce is rapidly aging, and there is an ever-increasing need for workers with higher levels of education, skills and experience. Parents in my riding want to know that their children are being prepared with the skills they need.

Statistics Canada estimates that in six years, workers about to retire will outnumber those workers entering the workforce around the same time. According to the Canadian Council on Learning, 70% of Canadian workers will require some form of post-secondary education. Our students are going to need to possess a higher level of skills than previous generations if our economy is to grow and remain globally competitive.

Minister, is this government doing enough to make sure our students will be competitive in tomorrow's economy?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We are working definitely to support students. We very much appreciate the partnership of the private sector. Some levels of government as well have also participated to support students with work opportunities while they're in school.

We have implemented a very unique, successful program in our secondary schools. It's called the specialist high skills majors program. I visited many of these. I actually went to a school not so very long ago where students were working in the construction course, where they were understanding how they should plumb, how they should wire or how they should do drywall or tiling. These were skills which they were getting hands-on experience with, and they had professionals coming in to the workplace to support them.

We have specialist high skills majors in agriculture, hospitality, tourism, environment, health and wellness, so our students are getting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: To the Minister of Agriculture: In July you announced the continuation of the grain and oilseeds business risk management program, stating that prices had dropped more than 25%. However, the chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario recently stated that the crop has been excellent and that prices keep going up every day.

Grain and oilseeds farmers have benefited, but not everyone else. Livestock farmers continue to face low prices and high input costs. Hog and cattle prices have

dropped well below the 25% that grain and oilseeds did, but they received no support.

Minister, will you commit to using some of the money allocated for grain and oilseeds to create a cost-of-production risk management program for livestock farmers who are suffering today?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to answer the question. I can say that we have worked very hard with our farmers and with our farm organizations. We recognize that the current suite of programs is not providing the predictability, the bankability and the stability that are needed in order to make our farms successful. So we have taken that message to the federal government, and for the first time, there is recognition from our federal government that the suite of programs is not working. Multiple negative-margin years have not provided the stability, and the programs that are in place, with all three levels at the table—that's our federal government, our provincial government and our farmers—this is the suite of programs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Madam Minister, I'm disappointed that you're back to being a lobbyist instead of a minister.

Recently, Alberta announced an extension to its cattle price insurance program. Soon, all Alberta beef farmers will have a cost-of-production business risk management program. Once again, the Alberta government is taking a strong leadership role to help their farmers.

Ontario producers compete against these farmers, and they are at a disadvantage when they are denied similar programs—not federal; provincial. Alberta's agriculture minister called the program an "Alberta solution." Minister, when are Ontario's livestock farmers going to receive a made-in-Ontario solution from the Ontario government that's supposed to be representing their interests?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I simply don't understand why the members from across the way continue to apologize for our federal government. Our programs have always been all three levels working together, because our farmers know that's what meets their needs. I simply would ask the members that as we work with our organizations, they'll be looking for their support, and they'll be looking for their support at the federal level as well.

We have brought forward a grain and oilseeds risk management program. We then extended it for a year, but they voted against that. So I say to them: We are committed to working with our farmers to bring forward a suite of programs that will address their concerns, assure and give them bankability, predictability and stability. That is what our farmers require. They require programs that meet their needs for now and into the future. We will not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last Friday night, my colleague MPP Paul

Miller and I were in Cornwall. We went out for dinner, and we went to the Best Western hotel. As I always do now, I asked the server about the hotel's tip-out policy. I was dismayed to learn that that hotel takes 2.5% of the gross bill and it steals the wages of the servers, whether or not an actual tip is given. On top of that, the management charged their workers for breakage and for Visa fees as well.

Does this minister think it's fair employment practice to charge people in Cornwall and across Ontario for the privilege of working?

1140

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, let me reiterate that we understand how hard waiters, waitresses and all those who work in the hospitality sector work. They provide services to all of us, as the member experienced when he went out to a restaurant in Cornwall.

I have said, and I repeat, that we have many protections here in the province of Ontario when it comes to employment standards. To anyone who feels that their rights have been violated, I encourage them to contact the Ministry of Labour.

We have gone a long way to helping many, and especially those who work within these service industries, in large part due to how we've increased the minimum wage year over year. We have the highest minimum wage now in the entire country, of all provinces.

We will continue to be on the side of workers and continue to protect workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: In Cornwall, in this hotel, the servers are anxious for this government to act on Bill 114. The workers at the Best Western have articles about the bill posted in the kitchen, including that excellent article by Christina Blizzard. I expect them to put up the copy of the transcript from today on that wall as well.

These workers asked me to ensure that they would finally get the protection they need and demand. I promised I would continue to demand answers from this minister until we finally get one.

Minister, when will this government take the steps necessary to protect our lowest-paid workers and ban the practice of tipping out to owners, rich owners, like the Best Western hotel?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We have thousands of businesses across this province, many of them in the hospitality sector being small businesses, and the member gets up in this House and just smears all of them with the same brush. I think that's very unfortunate.

Having spoken to those business owners as well as to their employees, the hard-working staff, those waiters and waitress, we know that the businesses in Ontario that are successful are those that are caring and respectful of their staff and that are fair when it comes to their wages, when it comes to ensuring that their rights are protected. Again, if anyone feels that their rights have been violated, I encourage them to contact the Ministry of Labour.

When it comes to prosecutions, that member has no record to stand on because from 1989 to 2003, they had

97 prosecutions under the ESA, the Employment Standards Act—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: My point of order relates to standing order 99, which deals with written questions.

Speaker, I'm well aware of the fact that you have no authority to direct the nature of the response, but I do want to register with you my concern and my belief that the way certain questions have been responded to by the Ministry of Transportation specifically, as well as the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and, just today, the Ministry of Energy is, in fact, a genuine grievance that I want to table with you, and I ask you to rule or to at the very least speak to this issue that I believe is a further erosion of the role of private members in this place.

In your comments yesterday with regard to the point of privilege that was raised, you expressed serious concern about what you referred to as "casual diminishment of the legitimate and key role of the opposition and of this House." I believe that the way we are being dealt with—and I, specifically, with regard to the questions that I raised with the Ministry of Transportation—is in fact that; it is, in fact, a contempt of my responsibilities as a member of this Legislature when I seek to get serious and legitimate answers from the Ministry of Transportation.

I want to refer you to O'Brien and Bosc in their reference to guidelines for written questions. On page 520, it specifically states: "Given that the purpose of a written question is to seek and receive a precise, detailed answer, it is incumbent on a member submitting a question for the Notice Paper 'to ensure that it is formulated carefully enough to elicit the precise information sought.'" I think that that reference and the references in the standing orders presume that a member, first of all, will be specific in terms of the wording of the question so that we can expect specific information back from the ministry.

I want to provide you with my questions and the responses because I would like to know from you as to whether the type of response that I have received as a member is at all respectful, first of all, of me as a member of the Legislature, and if it's appropriate that these are the kinds of responses that I and any other member would receive.

My first question to the ministry was as follows: "Would the Minister of Transportation provide details as to the number of medical professionals and their professional qualifications, who have the responsibility for reviewing files and rendering decisions for driver's licence suspensions and reinstatements and specify whether they are full-time, part-time or contract employees?"

I had a very specific reason for asking that precise question. Here is the minister's response: "Under the Highway Traffic Act, both physicians and optometrists are required to report to the registrar of motor vehicles

any patient age 16 or over who may be suffering from a medical/visual condition that may impair driving ability. Ontario is the first Canadian jurisdiction to introduce mandatory reporting.” That response has absolutely nothing to do with any of the specifics that I put to the ministry in my question.

My second question was as follows: “Would the Minister of Transportation provide details as to the number of staff employed by the ministry who have responsibility for processing driver’s licence suspensions and reinstatements?” A very specific question.

Here is the response: “When a report is received by the ministry, it is screened and prioritized according to risk to road safety. When a decision is made to suspend the driving privilege, the ministry sends the individual a formal notice of suspension by regular mail and a letter which will advise what type of medical information is required to have the case considered for reinstatement.” Not even a semblance of relationship to the question that I asked.

My next question, and please bear with me because there’s an important point that I am making here. The question is this: “Would the Minister of Transportation provide a detailed summary of the number of driver’s licences that are under suspension for medical impairments including impaired vision and provide the ages of the suspended drivers?”

1150

Here is the response: “The driving privilege will be considered for reinstatement when the appropriate medical information is received and reviewed. If the report indicates that the medical standards are met, and there are no other outstanding suspensions on the driving record, the ministry sends the individual a letter advising the outcome of the review and, where applicable, a notice of reinstatement is mailed.”

I can go on. I have a similar response from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I just received a letter, a response, from the Ministry of Energy. My question was very specific, and the best the ministry could do is refer me to a website. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services referred me to the freedom-of-information process, so that I, as a member of this Legislature, am forced to go through freedom of information to get specific information that is available to the ministry, who have staff to provide that kind of information.

Speaker, I am at a loss. I say to you that the treatment that I have received from these ministries as a member of this Legislature is an insult to me as a member of this House. It is, in my opinion, not only disrespectful, but it directly erodes my ability to carry out my responsibilities as a member of this House.

I ask you, Speaker, to use your authority to, at the very least—if you cannot find that in fact this is a prima facie case of privilege, which I believe it really is—agree that I have a legitimate and genuine grievance as to how I am being treated and I know other members are being treated as members of this Legislature.

I leave this with you, Speaker, and I ask for your support, not only on my behalf but on behalf of all mem-

bers of this House, particularly members of the opposition, as we seek to do our job in this place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I’m happy to report to the House that all order paper questions that are due have been answered. In this case, as the member for Newmarket–Aurora has indicated, he is not pleased with the answers.

In fact, the rules that we have before us that rule this Legislature do not provide for a provision for satisfaction with answers to written questions. Under 99(d):

“The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sessional days....”

“The answers to such written questions shall be given to the member who asked the question and to the Clerk of the House....”

Those are the provisions that are in the standing orders.

This question, a question of privilege, has been raised in this House on a number of occasions. I would just refer the members to the member for Dufferin–Caledon’s question on May 18, 2010, where she raised a point of order regarding order paper questions. You, Mr. Speaker, responded:

“I’d just like to say to the member that numerous Speakers have ruled that during oral question period ministers may answer a question any way they see fit. It’s also the case that it is not the Speaker’s responsibility to ensure that the answer to a written question satisfies that question.

“This is further supported by O’Brien and Bosc on page 522....”

I would just quote for you from page 522 in O’Brien and Bosc’s House of Commons Practice and Procedure:

“There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions. Nonetheless, on several occasions, members have raised questions of privilege in the House regarding the accuracy of information contained in responses to written questions; in none of these cases was the matter found to be a prima facie breach of privilege. The Speaker has ruled that it is not the role of the Chair to determine whether or not the contents of documents tabled in the House are accurate nor to ‘assess the likelihood of an hon. member knowing whether the facts contained in a document are correct.’”

In this case, the member for Newmarket–Aurora has indicated not that he is questioning the validity of the answers; it’s just that he doesn’t like the answers. And that, in fact, is even more far removed from the rules that we have in place and which you have already ruled upon in your decision of May 18, 2010. So I would argue that there is, in fact, in this case, no point of order nor a point of privilege.

Mr. Peter Kormos: If I may speak briefly in support of the matter raised. The government House leader cites the standing order, 99(d), quite accurately: “The minister shall answer such written questions....” It’s not discretionary. It doesn’t say “may” answer; it says “shall” answer. And the word is “answer.” The clear inference to

be drawn is that the answer has to be responsive to the question.

What the member has told this House, by virtue of reading the questions that he put and the responses that were given, is that these are clearly not answers. One can agree with the proposition that the Speaker has no discretion or jurisdiction to rule on whether or not a member is happy with the answer, but surely there has to be an answer. The responses that were read by the member are not answers.

I would also refer all of us to standing order 1, and in particular to 1(b): “The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members ... (iii) to hold the government accountable for its policies.”

Clearly, the provision providing for written questions and the fact that it provides for a significant period of time in which the ministry can prepare the answer is so that there can be more detailed answers. I think it’s clear that what the member got was boilerplate that wasn’t even close—never mind the bull’s eye; it didn’t even hit the target. So I appreciate the government House leader’s comments, but I think she makes the member’s point for him.

“The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sessional days”: Any person reading or hearing the responses—nobody is suggesting that the ministry didn’t respond, but nobody reading or hearing the responses would ever, by any stretch of the imagination, identify them as answers. The ministry could respond, “Dogs have fur and chickens have feathers,” and the government House leader would have us believe that that somehow is an answer. Clearly, it’s not. The ministry’s response could be that the winning lotto numbers last night were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. That’s a response, but it’s clearly not an answer.

The obligation to answer is mandatory. I suggest to you, sir, that the word “answer” has to be given its everyday meaning, as well as, for that matter, its dictionary meaning, and an answer has to be to the question. It’s not a response; it’s an answer.

I suggest also that the Speaker should consider this in the context of standing order 1, effectively the preamble to our standing orders and a preamble—I know that there are mixed views on this—that I submit has to guide all of us in the interpretation of the standing orders.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: While I’m sure we’ve enjoyed yet another speech by the member from Welland on a point of order, I don’t think he contributed anything to this debate. In fact, the answer was given to the questions. The member received written answers in a timely manner. I listened to his excerpts and I think the answer, specifically to the third part, was in response to his question. We heard excerpts from his requests and excerpts from answers. The answers were given, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I would just indicate—as you have indicated to the House in the past, particularly in May 2010, just this year—that it is not within your purview to rule on whether or not a member is content with the response,

but that they have in fact received a response to their questions in this case.

Mr. Frank Klees: Not to prolong this discussion, but I do want to thank my colleague from Welland, who I believe was very helpful in clarifying. To the House leader I would simply add this to the discussion: I think, out of respect for members of this House, who have legitimate, detailed questions for the ministers, for the government to insist that what I was presented with was in fact a legitimate answer simply underscores the lack of respect for members in this House.

Yes, I got a response, but as my colleague from Welland so clearly said, there is a difference between a response and an answer. None of the responses that I received were an answer to my specific question. I raise this on that basis and, further, in terms—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: If the House leader would allow me to speak rather than interjecting, which shows a further disrespect not only for me but for what is going on, I would appreciate it.

We’re speaking to the respect that individual members in this House should have from ministers of the crown and from everyone here. I’m simply saying that I’m desperately trying to do my job as a member of the Legislature, and the kind of responses that I’m getting from ministries here, and now from the House leader of the government, shows absolute disrespect.

Speaker, I ask you to at least do your part to support the work that we have to do here as members of this Legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for raising the point of order, the honourable member from Welland, and the government House leader as well.

