



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 2 March 2009

Lundi 2 mars 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 March 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 mars 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm delighted to introduce representatives of the Southwest Economic Assembly. The head of it is His Worship Dan Matheson, mayor of Stratford. He's here with Grant Hopcroft, who's head of government relations for the city of London. Welcome.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to ask all the members to welcome visitors today to question period from the Perth Federation of Agriculture and the Wellington Federation of Agriculture. They'll be joining us shortly. They'll be here today to experience Toronto 101. We'll be going to Brampton West with Mr. Dhillon to visit his riding in the urban experience that our farmers will enjoy today.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want to welcome Josh Bizjak, Seamus Atkinson and Anton Sharplanin to the Legislature this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Trinity-Spadina and page Olivia Mew, We'd like to welcome her mother, Gabi Mew, and her father, Robert Mew, who will be here this morning and this afternoon, sitting in the members' gallery. Welcome.

There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. Several weeks ago, you invited the media into your office one by one and told them of an epiphany that you had had, a conversion of sorts, on the road to recession and have-not status. Premier, when are we actually going to see some evidence of that epiphany? Because there certainly isn't any proof of it in your going-in-the-red energy bill.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the presentation of the storyline. I see it a little bit differently, you might

imagine. But I think, as my friend eagerly anticipates the coming budget, it's important for us to keep in mind what we've been doing together with Ontarians during the course of the past five years, notwithstanding the fact that the opposition does not support the efforts of Ontarians in this regard.

For example, Ontarians, working hard and well together, are today building hospitals and roads and bridges and courthouses. They are investing in border infrastructure and the like. And that's creating thousands and thousands of jobs. We're talking about billions of dollars in infrastructure investment. That's ongoing. That's the result of decisions we've taken two or three years back. I'm proud of that initiative. There will be more of that to come, but I'd love to have the support of the opposition in that regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: In fact, this bill is nothing more than a repeat of the damaging economic policies that we've seen from the Dalton McGuinty government over the past five years, and so it's no surprise that Dalton McGuinty's record for private sector job growth is a paltry 2%. All we see coming out of this bill is a lot of government inspectors brandishing search warrants and harassing businesses and homeowners.

Premier, on Focus Ontario this weekend, your energy minister was asked where the 50,000 new jobs were going to come from, and he said, "Well, how does anyone know these things?" Premier, if your energy minister doesn't know—and it's his bill—do you know where the 50,000 new jobs are going to come from?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what Ontarians want to know is, who's for going forward and who's for going back? I think they understand, in their heart of hearts, that the price of oil and gas is going to go up. They understand that whenever we buy oil and gas from outside of Ontario it does not create new jobs in the province of Ontario. They understand that, over time, with the evolution of technology, the price of energy from wind and the sun will come down. They understand that investing in those kinds of technologies creates new jobs in the province of Ontario. They want new jobs, they want clean and green electricity, and they want us to do more in the fight against climate change. I think they're with us in terms of this initiative.

What they really want to know is, why wouldn't the Conservatives, the so-called Progressive Conservatives, support this kind of initiative?

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It sounds like the Premier's advisers on this bill are the same ones who told him that he could close the coal plants by 2007, and we know how valuable that advice was.

If the Premier took the time to consult and listen, he would know this bill is probably the worst thing that he could do during tough economic times. Ontario already has the highest taxation rate on new investments. With this bill, businesses looking to invest and create jobs will see that the cost of energy in Ontario is going to skyrocket and the supply will be very unreliable.

Premier, you lost 71,000 jobs in December alone. Your energy minister can't back up his promise of 50,000 new jobs. Isn't this bill really all about seducing the people of Ontario with green talk to distract them from your disastrous economic record?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would encourage my honourable colleague to speak with some of the business community in Ontario to get a better understanding of their impression of our new Green Energy Act. For example, Paul Massara, who's chair of the Toronto Board of Trade said, "With the introduction of the Green Energy Act, Ontario will be at the forefront of progress, a dynamic force for change." I know that the Canadian Manufacturers' Association has also said much along the same lines. The Association of Power Producers of Ontario is supportive of the act.

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We're talking about a number of business communities. Here's what the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have to say: We support "the intent of the Green Energy Act to create opportunities for manufacturers and exporters and improve the environment. We recognize the opportunities that this legislation may present for many manufacturers to develop and commercialize new, more efficient products."