I want to take an opportunity to contemplate my thoughts on the points that have been raised, notwithstanding the fact that the Speaker has ruled in the past, and previous Speakers have ruled. I do want to provide the honourable member with a good answer, and I’m going to reserve my decision at this time.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It’s a pleasure for me to be able to introduce one of my very closest friends and one of the people who’s actually responsible for sending me to this place, Maureen Tourangeau. She’s up there right now with MPP Yasir Naqvi.

Before I came to this place, I did work with the Ottawa cancer society in communications, and Maria Redpath, whom I used to work with, is also here. They’re joined today by the new president. It’s really great to have them here. I’m sure Mr. Yasir Naqvi, as well as the

other Ottawa members, regardless of political stripe, is happy that they're here today.

In addition, I do have another introduction: Today Ottawa realtors are here, and I know that I join my colleagues from all political parties and certainly from the city of Ottawa to welcome them. Today we have Rick Snell, Linda McCallum, Pat Verge, Alison Larabie-Chase, Subhir Uppal, Tim Lee, Peter Sardelis and Matthew Thornton in the chamber to join me as I introduce a bill targeting grow ops that will help Ontario realtors and homeowners.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I can say on behalf of all members that we thank you for your assistance in sending the member from Nepean–Carleton to Queen's Park.

As the members know, today there's going to be a tribute held for former member John Yaremko. There are a number of guests and family members who are joining us here today. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. On behalf of all members, I would like to welcome Rosalie Yaremko, Anne Holota, Lucy Migus, Jeanette Cooke, Héléne Yaremko-Jarvis, Gary Jarvis, Yvan Baker, Oksana Rewa, Rosalia Sametz, Gloria Chewchuk, Katherine Chewchuk, Katherine Sametz, Walter Chewchuk, His Eminence Yuriy Kalistchuk, the Most Reverend Stephen Chmilar, the Right Reverend Bohdan Sencio, Marc Shwec, Mary Szkambara, Borys Wrzesnewskyj, Walentina Rodak, Olya Sheweli, Taras Pidzamecky, Walentina Kuryliw, Peter Kardasz, James Temerty, Paul Strathdee, Victor Krisel, Eugene Yakovitch, Lidia Smilka, Yuriy Kus, Lesia Panko, Les Salnick, Myroslava Oleksiuk, George Serhijczuk and Reverend Roman Pankiw. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Of course we'd like to welcome the Honourable Borys Wrzesnewskyj, the member from Etobicoke from the federal House, as well today, too. Welcome.

Thanks for the test on my pronunciation of Ukrainian names from a good Ukrainian Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION CENTRE

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize an agency that has been doing great work in Brockville for the past 25 years to connect people to the workforce. On Friday, November 12, I had the privilege of attending the silver anniversary of the Employment and Education Centre, which, under the leadership of Executive Director Sherri Simzer now boasts a staff of 26 and helps 3,000 people a year. That's remarkable growth for the agency Simzer started from scratch. She worked alone for much of that first year in 1985, helped 380 people and hasn't stopped since.

The EEC's constant evolution from its initial focus on helping young people under 24 get the training and confidence they needed to find meaningful work is a

testament to Simzer's vision. She saw when the employment situation in the Brockville area was changing and adapted her agency to ensure it was prepared. Today people of all ages come through the doors and are able to get help, whether it's a 50-year-old laid-off worker facing an uncertain future or an underemployed person desperate for a job that unlocks their full potential.

On behalf of the thousands of workers in my community living brighter lives thanks to these programs and as a founding board member, I offer my sincere congratulations to Sherri and her team.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Bill Mauro: In 2003, all three leaders of all three political parties committed to closing coal-fired generation in Ontario. Of the five coal plants in the province, two are in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

In August of this year, I was very pleased to announce that the Atikokan coal plant will remain a viable asset and be converted to biomass energy production. Just yesterday, I was very happy to announce that the Thunder Bay generating station will also remain open and be converted to natural gas.

The conversion of Atikokan and Thunder Bay generating stations will mean hundreds of construction jobs over the next two to three years. It will save the jobs of current plant employees and save the taxes paid by those plants to their host municipalities. In Atikokan's case, the plant represents roughly 40% of their total municipal tax revenue. Also, with regard to the Atikokan plant, the potential exists for the emergence of a new wood products industry to fuel the plant—an industry that could create even further employment.

As I mentioned, all parties committed to closing coal but not all parties committed to converting the plants in my riding. They might have simply closed the plants. That would have meant no resulting construction work for our building trades unions, the current plant employees could have lost their jobs, and the municipal tax revenue from the Thunder Bay and Atikokan plants would simply have disappeared.

The conversion of these plants is helping to keep and create jobs in the northwest. I want to thank the OPG management and the new plant manager, Chris Fralick, Gary Shchepanik of the Power Workers' Union, and all the building trade union reps that were with me yesterday at the announcement. It was a very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

WALTER BAKER

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am thrilled to be delivering this tribute to Walter Baker while my friend Maureen Tourangeau is here; she was a big supporter of his. My colleague Norm Sterling worked with him when they were both members for what at the time would have been Carleton–Grenville, and my colleague behind me from Leeds–Grenville would have also remembered the great service of Walter Baker, who was the former government

House leader and minister of revenue for Joe Clark's government.

He also served our community, which would later become Nepean–Carleton, so well that people still tear up when they think of him and the great community man that he was. In fact, our mutual friend, Cathy Boswell, will often tear up when she talks about the great contributions of this man.

A friend of mine, Wendy Fuller, who is about the same age as me, has a picture of Walter Baker and a note he sent to her framed in her house to show her children what a great man this was. My own assistant, Helen Byers, who, by the way, is 70 years old, would often say, "There was a great man in Walter Baker."

Why am I bringing him to the chamber today? Well, 27 years ago he passed from cancer; three years before that, one of the greatest institutions in Barrhaven, which I represent, the Walter Baker centre, was built and named in honour of this great, great Canadian.

I felt it was fitting today, as we've got representatives from the Ottawa cancer society here, as well as my colleagues, who I know Walter Baker touched, to say thank you to a man who I never met, but I was fortunate to become, later in life, very good friends with his own daughter, Nancy Baker.

I think everyone in this place aspires to the type of legend that Walter Baker was. For those of you at home and in this chamber today, I urge you to read up on Walter Baker or even former members in your community, whether it is federal or provincial, to see the type of legacy that they leave on these places.

ORNGE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: During constituency week, on November 8, 2010, I had the opportunity to tour the main operating facility of Ornge, located in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. Ornge is a state-of-the-art facility with cutting-edge technologies used to monitor and track patient transports across the province of Ontario.

In July 2005, Ontario announced the establishment of a new organization to coordinate all the aspects of Ontario's air ambulance systems. After five years, Ornge is now a recognized leader in transport medicine. It is one of the largest and most sophisticated air ambulance programs in the world. Last year, Ornge provided sophisticated medical support to over 20,000 Ontarians across the province.

I'm proud to acknowledge the work the staff of Ornge do every day, and I'm very excited to have learned about this organization.

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FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. John O'Toole: Today, two of Ontario's top high school football teams are set to square off at the Metro Bowl. For high school football, the Metro Bowl is the game to end all games—the Super Bowl, the Grey Cup.

Tonight, at the Rogers Centre, the Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School Titans from Courtice in my riding face off against the King City Secondary School Lions for the Toronto region championship. The game promises to be high-scoring and fast-paced, with a lot of talent.

In their semi-final matches, the Titans downed the Upper Canada College Blues 25-16 with a powerful performance from star player Earl Anderson, who had over 200 yards of offence in that game, and I hope he has more tonight.

The Lions likewise took down the Richview Saints 55-23 in their semi-final match.

I want to congratulate head coach Fred Zinkie and coach Rob Geary, a friend of my daughter who's a teacher as well, for all their hard work in guiding our team this far. Your leadership has been a strong force behind the success of the Titans team.

To the Titans, I say: Play hard, enjoy the challenge and know that your community, your school, Holy Trinity, Courtice, Clarington and Durham region are all behind you. Best wishes and congratulations. Well done.

LOIS HARTE-MAXWELL

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about a woman from my community whom I've known for many years. Ms. Lois Harte-Maxwell recently attended a ribbon-cutting at Peterborough city hall. This ribbon-cutting ceremony was a dedication of a new accessibility ramp located at the front entrance of city hall. This public recognition of her commitment to assist those faced with the daily challenges of living with a disability is well deserved. She's been advocating for the rights of the disabled for over 40 years and is a founding member of the Peterborough Council for Persons with Disabilities.

Ms. Harte-Maxwell's hard work in this area has received provincial recognition. She is a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for outstanding contributions to her community. While on city council, she was appointed to the Peterborough Senior Citizens Council, Fairhaven Home for Seniors, the Peterborough Social Planning Council, the Peterborough Civic Hospital board of governors and the mayor's committee on affordable housing, to name a few.

Ms. Lois Harte-Maxwell was an excellent city councillor. I served with her on city council from 1985 to 1993. I had the great honour of sitting beside her for many years during her time on council. She fell victim to polio at a young age but in spite of her disability has achieved more than most of us will ever achieve in our lifetimes. She truly sets an example for all of us to follow.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Ontario's long-term energy plan is multi-faceted. It addresses the use of several energy sources, such as solar, nuclear and wind. A major component of this plan is the conservation of Ontario's energy.

Through time-of-use pricing, the McGuinty government will be making energy more affordable for Ontario families by expanding the times in which power is sold at its cheapest rate. Power will now be cheapest for Ontarians to use from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., which is an expansion of two hours, as it was previously 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

While the opposition is now against time-of-use, they used to champion this very same policy approach. Former Energy Minister John Baird said in this House, and I quote, "If we could get everyone in the province to turn their dishwasher on in off-peak hours and do their washing in off-peak hours, that would have a huge consequence"—and we agree.

Making power affordable for Ontario families is a vital component in our plan to create a clean and reliable system of power, and we are committed to time-of-use pricing.

The adjustment of peak hours announced in the long-term energy plan will help make life easier for Ontario families by cutting costs and providing 10 additional hours per week under the lowest time-of-use rate.

In the long run, lower peak demand will mean the province needs to build less new generation to serve that peak, lowering costs for all Ontarians.

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to say a big thank you to the Canadian Cancer Society for their fight against cancer. Today, the society hosted a very successful breakfast right here at Queen's Park. They even had people from Nickel Belt and all over the northeast in attendance.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Even Nickel Belt?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Even Nickel Belt. I don't get very many visitors.

Through much hard work and dedication, the Canadian Cancer Society has become a smart, professional, effective advocacy organization, and they do their work with empathy—not an easy task, but certainly one of the reasons why I hold them in such great esteem.

Every three minutes, a Canadian is diagnosed with cancer. This is clearly unacceptable. We can and we must do better.

Today the cancer society wanted action on indoor tanning. I could not agree more. I'm so proud of the five medical officers of health in the north for their support and for the letters they have written. I'm proud of the thousands of youth throughout the north who have signed postcards asking for just that, and the thousands more who have signed petitions, and all the youth groups of the cancer society who are working diligently together to ask the government to ban the use of artificial tanning equipment by youths under the age of 18.

The refusal of our health promotion minister to move forward on banning indoor tanning leaves me scratching my head in disbelief.

To the 65,000 volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society, thank you for your fight.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Nuclear power has been a reliable, safe supplier of affordable baseload generation for Ontario families for over 40 years. The Pickering nuclear generating station has been an integral part of that fleet.

Nuclear has been an important component of Ontario's energy mix, accounting for about 50% of the electricity generated in Ontario during recent years. In addition to providing consistent supply at stable prices, nuclear energy does not produce any primary air pollution or release greenhouse gases.

That's why the McGuinty government, through our long-term energy plan, is committed to keeping nuclear energy as the main component of our supply mix. In fact, Ontario will partner with industry leaders to renew and refurbish existing nuclear facilities as well as to invest in new nuclear generation.

Over the first 10 to 15 years of our plan, 10,000 megawatts of our existing nuclear capacity will be refurbished. These investments will ensure that our nuclear facilities can continue to provide affordable, reliable electricity for years to come.

Unlike the opposition, we have a plan for Ontario's energy system. During their years in government, they mismanaged the system and doubled our reliance on coal. They allowed supply to diminish by 6% while at the same time demand increased by 8%, making Ontario a net importer of energy.

We in the McGuinty government are committed to keeping the lights on for Ontario families and seniors and not subjecting them to the blackouts that were all too potentially common under the Tories.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's always better, if members have comments that they wish to make to one another across the aisle, that they take them outside the chamber.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Dunlop from the Standing Committee on Estimates reported the following resolutions:

Resolved, that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011:

Ministry of Government—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Dispense. Agreed? Agreed.

Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the Ontario disability support program from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This is an extremely important report from the public accounts committee.

Section 3.09 of the 2009 Auditor General's report, which was presented in December of that year, pointed out some significant problems with the ODSP program. This is not a small program. This is a program spending \$3 billion of the taxpayers' money.

The Auditor General pointed out some significant problems with regard to the appeal process if a person is turned down when they apply for an ODSP pension. The auditor found that in one case, one arbitrator rejected every case, and in another case—one arbitrator accepted every case, and one rejected every case.

Eventually, everyone who applies and reapplies gets ODSP, whether or not they are a worthy applicant. There are significant problems with this program.

1520

The committee has made a number of recommendations. There's over \$663 million owing from people who have received payments who should not have received payments. Those are identified payments; perhaps it's much higher than that. I would ask that the minister take the recommendations with regard to the ODSP program very, very seriously. We could perhaps increase the benefits of legitimate ODSP recipients if we dealt with those who should not be receiving payments.

This program is in bad need of a significant look-at. The Auditor General made some significant comments and criticisms with regard to how it's being run. The administration of this program has to be cleaned up.

With that, I would adjourn the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CLANDESTINE DRUG OPERATION
PREVENTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR
LA PRÉVENTION DES OPÉRATIONS
DE STUPÉFIANTS CLANDESTINES

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts to prevent clandestine drug operations / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois afin de prévenir les opérations de stupéfiants clandestines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to have here today representatives from the Ontario Real Estate Association, who have been calling for something to happen on grow ops for quite some time.

This bill amends a number of acts with respect to clandestine drug operations, also known as grow ops, which are defined to be illegal operations where any substance listed in the schedules I through IV to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act of Canada can be obtained by any method or process.

It's a long explanatory note, so I'll shorten that for you. At present, under section 15.9 of the Building Code Act, 1992, an inspector can enter upon land at any reasonable time without a warrant for the purpose of the inspection of a building to determine whether it is unsafe. This bill will clarify that a building is unsafe if an inspector determines that it contains a clandestine drug operation.

The bill also amends the Municipal Act, 2001, to broaden the obligation of a local municipality or an upper-tier municipality to conduct an inspection of a building location on land in its jurisdiction when notified by the police force or local municipality, respectively.

Furthermore, the bill also amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to assist a landlord, on giving at least 24 hours notice, to enter a rental unit to determine if it contains a clandestine drug operation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following change be made to the ballot list for private member's public business: Mr. Murdoch and Mr. Clark exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Clark assumes ballot item 57, and Mr. Murdoch assumes ballot item 78; and that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 57.

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

Motion agreed to.

JOHN YAREMKO

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Mr. John Yaremko.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute honour and a privilege to stand and speak about this amazing man and member of this assembly, the first MPP of Ukrainian descent to be elected in the year 1951.

I'm going to start by just going over a bit of the facts of his life as told to us by the *Globe* and the *Star*. John Yaremko, who died at 91, was the man credited with the term "multiculturalism." That in itself is an astounding fact. One would have thought that multiculturalism has been there—been in the air—but he was the one who first used it. It has since spawned a number of doctoral dissertations and has been part of the lexicon of Canadian coinage.

He was born in Welland—I have a friend sitting in front of me here who is the current MPP for Welland. He was born to an immigrant family and became a Hamilton Municipal Boys Council alderman at the age of 14. Image that. He used scholarships and jobs in steel plants and on farms to pay his way through the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall Law School. He was not, as we say, to the manor born. This was a man who worked his way up the hard way.

He was elected, as I said, in 1951 and entered the public service in 1953 as a Queen's Counsel, one of the youngest to that distinguished order as well. He served under Premiers Leslie Frost, John Robarts and Bill Davis, and held a long list of portfolios including transport, citizenship, public welfare, and social and family services. He was Ontario's first Solicitor General.

He also, of course, was very aware of where he came from. He helped install a plaque in the Ontario Legislature commemorating Ukrainian immigrants. Four years later, he travelled to Austria to meet Hungarian refugees before returning to Canada to push for an expedited immigration program. Decades later, this same man became one of the first to push the federal government into recognizing an independent Ukraine.

These are some of the awards he received: He was awarded the Order of St. Andrew; he was awarded the President's Medal in Ukraine; in 2009, he received the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism. He also was given recognition for support of his alma mater; in his memory, the John Yaremko Chair of Ukrainian Studies was established at the University of Toronto. He also received the Queen Elizabeth Coronation Medal and the Confederation of Canada Medal. This was an exemplary individual in terms of his accomplishments; there's no doubt about that.

I'd like to take a few minutes also to recognize, to honour and to celebrate the spirit of this amazing and remarkable individual. I want to welcome his family; we're honoured that you're here. I want to also welcome those friends of mine from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and other Ukrainian organizations and, of course, some of our eminent guests who are sitting in the Speaker's gallery. Thank you for coming. It shows your concern. You're welcome, and thank you for sharing him with us all those years ago for all those years, because he

served for 24 of them, from 1951 right until 1975. We just found out that it was in the riding of Bellwoods. Riding names have changed, of course, but I like to think that part of the old Bellwoods riding was a little piece of Parkdale—High Park, the centre for much of Ukrainian immigration in those early years.

This was a man who came into an Ontario that was very different from the Ontario we know today and into a Canada very different from the Canada we know today. It was a racist province; there's no other way of saying it. Certainly I know, from the stories my family told me about how Italians were welcomed—or not welcomed—in the province. I know what it was like to be a foreigner and to have a foreign last name—that's how they would have termed it in those days—and to be a Roman Catholic in a distinctly anti-Catholic environment where Roman Catholics were not hired for certain jobs, where people with last names that weren't WASP last names were not hired for certain jobs and employers got away with it routinely. They weren't given housing because of their last names and because of their religion. That's the Ontario he walked into. That's the Canada he came to and helped change. He did that. He helped change the very landscape of this province and this Canada by his very presence.

He would have come, of course, from sorrow as well. For somebody who was elected in 1951, one can imagine that part of his family lived through the Holodomor in Ukraine. Part of them lived through the Stalinist genocide famine that lasted and claimed 10 million lives. We know he probably came from a horrific background, or his family did, and yet he achieved all that he achieved through sheer spirit, through sheer will. I like to think that in part in his honour and in his memory, we passed an all-party bill here recognizing November 15 as the day we commemorate the Holodomor as what it was: a genocide, a famine. Frank Klees, who is the member from Newmarket—Aurora, Dave Levac from Brant, and myself were all honoured to co-author that bill. That bill would never have happened were it not for people like John Yaremko.

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So, welcome. I look forward to seeing you after and getting to know you better, those of you who are his family. Certainly everyone here wants to thank you for being part of this amazing, remarkable man's life, for gifting him to our province and to our country. We have never been the same because of men like John Yaremko.

Vichnaya pamiat—always remembered.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise to honour Mr. Yaremko.

For those of us who are elected members of the Legislature, for those of us who have gathered here in the gallery from the Ukrainian Canadian community, and for all Ontarians, today is indeed a very special day, for today we pay tribute to John Yaremko, a great leader, a community member, a benefactor and, most importantly, a gentleman.

As MPPs we dream of making a difference, of building a better Ontario where every person can realize their

potential. Today we remember a person who, from his own humble beginnings, realized his potential and then dedicated his life to helping others realize theirs.

On behalf of the government, I would like to welcome our very special guests in the gallery. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Yaremko's family for being with us, as well as the leaders of Canada's Ukrainian community. Your presence is very appreciated.

John's life was an inspiration, from those humble beginnings to ultimately becoming one of Ontario's most respected public servants. As we heard, he was born in Welland in 1918 to George and Mary Yaremko. They had emigrated from the Ukraine to build a better life. Back then, remember, Ontario did not provide all that free access to good education that we have today. So through hard work in summer months and nights at the farm, he actually succeeded. He won scholarships, he was valedictorian, he attended the University of Toronto, he was a gold medallist, and ultimately he was called to the bar in 1944.

His achievements were impressive. He persevered and gained a level of success that would be the envy of most Canadians today. However, the struggles he and his family endured would become his greatest motivation to serve others, to provide others with those same opportunities for success.

In 1951, he was elected, as you heard, member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Bellwoods, the first Canadian of Ukrainian ancestry to be elected to the Ontario Legislature, and had a distinguished career in 10 portfolios. But what was most important to me was that he was also Minister of Transportation, and I was Minister of Transportation. I remember when I was put into the portfolio, the first thing he said to me was, "About bloody time they got a woman"—that was great—and the second was he then asked me about the conditions of the roads and what I was going to do about some of them. The best part was, I didn't even think he'd care anymore after all those years he'd put so much public service in; he still did. And every time we met, he had some good advice for me and he also asked some pretty pointed questions about what I was or was not planning to do.

He championed human rights. He championed the rights of the disabled, the poor and ethnic minorities, and his contributions were numerous. He sought to bridge the gap between government and new Canadians. He believed that Canada could be a place where people with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds could live together in harmony, a way of life that is now distinctly Canadian. He was one of the earliest champions of multiculturalism. He not only advocated for multiculturalism, he actually made it a reality. He worked to ensure that all ethnocultural groups had access to government—and not just government, but especially to the judiciary. He encouraged all ethnic communities to become involved—because, remember, back in the 1950s and 1960s, governments weren't that open and that transparent and there was not a whole lot of involvement of the constituencies

in government. He encouraged that. He believed government should be not only open, but inclusive.

He also believed that the diverse cultures enriched our society, and through his initiatives, heritage languages started with John and today they are taught in Ontario and in our schools.

He was a passionate person, so even when the issues were not his immediate issues, he got involved. You heard about the Hungarian Revolution. The people revolted, and John got involved; he went back to Ottawa and said, "Not only should Canada do something, Canada must do something," and ultimately 40,000 Hungarians came to Canada.

But he had his critics as well. I think the *Globe and Mail* accused him of "pandering blatantly to the ethnic groups from which he drew much of his support," and that he was "wholly unconcerned about justice." He wrote that off because he knew that to those Hungarian families who settled in Canada, he was a hero, because he had defended their freedom.

You've heard about the numerous medals that he received over his life, but in particular, virtually every ethnic professional association acknowledged his tributes: Italian, Latvian, Ukrainian, Acadian, Polish. He was Indian Chief Bright Sky and Indian Light in a Bottle as well.

He really had a span that went across all of Ontario. He loved his community. You heard about his roots. He was there in 1952 and, 40 years later, he was there at the same plaque speaking passionately about his community. It continued right through to Ukrainian independence. He was so determined that we would be the first country that would recognize Ukraine's independence—he strove for that and he got it. Ultimately, the federal government agreed, and Canada would become the first Western nation to recognize it.

He continued things after political life, and there were so many. He was a philanthropist. He gave; he established chairs. He did so much. But I want to say that, at the end, his most important legacy was his generosity and his public service. To all of us here today and to countless other Ontarians, he inspired everyone he met to public service. There is no plaque out there for this particular accomplishment, but there is a plaque in all of us: It's our love and devotion to not only an outstanding human being, but also to an extraordinarily fine gentleman. He has our eternal gratitude.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I welcome the many friends and family of John Yaremko to the Ontario Parliament here today. I'm honoured and pleased to be invited to pay tribute to a great man on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative caucus.

Not only was John Yaremko a great Ontarian, he was also a legend in the Ukrainian Canadian community. My mother and father were not political people, but conversations in our home often referred to John and his success as an MPP and minister of the crown.

Coincidentally, guidance from my parents resulted in my attending, like John Yaremko, the University of To-

ronto, Osgoode Hall Law School, and later being elected to the Ontario Parliament. I'm just one of the thousands of young people who found inspiration in John's career and his service to our community and democracy.

Today, we remember John Yaremko for his many contributions to his country, as an advocate and supporter of multiculturalism, and as a man dedicated to improving the lives of seniors, the disabled and cultural minorities.

John Yaremko was born in Welland, Ontario, in 1918, the oldest son of Mary and George Yaremko. He entered politics at the age of 14 when he became boy alderman in the city of Hamilton. He served on the social services committee, a position that allowed him to begin to fulfill his personal interest in bettering the lives of his fellow Canadians.

John graduated from high school with more scholarships than he was able to use in his eight years at the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall. Summers were spent working on local farms and at the Stelco steel plant.

In 1945, he married Mary Materyn, a registered nurse from Montreal, who he met at the Ukrainian Orthodox church.

In 1951, John became the first Ontario MPP of Ukrainian descent elected to Queen's Park. He spent 25 years here at the Ontario Legislature. He helped shape our province through his service in no less than seven provincial ministries, and he is remembered as a strong advocate for education, human rights and multiculturalism.

1540

Upon his departure from politics, John continued to support causes close to his heart. He was a founding member of the University of Toronto Chair of Ukrainian Studies Foundation. John supported the establishment of the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary intern program for university students from the Ukraine in the House of Commons and the Ontario Legislature. He was supportive of many community initiatives, including the John Yaremko Centre for Community Living, one of the foremost residential facilities for persons with physical disabilities in North America.

John's niece Hélène Yaremko-Jarvis shared some memories with me, and I quote from her: "Uncle John's successful political career was a beacon of light to all ethnic minorities. During my legal career, I have repeatedly encountered lawyers of different ethnic backgrounds who have said they met Uncle John when he was attending a ribbon-cutting or other ceremony at their cultural centres. He appears to have been kept extremely busy by those various groups, as they saw in his success a possibility of their own success."

In 2009, John was named the first recipient of the Paul Zyzyk Award for Multiculturalism from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The award recognizes individuals who have achieved excellence in promoting multiculturalism so that all citizens can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging in Canada. I could not think of a more deserving recipient of such a high honour.

John's contributions to the community and the recognition he received for his accomplishments are unprecedented. For me, John was much more than a Canadian of Ukrainian descent; he was also a family friend. I recall as a young man my family knocking on doors during John's election campaigns. Each year, without fail, he sent Valentine's Day cards to my mom and sister, and he even took the time to attend my graduation party from Osgoode Hall Law School way back in 1962.

Today, we remember and pay tribute to a great man, friend and relative who left his mark on our community and our country: Mr. John Yaremko.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to thank all the honourable members and thank the family and friends who are here today. As a Ukrainian Canadian standing here and sitting here in the Speaker's chair, it makes me really proud of what John Yaremko did, and, in my own case, of my grandfather. Dealing with that racism in 1937 in Toronto and going from Dymtro Pidwerbeski to Dick Peters—that was racism.

For all of us, it's a great moment. He was a pioneer, and you look at what he did and how it has changed the face of this chamber. This chamber was a much different place in 1951 and it was a pioneer like John Yaremko who made that happen. It's something that we all need to be proud of, no matter what country we come from and what our origin is.

I would like to say to the family and friends, thank you for being here. Copies of the Hansard and a video of today's proceedings will be provided to you. I would also like to invite all of you and all members as well: There is a reception that is going to be held in the caucus room of the official opposition. First, a photograph will be taken on the grand staircase.

On behalf of all members, we thank you, and we want to thank you for sharing John Yaremko with all of us.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

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

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I will give this to page Vithuran. I'm in complete agreement.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

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

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax.”

I affix my signature to that petition.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

“Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

“Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada’s British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario’s economy and prosperity; and

“Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

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

“Enact Bill 12, a private member’s bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale. I want to thank Steelers Restaurant and Focus Elmvale for sending the petition to me.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians,” including the people of Elmvale.

I agree with this petition and I’ve signed it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Dowling and Levack, which are in Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Vithuran to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition provided to me by Dorothy Duncan, a great champion of Ontario’s heritage, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario’s cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

“Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario’s greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

“Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

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

“The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

1550

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm presenting a petition on behalf of the Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water regarding the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine, which reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Joshua, the page from my riding of Durham.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have yet another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

This is from people from the London-Kitchener area.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition entitled "Keep Ontario dollars for Ontario students.

"This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average of \$26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario tax dollars should be kept in Ontario to help Ontario students, not sent overseas;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the McGuinty gov-

ernment to cancel its plan to give foreign students scholarships of \$40,000 a year and reinvest these funds in scholarships for Ontario students."

I agree with the petition and will sign it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Kingston.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Casey to deliver it to the Clerk.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have hundreds more petitions in support of paved shoulders on provincial highways, and they read:

"Petition in Support of Bill 100....

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This time I have similar petitions from the Brampton-Mississauga area. They read:

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

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I have signed that petition and am sending it down with Miguel.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

“Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

“Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

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

“That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario.”