We're talking about jobs, economic growth, and at the same time, we're talking about clean and green electricity.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the Premier about the going-red energy bill. Last week, when the minister was asked about warrantless searches, he didn't seem to know what the media were talking about. I'm happy to familiarize him with the bill. This bill allows intrusion into businesses without warrant. But furthermore, and more importantly, it allows government inspectors to go into private residences with a warrant to get the audit papers.

Premier, will you admit that you've taken the nanny state to a very scary new level and you're now forcing your way into people's homes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm going to allow the minister to speak to this momentarily. Let me just say at the outset that I understand where the opposition is coming from on this score, but to somehow frighten Ontar-

ians into thinking that there are some nefarious undertones associated with this bill is less than forthright. Our intention, and we are open to positive and constructive amendments, is to ensure that Ontario can leap forward, that we can move beyond old energy sources of the past, that we can take advantage of clean and green sources of electricity, that we can create new jobs at the same time and that we can do more to fight climate change as privileged global citizens. That's our intention, but I know the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure will want to speak to some of the details momentarily.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, this is like 1984 all over again, and I am not talking about the year. What the Premier is saying in this bill is that he is going to treat law-abiding citizens in the province of Ontario like common criminals. He's going to allow government inspectors armed with search warrants to barge into people's homes and rifle through their personal belongings and papers to find an energy audit paper.

Premier, how can you justify such an intrusion into the privacy of people's homes in Ontario in 2009?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to thank the honourable member—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: It is not so. Firstly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member might want to listen to the answer, seeing as he just asked the question. Please continue.

Hon. George Smitherman: On a matter of clarification, the honourable member has just come from an hour-long briefing with my deputy minister and senior officials at their request, for the second time, where he could have posed the same question and received the same answer as I'll offer now.

Firstly, there is no opportunity for warrantless search. He said they'd knock on the door, arriving with the search warrant in hand, but the bigger point is, only in the circumstances where a piece of legislation uses the word "mandatory" do governments seek the opportunity to address that in circumstances where it hasn't been abided by. The language in this legislation is identical to that in a 2002 bill that came from the opposite party. But I'm very happy to have a conversation with the member in the context of whatever amendments might be helpful to make the bill better. This is certainly one of those things I'd be very happy to talk to him—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is nothing but an outright assault on the private property rights of individuals in this province. They're going to treat Ontarians like criminals, violating their privacy rights while they're picking their pockets with skyrocketing energy prices and a new tax. There's nothing green about putting families and busi-

nesses in the red, and citizens are seeing red over the intrusion on their privacy rights.

Premier, do you really think that you're going to get away with this tawdry, green-tinged seduction of Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman: We've had evidence—in fact, I've twice paid at least \$10 for a CD of the member's artistic creativity and it's nice to see more of it on offer today.

On the matter he raises, though, as I assume he means that to be a serious matter, as I've said already, there is no such mechanism for intrusion into the private residences of individuals unless in a circumstance under investigation where a mandatory element of a legislation has not been fulfilled—and through the courts. But more importantly, as we move toward committee, we assume opportunities for enhancement and improvement to the bill.

If this is the primary matter of concern for the opposition, I give them every indication that I'm happy to have a conversation after question period. I'm very certain we can make progress on this very specific point of it and hear other points of concern from the honourable member and other members of the Legislature.

DON JAIL

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. On Friday, the member for Welland and I accepted an invitation to tour and see the Don jail. We did, in fact, see the Don jail. We saw first-hand the conditions that can only be termed squalid, overcrowded and inhumane. One can see why Ontario Justice Richard Schneider called the Don jail “an embarrassment to the Canadian criminal justice system.”

Premier, you received the same invitation to tour and see the Don jail. Can I ask when the Premier is going to accept?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: There's absolutely no question that the inaction of other governments, the inability of other governments to put money into building correctional institutions, the inaction of the NDP government from 1990 to 1995, the inaction and the threat of closure by the Conservative government from 1995 to 2003 obviously set some challenges for us. We are meeting those challenges. We are committed to building new facilities to increase bed capacity. We will not stand by and watch the corrections system deteriorate as the NDP and the Conservatives did.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, these are fine words, but the people of Ontario have heard these fine words from Liberals before. Members of the Liberal government—or the now-Liberal government—visited the Don jail in 2003. These are some of the things they said: “It's horrible. It's tough, I can't tell you.” “There are guys being peed on.” “People are being treated like animals.” People who are psychiatrically incapable of dealing with themselves or handling themselves are incarcerated here.”