I want to thank the corporation of the town of New Tecumseth town council for sending that petition to me.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas people need teeth to stay healthy; and

“Whereas a lack of universal dental care has resulted in an epidemic of poor dental health, and many people are living and working with no teeth; and

“Whereas there is only very limited support for denture care for those on social assistance and no support at all for the working poor;

“Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly to increase funding to assist people on social assistance and the working poor to access denture care.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Alexandra to bring it to the Clerk.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

“Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communication skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

“Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow

or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

“Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment,” and funding.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Joshua for the second petition of the day.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet another petition, this time from people from the Windsor area, and it reads as follows:

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

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I give this to Sarah.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition from people in the Owen Sound, Thornbury and Meaford area:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

“That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I agree with that petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got the last one. This time, it's from people from the Ottawa area and it reads as follows:

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

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I give this to Alexandra.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND
MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE
AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES
ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Mr. Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: As usual, I'll be sharing the vast majority of my time with the very capable member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I thank the deputy House leader for his wonderful sharing of his time. You hit the important points; I thank you for that.

I'm pleased to stand today in the House for second reading of the 2010 fall budget bill, the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010.

This government was elected to bring change to the province of Ontario—and this change from previous years of neglect of public services, neglect of infrastructure, that our families and our economy rely on. Ontarians have been working together over the past seven years to repair the past neglect and to rebuild the province. Since 2003, Ontario's schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, roads and bridges have all been significantly improved.

The McGuinty government has also modernized our tax system and made major investments to ensure that the people of Ontario have clean, modern, reliable electricity systems.

As a result of these changes we've made, our economy has created 426,100 net new jobs. We have recovered 75% of the jobs lost in the recession, compared to only 10% in the United States. That really bears repeating: We have recovered 75% of the jobs lost in the recession, compared to only 10% in the United States. And nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers are now paying less income tax.

This government has worked to improve the lives of the people of Ontario. We have reduced wait times for key surgical procedures and reduced primary class sizes. We've implemented full-day kindergarten, and 36%

more students are attending colleges or universities since we took office.

Unfortunately, Ontario was hit very hard by the global recession. Despite our economy having emerged from the downturn, Ontario families are still feeling pinched financially. The reality is that many are anxious and uncertain about their ability to make ends meet. That's why our government is providing Ontarians with significant refundable tax credits. They're the most effective way to help those who need it the most. These include the children's activity tax credit, which was passed unanimously by this Legislature just last week, and of course the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which also was passed unanimously in this Legislature just yesterday.

Bill 135, if passed, would provide Ontarians with significant relief on electricity costs through the new Ontario clean energy benefit. The Ontario clean energy benefit, or the OCEB, would give residential farm and small business consumers a 10% credit on their electricity bills for the next five years. This credit would help more than four million Ontario households and more than 400,000 hard-working small business owners, farms and other small users manage their rising electricity prices. The OCEB would be effective January 1, 2011. Due to the length of time that's required to amend bills, however, the price adjustments would not appear immediately. The benefit would appear on electricity bills no later than May 2011 and, of course, would be retroactive to January 1, 2011. The OCEB would apply each and every month for the next five years. The estimated cost of the proposed OCEB is \$300 million in 2010-11, with an estimated full-year cost of \$1.1 billion next year.

In anticipation of questions about how we would pay for this benefit, let me assure you that the costs of the OCEB are accommodated within the fiscal plan as a result of our government's prudent approach to managing Ontario's finances. The province's revenues from ownership of Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One are projected to be approximately the same as the cost of the OCEB. Providing the 10% OCEB to Ontarians is a responsible way of helping Ontario families through the transition to a cleaner electricity system.

Since taking office, our government has made the long-overdue investments in electricity—in the system infrastructure, of course—that were needed to make sure that the lights stay on. We're creating a clean, modern, reliable energy system that's attracting investment and is also creating jobs.

The Progressive Conservative government made little investment in either electricity supply or transmission infrastructure. By 2003, Ontarians did not even know if the lights would stay on. Their reliance on five coal plants meant that about 25% of our electricity came from dirty coal.

They had no plan for conservation and no plan for supply to keep up with demand. The electricity system lost 1,800 megawatts of power capacity. It's hard to imagine how much 1,800 megawatts of capacity is, and so if you were to imagine Niagara Falls running dry, that's the equivalent to 1,800 megawatts.

A brief experiment in market deregulation in 2002 saw spot market energy prices spike an average of 30% in seven months, prompting the Progressive Conservative government to freeze rates at an artificially low level.

Our government is phasing out coal-fired generation and replacing it with cleaner generation, which is improving the quality of the air we breathe and reducing health care costs. Interestingly enough, Speaker, shutting down coal generation is equivalent to taking how many cars off the road, do you think? Seven million. Outstanding. Closing coal-fired generation is equivalent to taking seven million cars off the road.

I want to share a quote from Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. He has this to say: "Ontario's doctors are delighted by the proposal to speed up the coal phase-out. This will be the largest single greenhouse gas reduction project in North America and a major contribution to respiratory health."

Since 2003, more than 8,000 megawatts of new clean power have come online, making up more than 20% of current capacity. Hydro One has invested \$7 billion to improve 5,000 kilometres of its transmission and distribution lines.

In order to have a clean, modern, reliable system, we need to continue to invest in Ontario's electricity system. While absolutely necessary, these investments are increasing electricity costs.

I want to share one more quote with you at this point. The director of government relations for the IBEW Construction Council of Ontario had this to say: "People that work in the industry know that the infrastructure needs to be renewed. It's going to create some opportunities to get Ontario youth involved in the electrical trade and the power line trade. And it's a great way to ensure that we're going to have a reliable system and job creation. We think it's a win-win for everybody."

1610

After five years, Ontario will have largely completed the transition to a cleaner, more reliable system, and price increases are expected to moderate.

Rising electricity prices are having a significant impact on consumers who are asking for help with the cost of clean, modern energy. That's why we're taking action with our targeted tax credits and other supports and our new proposed Ontario clean energy benefit. If implemented, the OCEB would save a typical household more than \$150 a year, small businesses would save more than \$1,700 a year, and farms would save over \$2,000 per year.

Bill 135 also introduces important amendments to the Securities Act. It would protect consumers and investors through strong financial regulations. Our government is proposing amendments to the Ontario Securities Act that would allow the Ontario Securities Commission, or the OSC, to develop and implement a robust regulatory framework for over-the-counter derivatives, also known as OTC derivatives. These amendments would allow for new rules specifically designed for OTC derivatives. The

amendments would also include derivatives within the scope of existing insider trading offences. The OSC will undertake significant consultations in developing the proposed new OTC derivative rules.

The Ontario government is providing regulatory leadership, promoting fair and efficient capital markets, enhancing investor protection and helping Canada deliver on its international financial reform commitments.

In updating financial regulation, our government is being consistent with the proposed federal Canadian Securities Act and assisting in a seamless transition to the new Canadian securities regulator. Additional proposed amendments to the Ontario Securities Act would also provide for regulatory oversight of credit rating agencies and strengthen the oversight of alternative trading systems.

Bill 135 would enable the province to move ahead with plans to modernize financial regulation by strengthening regulatory requirements, as well as adopting flexible and effective global regulatory measures. These plans would not only help to protect consumers and investors, they would also help to promote Ontario's growing stature as a well-regulated, world-class financial market. This would be a move in the right direction as we look to the future of Ontario's role within Canada and, of course, beyond.

When the global recession occurred, Ontario was hit harder than other provinces through its manufacturing and forestry sectors. Government revenues declined steeply. During the recession, we chose to lessen the impact on the people of Ontario through short-term stimulus investments to help create and, of course, help preserve jobs.

According to a report by the Conference Board of Canada earlier this year, Ontario's increased infrastructure spending preserved about 70,000 jobs in the province in 2009 and added almost a full percentage point to Ontario economic growth during that year.

We also made a decision to protect schools. We made a decision to protect hospitals and other vital public services. As a result, Ontario, like many other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, has a fiscal deficit.

Prior to the global recession, our government had eliminated the \$5.5-billion deficit it inherited from the previous government. We did that ahead of schedule and posted three consecutive balanced budgets. Our government is making progress with reducing the size of the deficit each and every year.

As economies return to growth, governments must return to balance, and our government is doing just that. We have a responsible plan to cut the deficit in half within five years of its highest point and eliminate it by 2017-18.

Last week, my colleague the Honourable Minister of Finance announced that the projected deficit for 2010-11 of \$18.7 billion has been cut by almost 25% compared to the forecast a year ago in 2009-10. This is \$1 billion less than the projected deficit that was announced in the 2010 budget.

This decline in the deficit is thanks to stronger economic growth and thanks to responsible management. We're borrowing \$2 billion less in 2010-11 due to the \$1-billion decline in the projected deficit and the \$1-billion payment to the province from the proposed Teranet agreement. Reducing borrowing needs lowers interest costs, of course, which creates more fiscal room.

Our government is committed to maximizing the value of government-owned assets, while at the same time protecting consumers. Our proposed agreement with Teranet Inc. would retain provincial oversight of the electronic land registration system, including fees. Teranet, which is owned by Borealis, was formed in 1991 as a partnership between Ontario and the private sector to create an electronic land registration system. This involved moving from a 200-year-old paper-based system to create an electronic database with records for more than five million parcels of land. The first electronic transaction took place in 1999. The system now has registration volumes of more than two million annually.

Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world to provide electronic registration of land-related documents. Electronic land registration enhances security, improves the accuracy and integrity of the database and provides an electronic audit trail.

Since Teranet's creation, the province has been involved in a number of Teranet transactions. These include the previous government's sale of its 50% interest in Teranet in August 2003. Under existing agreements, Teranet has the exclusive right until 2017 to operate Ontario's electronic land registration system.

Our government has negotiated the principal terms of a proposed agreement to renew its long-standing business partnership with Teranet by renewing for an additional 50 years Teranet's exclusive licences to provide electronic land registration and what are called writ services in Ontario. Writ services allow the electronic search of writs of execution that encumber any interest in land by a debtor who owes money to another person under a court order or under any other statutory authority.

Under the proposed agreement, Borealis would provide the province with an upfront payment of \$1 billion, which would be used to reduce the province's debt. Reducing borrowing needs would lower interest costs, which again creates more fiscal room.

Beginning in 2017, the province would also receive annual royalty payments from Teranet, which are expected to be approximately \$50 million in 2017-18 and of course to grow in future years. The proposed agreement is subject to certain final closing conditions and is expected to close in late 2010.

Unlike the Progressive Conservative government's Highway 407 sale, our proposed agreement with Teranet contains significant consumer protection, including provincial control over any increases to fees charged by Teranet for any statutory services.

It would also ensure the province has ongoing participation in Teranet through royalties, and the potential to share in any extraordinary profits that would be

realized by Teranet through a sale or any exceptional performance of the business. The province will also continue its oversight of the electronic land registration system.

The proposed agreement negotiated by our government freezes fees for five years. In 2015, certain fees would be increased to equalize fees for searches done in land registration offices and those also done remotely, and certain fees would be adjusted by 50% of inflation.

Because these adjustments would be based on only 50% of the full rate of inflation, they would decline in real terms over time.

1620

Our 2010 fall economic statement also outlines our ongoing fiscal prudence and expenditure management. We are using taxpayers' money wisely. We reduced government administrative costs from 15% to 12% of overall spending, which is the second best efficiency rate in Canada. Since 2007, we have achieved more than \$800 million in savings per year through streamlining processes, lowering administrative costs, better use of technology and other cost-avoidance and cost-reduction measures. We're on track to reduce the size of the Ontario public service, or the OPS, by 5%, including savings of \$440 million over the next five years from harmonizing the collection of sales tax and corporate tax with the federal government.

Measures we've introduced to restrain compensation in the OPS and broader public sector would help redirect \$2 billion toward sustaining public services over two years, and as a result of the government's approach to compensation, provincial public sector wage settlements have fallen since the 2010 budget to below the averages in the private sector as well as the municipal and federal public sectors. Proposed new rules on the use of lobbyists and consultants would improve accountability within the OPS and, of course, the broader public sector.

We've also reduced the price of most generic drugs listed under the Ontario public drug program by 50% and have delayed and rescope some major capital projects, saving over \$5 billion in borrowing costs over the next five years.

The ongoing comprehensive review announced in the 2010 budget has so far identified over \$260 million in potential savings.

Ontario is emerging from the global recession. Key economic indicators have improved from the lows posted during the recession, although many remain below pre-recession levels. After declining over four consecutive quarters, our real gross domestic product has increased for the last four consecutive quarters. In fact, real GDP has recovered 71% of its recessionary loss. Based on the best available advice, we project that Ontario's GDP growth will be 3.2% in 2010, up from what we forecast in the 2010 budget, and as I mentioned earlier, 75% of the jobs lost during the recession have been recovered. That's over 180,000 net new jobs since May 2009.

However, we are mindful that economic growth is projected to be slower in the coming years, mainly due to

the slow growth in the US economy. In 2011 we expect the real GDP to grow by 2.2%, and in 2012 by 2.5%. As is our practice, our planning assumptions are more conservative than the average private sector forecast.

The Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010, includes significant relief and support for Ontario families and Ontario businesses. It provides new investments that will continue to help grow the economy and will continue to help create jobs. The Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010, would help keep Ontario moving forward. For that, and for all of the reasons outlined, I strongly urge the House to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to comment on the speech from the member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

I guess I'll start off by just commenting about some of the language they use. The government certainly is very creative. I mean, the name of this bill is creative in itself, but they are creative; I will give them that.

She was talking about, and I know the finance minister in his speech in the fall economic statement brought it up, how they had reduced the deficit by 25% since last year's projection: \$18.7 billion is the current prediction for the deficit for this year, compared to a year ago in the fall, when they said that it was going to be \$24.7 billion. Well, that's fine, except that in the budget at the beginning of the year, originally the deficit was going to be \$14 billion. Then it went to \$18 billion in June, then it went to \$24.7 billion, then it came back down to \$21.3 billion just before the end of the fiscal year, which was March 31. When it ended up being \$19.3 billion, there were celebrations going on. I, frankly, am shocked that the Minister of Finance and now the parliamentary assistant have the gall to put that number in as if this is some big savings, predicting \$18.7 billion for this year and talking about it like it's some sort of accomplishment, using the favourite word of the Minister of Finance, which is "prudent," as if increasing spending over 70% is prudent and running a \$20-billion deficit last year and planning on \$18.7 billion this year is being prudent.

I'm running out of time, so I will leave it at that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's called Helping Ontario Families. I'll tell you, families would love some help. I know families across this province from north to south, east to west, all over Ontario and all points in between would love some help, because people are feeling really—how would you say—besieged by this government and its policies.

If you take a look at the latest initiative that happened as of July 1 this year, we woke up on Canada Day, celebrating Canada's birthday, to yet another tax by the Dalton McGuinty government—in this case, in the form of the harmonized sales tax, the dreaded HST. We immediately saw the gas prices go up. We saw our hydro

bills go up. We saw the oil bill go up. We saw everything that we buy when it comes to goods and services go up in the province of Ontario as a result of that particular initiative.

We did not pay any of the taxes that were applied on the HST before in Ontario when it came to services, and certainly now Ontarians are paying more. Helping Ontario Families? Hydro bills: We are seeing from east to west, north to south—it doesn't matter where you live in between—families besieged by the price of electricity. We're seeing hydro bills that have more than doubled over the last seven years. People are feeling—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think the word I'm hearing I would ask the member to withdraw, and to choose his language.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's that?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I may be mishearing it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "Besieged"?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Oh, sorry. I was mishearing it, so you're just fine.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was not saying "deceived"; I was saying "besieged." I said "besieged." Thank you, Speaker, for the clarification.

Helping Ontario Families? Absolutely. People are seeing their hydro bills go through the roof and now the government says, "We have a plan," and they announced it yesterday. We didn't like the old plan. We certainly don't like the new plan. What we need is an NDP plan. Vote often; vote early; vote NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. I deserved that. I understand.

The member for Durham—excuse me, the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

1630

Mr. Pat Hoy: Thank you, Speaker. I'm still here.

I'm pleased to rise and make comment on the comments made by the parliamentary assistant from Kitchener-Conestoga on this second reading of Bill 135. We often refer to it as the budget bill, and it is serious work indeed.

As she mentioned in her conversation about how hard we're working to repair some of the ills of the past—the neglect—and rebuilding, we're certainly doing that in terms of hydro. We've created a lot more generation in this province and we need to do that to make ourselves sustainable in jobs, our homes and elsewhere. Of course, we've put up a lot more transmission. The transmission lines we have installed, if put on one single wire, would stretch across the country. That is a lot of wire.

I think one of the key highlights in Bill 135 is our proposed Ontario clean energy benefit, which would provide eligible consumers with a benefit equal to 10% of the total cost of electricity on their bills, including the taxed portion, which people seem to notice quite a bit these days. So there's some relief there. That would take effect in January 2011, and we're proposing that it last a minimum of five years, so that we can assist families and large and small businesses to cope with their electricity needs and bills.

The member mentioned many points, but one that I noted in particular was that after going through this recession we have replaced 75% of the jobs, while the United States, where they're still mired in difficulty, only created 10%.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has really been doing yeoman's duty here this past week, and doing quite a good job of sticking to the notes they prepared for her. That's her job: to read the notes.

Mr. Norm Miller: You said Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon me. Let's correct that. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has been doing yeoman's work. The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka always does yeoman's work. He's our diligent whip as well as an integral part of the leadership.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has done yeoman's work reading the notes that the minister has given her to read. But, you know, I'm staying here this afternoon, along with my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, to listen to his comments on Bill 135.

Now, Bill 135 really isn't a budget bill per se. It has to do with the interim conditions of the economy in Ontario, which are troubling. It's a broad range of things that are troubling. It's almost as if they've lost control in terms of what buttons and what levers to push and when. The economy is going down as the trouble is going up, and the trouble is going up and they don't have the money to solve all the problems. Yet right now we know that the broad numbers of the budget are something in excess of \$100 billion; we have a deficit around \$20 billion, a 20% deficit, which means they're spending 20% more than they're taking in as revenue; and there are a couple of accounting moves that I'll discuss this afternoon, and our critic Mr. Miller, from Parry Sound–Muskoka, will broaden that out in a few minutes. So I'm here, and I hope other members will stay and listen to the work our critic Norm Miller has put into this to bring light to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I would like the acknowledge, of course, the comments of the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Timmins–James Bay, the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex and the member from Durham, who always talks about us reading our notes. So I'm going to implore him to find another comment or criticism he could throw at us; you know, you need to shake it up a little bit. But I'll tell you, in reading the notes I was very specific in a lot of detail, and clearly I need to go over some of it again.

We have done the children's activity tax credit for the people of Ontario, we have done the energy and property tax credit and now the Ontario clean energy benefit, which will see \$150 per year going to each household, \$1,700 a year to businesses and \$2,000 a year to farms.

We are also looking at the Securities Act or the OSC, and at strengthening the regulatory framework or oversight of credit rating agencies. The projected deficit in 2010, I will reiterate, has been cut by almost 25%.

I did want to talk about what the people are saying; I did spend quite a lot of time in the notes going over what we're hearing about this clean energy benefit and what we're hearing about the government's commitment to clean energy.

Rod Sheppard, from the Society of Energy Professionals, had this to say: "We're ecstatic. This plan is going to bring an awful lot of new jobs to the province." Jason Gray says, "The government's commitment to creating jobs in the new clean energy economy must be applauded and ... is an indication of smart planning for the future."

Deborah Doncaster from Green Energy Alliance says, "I think the plan is fantastic. This government has decided to phase out coal and replace it with renewable energy...."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: Because I know he always likes to get a word in, I am going to share some time with the member from Durham.

This afternoon, of course, it's the leadoff debate on Bill 135. I would give the government credit for creativity—that's for sure—when they come up with their names. It's the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010. This is yet another omnibus bill introduced by the McGuinty government. There are 21 schedules amending 18 separate acts, and this bill comes out of the fall economic statement.

The economic statement paints a fairly bleak picture of fiscal mismanagement by this government. We've known for some time about the spending addiction of the McGuinty government, but this bill really draws attention to a failed energy policy that is so out of touch with Ontario families and seniors that it required a \$1-billion silver bullet. Of course, we on this side of the House have been raising the alarm for a long time, but there have also been some very damning assessments about the McGuinty's government's management of taxpayer dollars.

Economist Livio Di Matteo commented on how Ontario is doing based on the recent Statistics Canada update to the provincial gross domestic product numbers. He points out that Ontario's poor performance this year is part of a track record spanning a decade in which Mr. McGuinty has been at the reins of the province's finances. Ontario has gone from the second-highest real per capita gross domestic product, second only to Alberta, to its current fourth place position in the country. Di Matteo says, "Ontario's economy appears to be adrift, with its government oblivious to the real state of its economy and seemingly unable to get a grip on economic and fiscal policy ... "Ontario's regulatory and interventionist government policy culture has not helped much." I would just add that this omnibus bill will only add to the regulatory burden here in the province of Ontario.

Professor Di Matteo points out the cost of the green energy agenda under this government and Ontario “is on the verge of being unable to deliver the standard of living that its citizens have come to expect.”

Other experts from the government’s own Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress point out that the rising electricity costs could nullify some of the promised 50,000 new jobs that they claim the Green Energy Act will create. This is something we’ve been saying for a long now: that increased energy costs will make industry uncompetitive in the province. You may create some jobs through huge subsidies that we all pay for, but when you drive up electricity prices 46%, as is predicted in the fall economic statement, we have businesses that just can’t compete if they’re located here in Ontario.

The task force cites work done by another group of experts, London Economics International, that estimated the Green Energy Act’s costs at between \$247 and \$631 per household per year, or the equivalent to two to six additional monthly electrical bills per year.

The Task Force on Competitiveness also reported that the predicted job creation impact is also based on what happened in Germany, which has already implemented similar green energy programs. Those programs initially translated into job increases that eventually disappeared due to rising energy prices.

Jim Milway, executive director of the government-funded task force said, “I think the province would be wise to have a fresh look at this and really ask themselves, is this the best way to go? I’d strongly reconsider it before we get too far wedded to this.” He also described the impact on rates as “probably ... higher than what the government says.”

1640

I will pause for a second at that point and say probably higher. It seems not very long ago that then-Energy Minister Smitherman was repeating over and over that the effect of the Green Energy Act would be 1% per year, and now we see that that is not the case at all.

In recognition of that fact, the government introduced schedule 13 in Bill 135, and schedule 13 is the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010. Again, I think they’re pretty creative with their language. It could be named something else; it could be “the panic before the election act” as well. I think a lot of observers will look at this 10% reduction and say that what it’s really all about is trying to curry favour with voters who are seeing their hydro bills go up dramatically.

You know, every day, constituents ask me in person, on the phone, by email and by mail, “How am I supposed to make ends meet?” Apparently, enough Liberal MPPs were getting the same message and the result is the clean energy benefit. Consumers would almost be expected to believe that they have clean energy to thank for the benefit, but taxpayers were pretty quick to catch on. First, the benefit is for 10%, but the government admits that the costs are going to rise, in the latest estimate, by 46% over five years. Second, taxpayers will be funding their own

benefit because the government will be borrowing \$1 billion per year to pay for the benefit, so \$5 billion over the five-year plan—borrowing that money and paying interest, so it obviously gets shifted on the debt, and we all pay for it eventually.

Adam Radwanski reports, “The Premier’s decision to offer a hydro rate cut, as part of his government’s fall economic update, is an admission of failure.” He suggests that adding an extra \$1 billion or more each year to an already enormous debt might not necessarily be a service to the taxpayers.

But this bill does much more than offer a clean energy carrot. As I already mentioned, this bill amends 18 separate pieces of legislation. Some of the highlights include schedule 7, the Financial Administration Act. There are some significant or—as the legal counsel in the Ministry of Finance say—consequential amendments that are highly technical in nature, and I don’t pretend to understand all of their intricacies. I might add that this is a substantive bill, and I had all of an hour and a half’s briefing on it, and so I’m sure there will be surprises we will learn as time goes on and as we have more time to analyze it.

There’s schedule 18, which was mentioned by the parliamentary assistant, about regulating over-the-counter derivatives. I would say that the general reaction to that has been surprise that the government is getting into it. I would say that there’s general agreement that uniform regulation is key to any global action plan, and it’s important that provincial proposals do nothing to threaten or bog down Canada’s ability to keep pace with other countries.

Ian Russell, chief executive of the Investment Industry Association of Canada, commented, “Because we now have two tracks, we now have a less efficient regulatory process going on, which will result in delays.”

He goes on to say: “There is no guarantee Ontario and other provinces will end up with the same rules, exacerbating an already ‘fractured’ regime of 13 provincial and territorial securities regulators.

“A lawyer who works closely with regulators and the government said provincial regulators ‘are in la-la land if they think they will take the lead on this’....”

Bankers and other regulators expressed surprise at the move, describing Liberals as “desperate to have this be an Ontario solution.” I think we can all see the desperation in many of this government’s most recent announcements.

There’s schedule 21, which deals with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. I would simply say that with the WSIB, this government has made a mess of it. The unfunded liability has essentially doubled from, in round terms, \$6 billion to \$12 billion. I did ask in the briefing I had, “Why doesn’t this \$12 billion show up on the government’s books?” The response I got was, “Well, because it’s funded by industry; it’s not directly funded by the government,” although this bill does make provisions for funds to go to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board from the consolidated revenue fund when

there are certain situations where there aren't enough funds around. I would hope that means that we will see this liability reflected in Ontario's financial statements.

It is clear that the bill responds to the Auditor General's critique of the WSIB, the board's funding, the independence of the board from the government and the ownership of the unfunded liability. The government is removing direct controls over the board and is no longer able to issue official policy directives. Moreover, the minister does not approve or reject the board's funding plans but may question those plans and engage an independent auditor or actuary to review the board's plans. Even then, the minister will not direct the board but the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act will compel the board to revise its plans in the event that the minister's review concludes that the insurance fund is unlikely to become sufficient by the date prescribed in the regulations.

The bill itself is void of specifics and is clearly an empty, pre-emptive shell awaiting the results of the Arthurs funding review. The funding review will provide the details for the actual funding targets and will provide the meat in the sandwich, culminating in the regulatory language. The bill is driven mainly by the regulations, as yet unwritten and unknown.

One strong hint as to some likely content of the regulations is provided in the definition of the board's funding obligations, now defined as two distinct obligations: one is to provide sufficient funding for "current benefits" and the other to "provide for future benefits." I anticipate that the regulations will require current benefits to be fully funded and paid by current revenues, unless there are unforeseen circumstances, thus avoiding operating losses contributing to the unfunded liability. Of course, investment fluctuations and other factors will still be at play. Some shortfalls funded through the future reserves will still be permissible.

The bill does not remove the government's discretion to set indexing levels above the prescribed amounts. Thus, the government is still open for direct lobbying with respect to increased worker benefits beyond the prescribed amounts.

On the funding and premium side of the ledger, however, the bill effectively insulates the government from employer lobbying. The government is statutorily powerless to intervene with the WSIB funding and premium rate decisions, except where there's evidence the board's funding plans may not be met, and even then, only to order a review. I would certainly be concerned about some of aspects of this section. Frankly, I don't trust that it won't mean great increases for a lot of the businesses in the province.

The bill has two appropriation provisions, schedules 10 and 19. One provides for spending between now and the budget following the election, and the other for the period up to the next budget. The fall economic statement confirms that the Liberal government is on track to add another, essentially, \$19 billion in provincial debt. As I was saying, only this government would congratulate

themselves on that. It seems to me that a few years ago they were railing about \$5.6 billion, and I'd point out that they had to be fairly creative to come up with that number back in 2003-04.

The government now spends \$2.13 million more per hour than it takes in; so every hour, it spends \$2.13 million more than it's bringing in. It's living well beyond its means. Despite four quarters of consecutive economic growth, the McGuinty government has only reduced the deficit by 3%, from \$19.3 billion in 2009 to \$18.7 billion in 2010. They have not reduced discretionary spending by one penny.

Expenses are down \$246 million as a result of lower interest on debt, explained by lower than projected interest rates and a lower borrowing requirement because of the Teranet revenue that nets the \$1 billion that the government is receiving for the Teranet deal. That's one that we will certainly have more questions about. We haven't seen the details on it, but we wonder about what it's going to mean for future costs for households as they use the land transfer system, and questions about the length of the deal being—I think it goes for 50 years—and just what that will mean for Ontario homeowners.

1650

However, bear in mind that the \$1 billion the government is spending to bring you the Ontario clean energy benefit is not reflected in the fall economic statement. So they say they saved \$1 billion from their prediction, but they didn't. The \$1 billion they had to borrow to provide the clean energy benefit is not reflected.

Under Premier McGuinty, program expenditures have increased by 80%, compared to a 60% increase in revenue. The total debt is up 60%, having increased \$88 billion.

I know the finance minister made a big deal about the fact that he was getting this billion dollars for Teranet. He was putting it against interest and that was going to save \$50 million a year, I believe is the figure he used.

If that's the case—they've added \$88 billion to the debt. That means Ontario residents, based on that calculation, are paying an extra \$4.4 billion in interest, if his calculation is correct, each and every year. And, of course, that's going up and up and up.

How does Ontario measure up against other provinces in Canada? Ontario's deficit in 2010 is projected to be \$18.7 billion. The deficits of every other province combined would equal \$12.4 billion, so the McGuinty government's deficit is \$6.3 billion greater than the rest of Canada combined.