That is what Liberals had to say five years ago, now going on six years, and in fact conditions have gotten worse over the last five and a half years. Why should people have any confidence in the McGuinty Liberal government, that you're going to do something now, when in fact you've allowed conditions to get worse over the last five and a half years?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Quite frankly, because we are allowing our actions to speak for what we plan on doing, not what the NDP government did. We must remind everyone in the province of Ontario that when the NDP formed government, they cut correctional budgets by \$20 million in 1993-94. They cut \$13 million in 1994-95. In those two years, they built no increased capacity. In those two years, they turned their backs on correctional officers. In those two years, they slapped them around and said “You'll either do what we say or we'll impose a social contract.” No, our government treats their workers differently, and our government plans on increasing capacity with new institutions.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: It amazes me how nasty Liberals want to be to that good Liberal, Bob Rae.

This is about conditions at the Don jail today. This is about people who have been released from psychiatric institutions because there are no more beds in the psychiatric institutions, and instead, they're incarcerated at the Don jail. This is about people who bang their heads against steel bars and cement walls. This is about people who have drug addictions, who can't get any help. In some cases, this is about people who have been picked up on a warrant, and they're next to somebody who is charged with three or four murders. This is about a condition that has gotten worse and worse under a McGuinty government that promised, five and a half years ago, that they were going to deal with the problem immediately.

Tell me, why does this disgrace in international law terms, in international human rights terms, continue in Ontario under a McGuinty government—

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me use his words, Speaker. He says it was a disgrace, and it was a disgrace. We've decided that we will be very proactive at increasing capacity, so our capacity will increase by over 1,200 beds. We will ensure that the working conditions are improving.

Not like them and not like the previous Conservative government, we are continuing and we will continue to address the concerns in our correctional institutions, because we understand the importance of them and the people who work there. We will not turn our backs on them as the NDP government did.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Premier. In 2005, with much boasting, the McGuinty government announced a \$150-million forest sector prosper-

ity fund and a \$350-million loan guarantee fund. Through a freedom-of-information request, we have learned that of the \$500 million that was promised, a staggering \$373 million is uncommitted and untouched. That means 75% of the assistance package that the McGuinty government boasted about for the forest sector has never been touched.

When tens of thousands of forest sector workers in northern Ontario have had their jobs destroyed and forest sector communities have been devastated, can the McGuinty government tell us why 75% of the boasted-about assistance package has never been touched, never been utilized?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to be able to respond on the prosperity fund, which was put in place to help the forestry sector.

As you know, we have a challenge. AbitibiBowater is currently facing some very serious issues, and I'll use that as an example. We recently gave them—they had asked for a grant of \$1.6 million. That was based on the fact that they were going to invest a significant amount of money, up to \$10 million, in their kraft mill, and they have not done that. Therefore, they have not accepted the grant yet. So what has happened is that, yes, there are places within the prosperity fund where in fact the companies have not been in a position to take the money that has been offered to them.

I've now just had another—Firelogic Inc. this morning—that has come in and has indicated that they now have their financing in place and are ready to accept their grant. This is just an example of what we are doing to help the forestry sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't know what planet members of the McGuinty government are on, because forest sector companies and forest sector communities and unions and workers told you that there were major problems with your program and companies wouldn't be able to utilize it. Instead, this is what the McGuinty government said. The previous Minister of Natural Resources said, "We have had a very positive response from the forest industry to the forest sector prosperity fund.... We expect that 100% of the prosperity fund will be committed to investments ... by the end of 2006." Here we are now, 2009, and 75% of the money has not been used.

I ask again, when tens of thousands of workers have lost their jobs, when dozens of communities have been devastated by the loss of forest sector jobs, what's the McGuinty government's excuse for three quarters of the prosperity fund sitting there while more workers become unemployed every day?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: The bottom line is, you cannot sell a product if you don't have a market for it.

But let me just share with this particular member that in fact Abitibi in Fort Frances-Rainy River received \$16,152,255 for a boiler. The fact is, the money has been announced. They need to be able to pick it up with

matched grants. That was the way it was set up. They've declined that, but we do have the monies here for the companies and we are working with them.

We just announced a new bio-energy product—a request for interest for a new product. We are working with OPG in this particular case.