If we measure the Ontario deficit against Quebec and British Columbia, we see that Quebec's deficit is less than a quarter of our own, at \$4.5 billion, and British Columbia's is a mere \$1.4 billion.

If we look at another economic indicator, we see that the unemployment rate in Ontario sits at 8.6%. It's higher than the national average of 7.9%. If you want to compare it to others, Russia is 6.6% and Mexico is 5.7%, to name a few.

While the Premier would blame Ontario's job situation on the global economic downturn, in fact, the unem-

ployment rate has surpassed Canada's national average every month since January 2007. That's almost two full years before the financial crisis. As a result, Ontario has acted as an anchor on Canada's wealth for the last three and a half years. Under the McGuinty government, Ontario has lost 295,000 manufacturing jobs, a 28% decline.

If we look at the standard of living of Ontarians under the McGuinty government, we see that it grew at a slower pace than anywhere else in Canada. It also lagged behind several states in the US, including California, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. In fact, I don't think that any member here would have to rely on statistics to confirm that. Anecdotally, I hear from constituents every day about how they struggle to keep abreast of mounting costs.

I'm going to take a moment to read some of those letters to you, because they put a face on the raw data. These are the forgotten people in Mr. McGuinty's Ontario, who need a voice in House. Here's a letter:

"Dear Norm:

"I have just completed a report on my energy costs with the new HST charges by Mr. McGuinty.

"I know there have been a lot of conversations regarding hydro costs, but the public is forgetting about heating costs and gasoline costs. I have a 1,700-square-foot home and I believe we do a better-than-average savings on our hydro expenses.

"Average adjusted kilowatt hours for 2009 was 836 kilowatt hours (12 months); average for 2010, 789 (10 months). Based on these figures over two years, my additional costs due to HST will be \$9.37 a month.

"I'm on a smart meter (McGuinty's private ATM) but not yet on time-of-use pricing.

"Fuel oil costs for the past two heating seasons of six deliveries per season:

"—2,591.1 litres for 2009 at an average of 83 cents a litre is an additional cost due to the HST of \$172.10, or \$28.68, per delivery;

"—2,583.9 litres for 2010, at an average of 87 cents a litre is an additional cost due to HST of \$181.29, or \$30.21, per delivery.

"These numbers are based on actual costs at the time of delivery and do not allow for increased fuel costs which will increase over the winter as per past history.

"I also wonder why we are paying GST and HST on gasoline. This is a tax on a tax, which should be illegal.

"We are also paying HST on Hydro One's debt reduction. This is paying back money for debt and should not be HST-taxable.

"We are retired and live on fixed company pensions, OAS and CPP. We are living comfortably on these pensions, but these taxes are taking that comfortable feeling away.

"We were planning on travelling and seeing this great country of Canada, but increased fuel costs and taxes have taken that privilege away.

"It makes me wonder why I worked my butt off for 45 years and now have to sit at home and shut the lights out, turn the heat down and watch the car sit in the garage.

"I am just trying to make a point here because I do appreciate what I have and there are many, many people in this province and country who are not as well off as I am.

"A first good step would be to remove the HST from all energy items.

"Best regards,

"Ron Stephens."

From another constituent:

"Good day, Mr. Miller,

"I am writing to you in your capacity of finance critic for the province of Ontario.

"I want to point out that my car insurance has gone up almost 30%, while my coverage has been decreased by 50%. If I am thinking correctly, there is an 80% difference here. What can I, as a citizen, do to express my shock? I have called my insurance broker and expressed my deep concern.

"A letter I received from my insurers tells me the Ontario government allowed these increases. Along with the increased taxes due to the HST being spread to many new items, my spending dollar is less and less. You can be sure that as a senior citizen my income is not going up to match any of this.

"I see the people of BC had an intelligent former parliamentarian spearhead their campaign to negate the HST in that province. A referendum is being held to allow public input by way of vote. I wonder how we might do the same." That's that one.

I have another one:

"Hello Mr. Miller,

"In regard to the increase (smart meter) and time schedules for high and low usage of kilowatt hours. Going back to 1969 and 1970, Ontario Hydro came to our home as it was properly insulated for electric heat and encouraged us to go to the Medallion home for lower heating costs, which that is what we are now (everything is electric). What I am in hopes of is a lower rate when Ontario Hydro encouraged us to go this route of a Medallion home.

"Now this harmonized tax! Where does the Liberal government stop? Please help us as much as you can with the position ... you hold."

It goes on: "Old age pension, and Canada pensions don't even come close to keeping up with gas prices. This is only the chip of the iceberg, as folks say.

"So now it's Ontario Hydro, low interest rates, HST and the list goes on.

"One last item is on medications. We do not need more cost. Let's put the Liberal leader in our position. I am sure his way of thinking would change. He receives too much power to make money flow too freely. We need help in the medical field and medications, not cutbacks.

"Thank you for reading my letter and again work on Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals on these issues."

I have another letter, my last letter—of course, I have hundreds of letters, but this is a sample letter: "The provincial government are a bunch of thieves and they are"—I probably shouldn't read that; "misleading" is

what it says—“when they say how much better off the people will be with this ... HST.

“Poor seniors like me (I’m 75 years old, crippled with osteoarthritis) have little enough to live on now. I depend on the OAS, supplement and Gains to keep a roof over my head, keep warm in cold weather and have something to eat. By the time I get all my bills for the month paid I have less than \$100 to buy groceries and now McGuinty’s gang of robbers is taxing our heating fuel and hydro—and those of us who live in Muskoka apparently won’t be getting any aid in paying this exorbitant tax.

“I was taught in my grade school geography lessons that the counties are in the southern part of the province and the districts are in the north. Norm Miller MPP’s riding distinctly says, ‘The district of Parry Sound–Muskoka.’ Dwight Duncan and Dalton McGuinty have obviously never had a geography lesson in their misbegotten lives or they would know that.

“I was born and raised in Muskoka and I can tell you for a fact that many times Muskoka is several degrees colder in the winter than the Lakehead (Thunder Bay), the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and Nunavut.

“We need that \$130 to help pay that tax on our heating fuel and hydro. Many seniors and other poor people will no doubt die from hypothermia in their own homes in Muskoka, if we don’t get these funds.”

That was Audrey Thompson who sent me that letter. She’s noting, I think, that Muskoka specifically was removed from the north for provincial programs by the McGuinty government, and she’s pointing out, as I know district chair Gord Adams has in the past, that districts were considered part of the north, and counties in the south.

The energy front is a huge part of this bill, with the justification for this 10% reduction. But I think the energy policies of late—we’ve seen the energy plan rolled out—are being roundly criticized by many of the pundits out there.

1700

I note that Tom Adams, who is an expert on energy, has written extensively about it. Just recently, on November 22, he wrote:

“Dwight Duncan, now Ontario’s finance minister, told the Legislature in 2004: ‘It would be irresponsible for the province and taxpayers to continue to subsidize electricity consumption, because it jeopardizes our ability to invest in health care and education. This is simply not sustainable, nor is it acceptable. The people of this province deserve better.’ He committed to ‘take the politics and politicians out of electricity pricing.’

“Where is the Dwight Duncan of 2004?”

“Then, with the deficit at \$5.6 billion, he said it was unacceptable for taxpayers to shoulder a portion of the cost of electricity.

“Today, with the deficit at \$18.7 billion, he engineers techniques to split the bill for the McGuinty government’s careless, profligate electricity policies between staggering power rate increases today and enduring pain for tomorrow’s taxpayers.

“Duncan’s new electricity plans are riddled with contradictions. He claims that the government’s new long-term electricity plan will lead to ‘stable and predictable pricing.’ Yet, in his own statement, he admits that: ‘Over the next five years, however, residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46%, which is an average annual rate of about 7.9%.’

“When McGuinty’s government introduced its Green Energy Act last year, enshrining sole-sourcing of power contracts in law, it promised that the rate impact would be limited to 1% per year. Then energy minister George Smitherman told the Toronto Star: ‘I have been very clear about it. One per cent per year, incremental of a person’s electricity bill, with corresponding capability through investments in conservation for people to lessen their use of electricity.’

“One glimmer of truthfulness in the economic statement is the admission that renewable power generation is the main driver for the rate increases. This admission contradicts the recent surge of denials from government and renewable energy apologists. Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner, Gordon Miller, for example, has been on a speaking tour pleading with electricity executives to convince consumers that rates are stable.

“Applying the government’s estimates, by 2015 the cost of sole-sourced green energy contracts above the market value of the power will exceed \$4 billion per year.

“Slavishly, Duncan cleaves to Premier McGuinty’s propaganda slogan that the ‘Green Energy Act will create 50,000 new jobs in three years.’ The employment losses galloping electricity cost increases have and will cause are ignored.

“Duncan’s retreat from truth and principle grows with his explanation for how the public will pay for his blatant vote-buying scheme. Next year, the government claims the ‘benefit’ will cost \$1.1 billion. Until this corrosive shell game is killed, the taxpayer hit will follow skyrocketing electricity costs.

“Notwithstanding record deficits, the cost can be accommodated due to what Duncan calls the McGuinty government’s record of ‘prudent management of finances.’ Duncan claims that provincial income from crown-owned Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and Hydro One are projected to match the cost of the rebate. Duncan ignores previous decisions pledging all of OPG’s and Hydro One’s profits to servicing debts left by the former Ontario Hydro. Shifting funds from servicing Ontario Hydro debts to paying for rebates would only work if Duncan could magically spend dollars twice.

“With little hope that even very aggressive actions by a new government and an economic rebound better than any current forecasts can get the Ontario government out of deficit any time over the next five years, all of the costs for the ‘benefit’ plan will be borrowed, to be repaid in the distant future.

“McGuinty’s Green Energy Act, passed last year, erased more than a century of electricity policy consensus based on the idea that the purpose of the power

system, irrespective of policy instruments used, was to serve consumers. Now the purpose of the power system is to achieve green economic and social transformation.

“Duncan’s economic statement breaks from our traditions more profoundly. Historically, a fairly solid wall separated electricity sector financial flows from provincial governmental finances. This compartmentalization provided some tenuous measure of transparency, accountability and independence for the power system from political meddling. Now, the financial flows of the electricity system are deeply embedded in the government’s daily financial life.

“McGuinty claimed his electricity policies, enshrined in the Green Energy Act, would benefit future generations. Although our bills are skyrocketing, Duncan has signed an additional blank cheque payable by our kids to fund irresponsible green initiatives. Duncan has polluted the power system with unprecedented political meddling and created a whole new class of taxpayer liability.”

That’s an article written by Tom Adams. He’s a Toronto-based energy consultant and, I would say, a keen observer of what goes on. That’s quite a damning article of the government’s policies.

The National Post’s Lee Greenberg writes, “Green Energy Costs Lowballed, Task Force Says.

“Ontario’s government is overstating the benefits of its Green Energy Act and underestimating hydro rate increases, according to a new report on economic competitiveness set to be released on Tuesday.

“The report—written by the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress”—I might point out that is the government’s own commissioned report—“points out that rising electricity costs could nullify some of the 50,000 new jobs the Liberals claim will be created.

“The prediction is based on some stunning price estimates that go much further than the government’s own projections.

“The task force notes a study of the Ontario green energy program by London Economics International, a global consultancy that estimated the act’s cost at between \$247 and \$631 per household per year—or the equivalent of two to six additional monthly electrical bills per year.

“The task report also cites the study by Aegent Energy Advisors Inc., an energy consulting group, which estimated recently that partly because of expenses related to the act, residential electricity costs are expected to increase at an annual rate of 6.7% to 8% over the next five years.

“The predicted job-creation impact is also based, the record says, on what happened in Germany, which has implemented a similar green energy program that initially saw job increases that were eventually eroded by rising power prices.

“I think the province would be wise to have a fresh look at this and really ask themselves, is this the best way to go,” said Jim Milway, executive director for the Institute of Competitiveness and Prosperity, the task

force’s government-funded research arm. ‘I’d strongly reconsider it before we get too far wedded to this.’

“Mr. Milway says the impact on rates ‘will probably be higher than what the government says.’

“The task force, created by the Ontario government in 2001 to recommend strategies to bolster long-term wealth, also casts doubt on the job creation from the act.

“‘While the Green Energy Act may create 50,000 new jobs, the higher energy costs may result in employment losses elsewhere in the economy, particularly in industries that are intensive energy users,’ the report says.

“The Green Energy Act offers huge 20-year guaranteed contracts for wind, solar, hydro and bioenergy projects at rates up to 20 times more generous than the current market price for electricity. The legislation was seen as a way to kick-start a homegrown green energy industry, but has lately become the focus of consumer anger as its costs begin to show up on home electricity bills.

“Those bills have risen 20% in the past seven months.

“In the past week, the government has moved to mitigate the mounting political damage, introducing a \$1.1-billion hydro subsidy on Thursday and hinting Sunday it will expand off-peak pricing by two hours each weeknight, moving the start to 7 p.m. from its current 9 p.m.

“A major report to be released by energy minister Brad Duguid on Tuesday is also expected to set limits on the amount of green energy contracts being awarded.

“The task force report, meanwhile, also points to continued troubles with productivity in Ontario’s economy. Ontario ranks 14th of 16 equivalent-sized North American states and provinces. Ontario businesses invest less in research and development, produce fewer patents and its managers are still not as good as those in comparable U.S. jurisdictions.”

That article, again, is painting a pretty bleak—doing a pretty bleak assessment by the government’s own task force on the effects of the Green Energy Act. It’s not just the usual partisan comments from the opposition or third party. That’s a task force that the government themselves commissioned.

Before I hand it over to the member from Durham, the last article that I wanted to get on the record was a comment by economist Livio Di Matteo on the state of Ontario’s economy. It’s called “Laggard Ontario.”

1710

“Dalton McGuinty has presided over the province’s economic decline.

“The Ontario government will be tabling its fall economic statement in the Legislature on Thursday. Premier Dalton McGuinty, who has been seemingly unaware of the impact of his energy and economic policies on the province’s economy, would do well to take heed from the danger signs provided by another update—the recent Statistics Canada update to provincial GDP numbers.

“The new StatsCan numbers show that, as a result of the recession, real gross domestic product in 2009 fell in every province except Manitoba. Moreover, the declines

were steepest in Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario.

“Being in the company of so many poor performers will not be a suitable defence for Ontario’s economic record for two main reasons. First, while Ontario’s decline was smaller than that in Newfoundland, Alberta and Saskatchewan, those provinces can blame their drop primarily on the fall in natural resource commodity prices, namely oil. Ontario’s key natural resource sector—forestry—while hit hard over the last decade, is not as important a sector to Ontario as oil and gas is in these other provinces. The economy will grow in Newfoundland, Alberta and Saskatchewan as oil and gas prices recover.

“Second, Ontario’s dismal performance caps a decade of dismal performance. Ontario has become a laggard in per capita GDP, as highlighted when it entered the ranks of the ‘have-not’ provinces and began to collect equalization. A survey of statistics for the last two decades shows that Ontario’s share of total provincial GDP has declined from 42% in 1990 to 37% in 2010. More ominous, the bulk of that decline has occurred since 2000—largely coinciding with McGuinty’s decade of political power. Whereas in 1990, productive Ontario’s share of national output exceeded its population share, we now are witnessing the sorry spectacle of the reverse.

“When Ontario’s economic productivity performance is examined in terms of real per capita GDP, it emerges that Ontario’s output has stagnated for an entire decade. Between 2000 and 2010, real per capita GDP in Ontario actually declined by 8%. While one may wish to ascribe this to the impact of the recession and the global financial crisis since 2008, the fact remains that Ontario’s performance was the worst of all 10 provinces.”

The government’s always blaming the world economic situation, but we were the worst of all 10 provinces; we are the worst.

“Indeed, over the first decade of the 21st century, eight out of 10 provinces experienced an increase in their real per capita output, while only Ontario and New Brunswick saw declines. Even Quebec, which has been the historical poor economic sibling to Ontario, saw its real per capita GDP grow 6% during the decade. Since 2000, Ontario’s real per capita GDP has gone from being 25% above the provincial average to being barely at the provincial average. From having the second-highest real per capita GDP in the country (second only to oil-rich Alberta), it is now the fourth highest. No wonder Ontario is now receiving equalization payments.

“Ontario’s economy appears to be adrift, with its government oblivious to the real state of its economy and seemingly unable to get a grip on economic and fiscal policy. While global economic circumstances have played a part in Ontario’s predicament, Ontario’s regulatory and interventionist government policy culture has not helped much.

“Witness the initiatives of recent years: the messianic closing of cost-effective coal plants and implementing of higher-cost wind and solar energy initiatives in the name

of the environment, raising minimum wages, implementing and then rescinding eco-taxes, timing the arrival of the HST with a recession, sequestering large land areas of the province’s north from economic development. Rather than the economy, priorities that have consumed the government’s energy include banning pit bulls and pesticides, as well as both smoking and cell-phones in vehicles (but then actually considering cell-phone use in schools) and debating the merits of mixed martial arts fighting.

“In the midst of all the economic carnage, the Ontario government is presiding over a massive hike in electricity costs—an energy source that used to be the foundation of Ontario’s economic advantage. Add to this the fiscal deficit and a net debt that is expected to reach \$240 billion by 2011, and one has an economy that is on the verge of being unable to deliver the standard of living that its citizens have come to expect.

“That Ontario’s future economic welfare is in a clear and present danger is a sad understatement.”

That’s written by Livio Di Matteo, an economist who’s at Lakehead University. It sounds like it’s an opposition comment, but it’s actually an economist making those comments.

In conclusion, before I hand it over to the member from Durham, I would simply say that this bill enables the government to continue to live beyond its means. It allows it to continue to spend the \$2.1 million an hour more than it’s taking in. It enables possible future tax increases. It enables future beer tax increases, particularly for small microbreweries. It will increase the red tape and regulation in the province of Ontario. Frankly, I certainly don’t trust that the McGuinty government won’t do all of those things.

I actually believed Mr. McGuinty in 2003 when he said, in the midst of the election campaign—and signed documents saying it—“I won’t raise your taxes.” I must admit, in the midst of that election campaign I thought, “If he’s going to do that, that would make a lot of people comfortable that it wouldn’t be a tax-and-spend Liberal government.” But he got elected, then immediately broke that promise and has demonstrated it to be very much a tax-and-spend Liberal government.

In conclusion, I’d just say we will not be supporting this bill that enables the government to keep on spending beyond its means.

I’m pleased to hand it over now to the member from Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I listened intently, and I certainly learned plenty from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, our finance critic, who I really want to thank here today personally for the work he has done and his staff, and also the Ministry of Finance staff who took the time to try to untangle this omnibus bill. Really, that’s what it’s turned out to be. As our member Mr. Miller has pointed out, there’s a lot in the bill. There are 21 different schedules, and it’s hard to know where to begin. I guess you start with what it didn’t do.

You knew right from the beginning, when the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, stood on

November 18 and he had a bill here, a speech that he made—I have a copy of the Hansard; I’ve had a look through that as well—praising themselves for doing such a great job. There’s no doubt; they tried. I want to set a respectful tone here.

Some of the comments made by the member and the independent experts who were quoted—Jim Milway, and Di Matteo from Lakehead University, and other experts who know they’re on a spending spree that can’t be sustained. That’s the troubling part. You wonder when they’re going to be straightforward with the people of Ontario.

I think people are ready for the medicine that’s necessary to get well. They want the recovery plan now. If you look at their plan, it’s anything but. Just to put a frame around it, the frame around this is keeping the numbers something that we can all explain fairly easily. We’ve got a budget in excess of \$100 billion. They’ve increased spending by about 70%. I’m not claiming that measurement in itself is bad. What I’m saying is, the people of Ontario should ask themselves, “Is it any better?” You’re spending more money. Is it any better? Are waiting times in emergency rooms fixed? Are there more doctors? Are there more nurses? Is there any plan for mental health? Is there any plan for the children’s aid society? How is the poverty task force doing? Are the housing issues solved? You start to add it up.

I think the energy file tops it off. In the last week or so, we’ve had two bills already that have tried to address the errors they made on the whole energy file. In fact, the plan that they have is described in a paper that we often refer to; it’s the confidential document here that we’ve recovered. Ask the Premier to release it and respond to it. It’s called Renewable Energy Matters—Campaign Outline. It’s privileged and confidential, and it was delivered in a brown envelope, by the Sussex group. In this plan is an admission that they were told by almost all the consultants, as well as the independent experts out there, right from—you mentioned Tom Adams and others who work as consultants. They never try to diminish themselves and their rights to their opinion. They express them professionally, and I guess you have to respond that they’re trying to be helpful. I really believe they’re not trying to diminish themselves or place themselves as such an outsider in commenting and working. Those people work with all governments, and that needs to be the case.

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But when I look through the bill, there are several sections. Let’s start it this way. Our critic, Mr. Miller—I hope people are listening—has suggested that we could have a motion to divide the bill. That idea of dividing the bill would allow us to support the provisions in the bill that we need. That’s what they do. They put this omnibus bill together, Bill 135, in such a way that they’re going to say, “You didn’t support that relief for the energy bills.”

Hon. James J. Bradley: That’s right.

Mr. John O’Toole: That’s called a wedge issue, and the former Minister of the Environment and energy—I

would say he’s admitting it here today, and I commend him for that. His honesty is commendable.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, no. I never admitted anything.

Mr. John O’Toole: Well, I think he should actually stand in his seat, because I’m putting it on the table: a motion to divide. He has admitted that they loaded this with wedge issues, 21 different sections. We’re asking for a motion to divide so that we can deal with this section by section.

I think the compendium of the bill is really worth a read, and I encourage my constituents to stay in touch, because it is a fairly large bill. I think the name is so cynical, I’m putting this on the table as well: Maybe we should amend this to be “the truth that this is all about we’ve made mistakes” bill. Here’s what they call it: Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. They have whacked them and stacked them like you wouldn’t believe.

Look at what the HST is doing to the average household. Look at your energy bill. Look at what they’re doing to the province of Ontario. They’re decimating it, and this bill is saying they’re blaming it on the families now. They’re saying, “Start to manage your job. We’re going to stop—you can’t eat junk food and you can’t do this and that, no pit bulls”—the Father Knows Best bill would be a good way to put it.

Quite honestly, and in all sincerity, if you look at the preamble of the bill, you’ll find that it does say a lot of things. Under the section under the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario—well, they’ve tried to rein them in several times. The Assessment Act: We know the impact, and the Auditor General and the Ombudsman are looking at that. The Commodity Futures Act is another one, and the Corporations Tax Act, which comes under my specific critic file. Employer Health Tax Act: They’re probably going to raise it again. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario: There are huge issues with respect to pensions, which they keep blaming on other levels of government.

But, really, this is not a budget; this is actually the fall economic statement. That’s what it is, let’s be honest; it’s not the budget. They’re not finished yet. They aren’t finished spending. In fact, as I said before, the last two weeks we’ve had bills in here, including one that reduced the burden on seniors. That bill, annualized, is \$1.3 billion per year of increased spending—an additional \$1.3 billion in spending.

Now, Bill 135 has one provision in it, the 10% reduction in your energy bill. It sounds like an election thing to me. That costs \$1 billion every year. Now, the funny thing there is, it doesn’t actually start until next January.

There’s another provision that they haven’t costed yet, so we’ll see it, the smart meter you have at home that actually is a tax machine: What it does is tell the utility when exactly you use the electrons, and that smart meter says, if you use it at the high peak, you’re going to pay twice as much as you would pay off peak.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Around half. They're arguing. Well, it's not quite a 100% increase; it's probably a 45% increase in the cost.

Here's the issue, though: They've changed it by two hours. The lower rate, the mid-peak rate, will come in a little earlier—two hours' difference—but that's not going to click in until next May, just before the election, and that's going to cost money because that's a loss of revenue. Why? Because when you use electricity on peak, it costs just under 10 cents, and when you use it off-peak, at base peak, it's about five cents, roughly. So it's a 100% increase by any number. If that's what it is, call it what it is. Tell the people the truth, and you'll be free.

Here's the real issue, though: Those two things alone cost about \$3 billion. That comes out of the taxpayers' pockets by way of your electricity bill.

Another thing that's really interesting in following up on is the HST—that's not done yet. Those cheques that you've been getting to offset some of that will stop next year just before the election. They're so cynical about this thing. The money they're giving you in these cheques is your money from your federal taxes, that transitional funding. So that is an admission there that the HST in itself went too far, too deep. They know it now and they're backing off. We call it backtracking on almost everything they've said, and they're not finished yet because all of this backtracking is saying, "Oops, we made a mistake." This bill could easily be called the "Oops, we made a mistake" fiscal update.

Let's work a little harder on the energy bill itself in the little time that our critic left me, which is another issue—maybe deliberately, but I'm going to ask for more time later on.

Quite honestly, what I'd do, Mr. Speaker—and you would know this, because of the way I attack things, just by listening to my constituents. Mr. Miller read the letters from his constituents, but I'm not going to take you down that road. I'm just going to take you down the road of a scan of what the intelligent, generally well-informed media people are saying. Here's one, for instance, from the Toronto Star. We often refer to it as the Liberal briefing note. What does it say about the power plan that was announced by Premier McGuinty yesterday? I think it's right. I agree with many parts of it, especially the part about Durham getting about \$33 billion. How can I argue with that?

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Don't laugh now. That's a sign that Durham's going to prosper, but the rest of Ontario is going to pay big time.

Here's the deal: The Toronto Star headline reads, "Power Plan Lacks Detail." I guess it does. It's 20 years into the future and beyond. In fact, this is like the promise they made in 2003: "I won't raise your taxes." Guess where we are today? The health tax, the largest tax in history; HST, the second largest—well, it's the largest. Actually, the health tax is now in second place.

The mantra of the Liberals has returned: Tax and spend. The problem is, they have a spending problem, an addiction. The Minister of Finance—and the Premier—should stand up and say, "My name is Dwight Duncan and I have a spending problem." He's got to take the 20-step plan. I'm telling you.

Here, they talk about what the investments are going to be. This is the part that gets really interesting. This plan is, they're going to spend \$33 billion on nuclear and they're going to spend \$14 billion on wind. I know that in my riding of Durham, and I can say it with confidence that I'm listening to those people, the concerned wind group, as well as in the city of Kawartha Lakes—the member should be listening. The election's coming up. You better stand up for your constituents, not for the Premier. He won't be there to help you get elected.

Wind is not very popular, and yet—I can't believe it. If you look at the supply-mix side of energy, they've got wind energy as producing more electricity than natural gas. Wind energy, by all the experts, is called a non-dispatchable generation source. In other words, dispatchable energy is when you can turn it on and put it on the grid, like a gas plant, a nuclear plant, a coal plant or a natural gas plant. Even a hydroelectric plant to some extent is dispatchable, but wind, by the experts, is called an intermittent power source. Sometimes it's windy, and you get electrons.

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Here's the irony of that, on the wind side. Wind has got what they call a protocol for dispatch. Any of these renewables, under the feed-in tariff, have first draw. In other words, they will be the first ones to be dispatched, when they're available. When they're dispatched, that means the people in the natural gas plant sit down and play cards. You're not saving a cent because they're still going to be at that plant—whether it's a natural gas plant or a nuclear plant that's being shut down—playing cards, reading a book or whatever they do, because they're going to let the windmills put the electrons on the grid so you don't have to put coal or whatever in the thing. I think that that \$14 billion is gone with the wind—that's a novel they should probably read.

Conservation: That is something we would support. In fact, they cancelled some of the initiatives that we had for incenting people to update their homes, whether it's heating, air conditioning, insulation, energy-efficient appliances etc., and the EnerStar program. They cancelled that. Their plan for conservation is to charge you so much that you can't cook your food or wash your clothes until it's off-peak, in the middle of the night. In fact, the Premier said at a school full of kindergarten kids around him, "Tell your people to do your laundry on the weekends." That's what he said.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not making it up; it's in the paper. Read it.

Transmission: They're spending \$9 billion in transmission. In fact, most of that is to get the wind from out in Lake Ontario or up on the Oak Ridges moraine or somewhere to where it's needed.

Solar: I have some sympathy with the solar suggestion, but I think people should be allowed to feed it directly into their home, like they do in some other countries now where you heat hot water with it, where you are able to have other applications in the home. Let the people invest, save and see it the next day when they turn that switch on.

What's wrong with allowing them to be empowered, as opposed to the big grid? Do you know why? They don't want people to get off the grid. No, sir. Because they've got to pay off that \$86 billion of debt. If they allowed people to get off the grid or use some less power off the grid, they would be stranding those assets. I tell you, in the future, if you look at the energy file, I believe that Brad Duguid and the Premier have gone down the absolutely wrong road, totally.

If you look at California and what they're doing, it's an innovation. It's called Bloom Energy. Bloom Energy build small hydrogen reformers and they build small dispatchable nuclear that could heat a subdivision; no transmission and line loss, for which you pay 1.3% on your bill. They actually have what they call distributive generation. These are ideas that they should be thinking about. I'm so disappointed.

But the real issue here is, I think you should read the report. I'm going to ask the viewers of Ontario to look something up; if not, call me, and I will get it to you. It's worth reading. This is by Terence Corcoran. It's in the media, the Financial Post, dated October 7, and it says this. IKEA, the furniture company—it was asked today in the House—is going to put \$4.6 million into installing 3,790 solar panels, and on it—I've got to cut, because they've cut me off here. They're going to put in \$4 million and they're going to get out about the equivalent of making a profit of almost double in less than seven years. Why? Because the feed-in tariff is so good, they're going to make more money selling electricity to Dalton McGuinty than they will selling bookcases. I'm telling you, they get it.

They said today they blame the farmers—they said that we're blaming farmers. No wonder—why did you cut the farmers off? Why did you cut them off? They were using the farmers—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Why did you cut them off? You shouldn't cut them off; you should allow them all to have it, because it's such a good deal for the farmers. They haven't done one other thing for the farmers. In fact, our critic—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: —a marvellous job on that file.

Now, the media—I seek unanimous consent for more time, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham has asked for unanimous consent for additional time. Agreed? Sorry, I heard a no.

Mr. John O'Toole: They don't want to hear this.

“Ontario Plan Will See Hydro Bills Double By 2030”—that's in the National Post.

The next article is in the Toronto Star: “Rising Power: Ontario's new energy plan will see prices double in 20 years.”

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's it, Speaker. Now I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from Durham speak for almost an hour about many different things.

I want to go back, first, to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I know he listed many different articles from many different papers mentioning the growth and productivity in the province of Ontario. I want to tell him that our productivity in this province is higher than any other province in Canada and is the best in any jurisdiction around the planet. Also, we're performing very well. We've recouped most of the jobs we lost, due to our economic strategy and our strategy to attract more businesses to come to the province of Ontario.

I also want to say that probably in his eyes and his party's eyes, we're not performing very well and we are the worst province. In our eyes, as the government here, we believe strongly in the province of Ontario. It's the best province in this nation and the best province around the whole planet. That's what we believe on this side. We have a great interest to maintain our ability and our prosperity in this province.

The member from Durham spoke about a lot of things. He said that the government never hired nurses. We've hired almost 10,000 nurses in the province of Ontario. And now we have one million more people with a doctor in the province of Ontario.

Interjection: And 2,300 more doctors.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, and 2,300 more doctors in the province of Ontario.

I have no idea where he gets his statistics. I'm not sure what he has against the poor people in the province of Ontario, the vulnerable people in this province or the seniors in this province. I think on this side we have an obligation to support the vulnerable people among us and support the seniors.

Also, he mentioned something very important. He complained about Ikea: “Why are you supporting Ikea?” We'll support any outlet—as the Premier mentioned this morning, small farms, large farms, whoever wants to participate in green energy—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I certainly listened intently to my good friend and colleague the member from Durham. I just wish that we could get unanimous consent to let him speak longer, because I find he has worthwhile things to say, and he says them reasonably and at length. The last is especially relevant in this situation.

Be that as it may, the point that he was making, that possibly we could change the bill's name to—maybe it

should be the “managing responsibility act of Premier McGuinty.” That would make a lot more sense, because I believe that this government has not in fact been managing the expenses and the finances of this province in a responsible manner.

We are in grave difficulty in this province. Spending is out of control. We have an enormous deficit, and the plan to reduce the deficit over the next few years assumes a 2% spending maximum, when we know that is totally irrelevant. It's totally irresponsible to even have such a plan. The police in our region just got a 6% increase for one year, as I understand it, and somehow we are going to limit our expenses to 2%? We know that's not going to happen.

That's unfortunate, and it's about time the citizens of this province took a good look at what is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

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Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, thank you for this opportunity. I always appreciate following the member from Durham and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. The member from Durham has contributed a lot to the English language, a lot to literature, and again today he made that contribution.

I want to go back to the reality of the bill before us. The reality is that because the McGuinty government has made such profound mistakes when it comes to the electricity file, because this government is proceeding with a plan which is built around a nuclear core, this government is looking desperately for ways to deal with the political problems it's created. The bill before us today, which puts in place the electricity credit, the 10% refund, has everything to do with votes, everything to do with an election next fall and very little, if anything, to do with a solid electricity policy for the province of Ontario.

This act reflects the anger that this government is picking up from its dealings with the people of Ontario, people who watch how this government has mismanaged the file, made mistakes that replicate those made over the last few decades, and now, in a moment of panic, is trying the best it can to paper over those mistakes and defend itself.

It's no surprise that the member from Durham and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka went after the government as heavily as they did. It is no surprise that they expressed their frustration about this government's mismanagement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to make a comment on the speech by both members opposite, primarily focusing on the energy file when it came to the fall economic statement. I think I'm going to make a bit of a prediction here today. I'm not going to go too far out on a limb, but I'm going to make a bit of a prediction that at some point over the course of the next several months, the official opposition, the Conservative Party, is going to come forward with an energy plan. They don't have one now.

They're spending a tremendous amount of time criticizing ours and they're spending a tremendous amount of time criticizing us on the energy file, but so far no plan.

So what do we know? We know today that about 50% of the energy production in the province of Ontario comes from nuclear, so at some point the official opposition is going to have to stand on their feet and tell the people in the province of Ontario what it is they plan on doing, should they be so honoured as to be the government in Ontario, about the nuclear file: how they're going to maintain it, how they're going to refurbish it and how they're going to cost it. They're going to have to tell people, because so far, as I understand it, they're not in favour of nuclear. We certainly understand that they are not in favour of green energy, be it wind or solar. We heard the member today talk about the 16,000 sweetheart deals, primarily referring to the microFIT program, which is one of the most popular programs in the history of the province of Ontario. We also know that in 2003, they committed to closing coal. So what do we know? They were going to get away from coal, they don't support nuclear, and they're not in favour of the clean, green energy program. So it's going to be very interesting to see what they bring forward when they bring forward their energy plan.

I'll tell you what else they didn't support. They supported closing coal. I had two of those plants in my riding: one in Atikokan and one in Thunder Bay. In 2003, when your former leader committed to closing those plants, he never talked about converting them. There's a cost associated with those conversions. I'm very proud of the money that's going to be invested in my riding to convert both of those plants. That's a cost that's attributed to the energy file, and I want to hear, when you come forward with your plan, if you're going to still go forward and remain committed to the conversion of the Atikokan plant and the Thunder Bay generating station: one to biomass for the first time in the history of the province and one to natural gas as well. I'm looking forward to hearing your plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I probably won't have a chance to comment on all the people that spoke, but I'll start with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and make it very clear that the PC Party is in support of nuclear power. We recognize that it's 50% of the baseload power. We wonder why you've taken seven years to do anything. You've been sitting over there for seven years not acting as we dig ourselves a bigger and bigger hole.

The member from London–Fanshawe talked about how he likes the province. Yes, we think this is the best province in the country; we think it's the best place to live in the world. Unfortunately, it has become a have-not province under the McGuinty government. I've noted some of the comments on the Green Energy Act, but I also note a recent study that shows that Mr. McGuinty is the worst financial manager of all the provinces in the

country. It wasn't us; it was a recent study looking at all the provinces and their debt and deficits etc.

The member from Durham brought up how the government's plan with the energy policy is to confuse the public. We have the Sussex campaign outline, which shows they have a definite strategy to try to confuse the issue of energy so the public doesn't really know what's going on and won't just look at their hydro bill.

The member from Toronto–Danforth very correctly points out that the 10% discount is not about energy policy and has everything to do with an election that's going to be happening on October 6, 2011. And the member from Cambridge talked about how the spending of this government is out of control and how their plan to balance by 2017, beyond two elections, is not credible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to round off this afternoon. I understand that I will have an opportunity to continue my leadoff debate tomorrow morning.

Speaker, as you are well aware, and as anyone who goes to the Internet and reads this bill can see, this bill touches on derivatives, it touches on property taxes for hydro poles, it talks about debt regulation for boards of education—many things. What I want to talk about with regard to this bill, though, are two fairly large items and one item outside of the bill that affects its ability to come into effect—affects its actualization.

The largest piece is the Ontario clean energy benefit. That Ontario clean energy benefit is the most important task this bill has to deliver on, because it's so critical to the government's survival. The other thing that needs to be touched on is the WSIB changes and the issues that are addressed in this bill. Outside of the bill and affecting whether or not there will actually be the funds to deliver the goods is the sale of future operations of the Teranet electronic land registry. But first, let's talk about the context within which this bill has been introduced.

We have a government that is engaged in policies around electricity and hydro that are proving to be extremely unpopular. This is a government that is within 11 months of an election date and is looking for a quick fix. I have no doubt that somewhere in the back of the Premier's office, communications and strategy thinkers sat down and said, "You know, let's have a very quick, clean hit of a 10% cut. That will calm people down. It will put oil on the waters, and we may just slip through after all."

This government is coming up to an election, and it has money troubles. It needs a quick fix. They thought about whom they could copy. They looked back at recent Ontario history and realized that Mike Harris was in trouble before an election in the 1990s and sold off the 407 for a quick hit of cash. In fact, if you think about this clean energy benefit, you can think back to Ernie Eves, who needed to borrow almost \$1 billion as well to buy down the cost of electricity. So it isn't as though what is being done is without precedent. In fact, there's a history of governments in the last 15 years coming up to an

election date and either selling off assets for quick cash or incurring large debt in order to deal with a situation that has troubled the people of Ontario.

What did the government say? What did the McGuinty government say about what it was going to do before it introduced this bill? The headline on its media release was, "McGuinty Government Introduces New Measures to Help Ontario Families and Reduce Debt." Their media release said, "The Ontario government today introduced the Ontario clean energy benefit, which would provide a 10% benefit to help consumers manage rising electricity prices for the next five years."

Now, in the media release, the government didn't say, "Those prices are rising because we made a mistake by investing in time-of-use smart meters." No, that wasn't mentioned. The government didn't mention that it had decided to blow the farm on nuclear investment instead of investing in efficiency and conservation. It simply recognized that prices were rising to a level that was politically dangerous for its continued existence.

Interestingly, in the media release the Liberals went on to say, "In order to have a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that includes renewables and creates jobs"—that's certainly not at the centre of this plan. The centre of this plan is nuclear power. It doesn't say that this plan, because it will drive up rates through an ill-conceived investment in nuclear power, will make electricity expensive and thus will undermine jobs in this province. It just says that its plan will include renewables and create jobs. Much reality is lost here through omission.

In the media release, the Liberals say, "Over the next five years, residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46%...." I have to say that, in talking to my constituents who saw the 10% and heard about the 46%, they were far more impressed with the 46% rise than the 10% cut. Maybe it's because they went to school here in Ontario and they learned math. Maybe it's because teachers kept them in class until they could do their subtraction and their addition. They realized that what was being promised to them was a very substantial increase in their electricity costs. That was not popular. So what we have is a botched job on electricity and we have doubtful numbers before us about the cost of the plan that has been presented by the government.

If you go back to the government's long-term energy plan and you ask about the numbers—the costs—the government, the Premier, cannot explain those numbers. Take a look at the performance of the Minister of Energy yesterday at his press conference when he introduced the new power plan. The reporter from CityPulse asked, "What about the cost of nuclear waste?" And I have to tell you, without doubt, the Minister of Energy—Minister, you looked very confused. Clearly, you had not thought a lot about that issue. You talked about it being a federal responsibility—some sort of federal committee.

Speaker, for your information and that of those who are watching, federal legislation requires Ontario to put money into waste disposal and it requires Ontario to

appoint members to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization board. The federal government's role is to set up the legislative framework; it is the province of Ontario and other nuclear jurisdictions that pay for that organization and appoint the directors. The minister should be well aware that a big chunk—in the billions of dollars—of debt that we're paying on the stranded debt and the billions that we continue to set aside for operation of our electricity system go to this waste. So when the reporter asked yesterday, "What about the cost of the waste?" the minister showed that he did not fully understand the scale of the problem and whose responsibility it was to deal with that.

The reporter from RDI—the CBC French service—asked the minister, "How is it that you are going to reduce the cost of peak power in time-of-use? Where is that reduction going to be paid for? Does that mean that the non-peak cost of power in people's homes is going to go up?"

I have to say, I thought I was in question period because the minister danced around it without answering. He was pretty good at it. He never touched down. One has to say it is impressive when you're asked a question and you never actually come close to the answer, and he didn't.

I would say that that question is one that's going to be addressed another day because, frankly, the way the Liberals have structured things, if you reduce the price here, you've got to raise the price over here. I look forward to hearing how that's all going to be balanced out.

Certainly this morning in question period, we got an opportunity to see the Premier check out or test out his talking points for the coming few months, and at the same time, we saw the Premier, who claimed that this long-term energy plan had all kinds of detailed answers, not able to answer some pretty fundamental questions about how things were costed and really how his government was going to make decisions.

This morning Andrea Horwath, leader of the NDP, asked: "My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the government announced that they will be 'proceeding with two new units at Darlington on a cost-effective basis.' How will the government determine what cost-effective is?"

That's not a complex question. One would think that the government, having published its 68-page plan, having engaged numerous bureaucrats over countless hours to pull together this plan, would be able to say,

"Yes, here's how we would determine what's cost-effective." But in an indication of either a lack of understanding of the issue before him or an indication that that particular point had not been addressed by his planners, he didn't answer that question in any way, shape or form. He went on about the virtues of nuclear. He went on about whether anyone else had a plan. But he didn't, in fact, answer a fundamental question about his plan.

When you have a large department, a Ministry of Energy, and when you have bodies like the Ontario Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation which engage fairly high-priced people who do this kind of planning, you should be able to answer how you determine whether or not something is cost-effective. The Premier could not do that this morning. The Premier tested out his lines for the next election, he tested out his lines for the next few months, but he couldn't answer a fundamental question about the plan that he has put forward.

Ms. Horwath came back again, saying, "Yesterday, the energy minister seemed to be pulling numbers out of thin air. But for families that were just told that they're going to be paying \$700 more a year for hydro within the next five years, this isn't make-believe. Who will be determining whether this government's nuclear plans are actually cost-effective, and when will they be doing that?"

That question wasn't that complex either because, generally speaking, you take this kind of plan to the Ontario Energy Board, witnesses are presented, witnesses are questioned and the OEB makes a ruling on the feasibility of the plan. The Premier could have given that answer, but he didn't. What he had to say was interesting: "We're doing whatever we can to place as much of the risk as we reasonably can on to those of the private sector." That was a great line. That was about as loose as it gets.

Speaker, in a very subtle way, you are indicating that I may be running short of time. I appreciate your subtlety and discretion. If indeed we're running short of time, I'm willing to stand down so that I can resume tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to the member for Toronto–Danforth. He could see that I had my trusty pocket watch out.

It is now 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until Thursday, November 25, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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