We realize that there are extraordinary challenges facing this industry. It is a global issue. You cannot produce for a market that doesn't exist. Maybe that's where this member doesn't quite get it.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: What we get and what workers get is that the McGuinty government goes across the province boasting about \$500 million for assistance. The workers themselves and the community leaders tell you they're not going to be able to access this money; it doesn't address their needs.

I'll tell you, there is something you could use it for: Abitibi wants to sell off their power dams, power dams that support 1,000 jobs at the mill in Fort Frances and support 1,000 jobs at the mill in Iroquois Falls. The McGuinty government could take the money that is not being used in this fund right now, flow it to the municipalities, allow them to buy the power dams and use those power dams to support those jobs. Instead you're going to allow Abitibi to sell off the power dams to a company that couldn't give a damn how many jobs are lost in northern Ontario.

If you want to use that money, Premier, use that money today. Tell the communities of Iroquois Falls, Fort Frances and Kenora you're going to flow this money so they can buy the—

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

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I do not have any proposal in front of me from AbitibiBowater with respect to the sale of any dams. If this member has some information that I'm not privy to, I'd be more than pleased to receive it from him. I do not have a proposal in front of me.

The fact of the matter is that we have committed over \$120 million, through this fund, to companies, and they are in different processes in terms of accessing those dollars. We're working with them.

The challenge, as I indicated, facing the forest industry is not new. It is one that has been going on for over two years. There is no market for the product. The member doesn't seem to understand this. It's one of the reasons why we've been doing the added-value market products. This is one of the reasons why we put out a request for interest. It's very clear, the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I just remind the member of the third party that he did ask the question. He should have been listening to the answer.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Dalton McGuinty's power grab

will be catastrophic for consumers. Energy bills could be 30% higher. Consumer choice will be eliminated. The minister will pick our energy consumption for us. Rates alone will increase from 5.5 cents to 46 cents; that's nine times higher. The bill overrules contract law and title law by favouring renewable energy projects over real property agreements. Finally, it establishes the toaster police, who have vast search-and-seizure powers on household appliances, and if you get in their way, you might face \$25,000 in fines. I can't believe that you, as Minister of Consumer Services, would allow this. Were you consulted on the bill? If not, why not? And if so, how could you let this bill pass, as Minister of Consumer Services?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, please.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to address some of the misinformation that the honourable member has offered. Firstly, on this very last point that the honourable member has made, I do want to make note that any inspection powers that were proposed in the bill were identical to those from the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act of 2002. Certainly if the honourable member reads the bill, she'll see that there is no warrantless search opportunity as has been speculated upon.

More to the point, the honourable member is just plain wrong with respect to the numbers. She's operating on the idea that we're going to stop using Niagara Falls, we're going to close down our nuclear plants and we're going 100% renewables, when to the contrary, what we're seeking to do is enhance the proportion somewhat of renewable energy in our supply mix. Over a 15-year period with the investments that are anticipated, we see about a 1% increase on people's bills related to the Green Energy Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I didn't realize that the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure actually got a new portfolio for consumer protection.

To the Minister of Consumer Services: You have some explaining to do. This is the biggest threat to consumer protection in this province's history—more taxes, more bureaucrats, more government intrusion onto real property. How can any of that be good for Ontario's consumers? Enough is enough. Will the Minister of Consumer Services educate the Minister of Energy on the consequences consumers will face as the result of this power grab? Will he stand up for consumers so they won't face skyrocketing energy increases at a time when we can ill afford to raise anyone's standard-of-living expenses?

Hon. George Smitherman: The consumers in the province of Ontario will be given the opportunity to purchase energy which is cleaner and greener, which is lighter on the footprint on the environment and which enhances the opportunities for jobs in the green economy. These investments in renewable energy alongside investments in conservation will allow people to go about their lives with a cleaner, greener supply of electricity while,

at the same time, using less electricity on a day-to-day basis. Associated with the investments which are front-end loaded on distribution, which is called the smart grid, or on transmission, we anticipate about \$5 billion of investment in the next three years, starting in 2010. We anticipate that the incremental additional cost to the ratepayer will be 1% per year. It runs quite counter to the hyperbole offered by the honourable member. I look forward to more opportunities to speak to her on this important subject.

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EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Once again, the numbers show the disastrous state of our economy. Close to another 150 jobs are expected to disappear in Wheatley at the Omstead Foods vegetable processing plant. The fourth-quarter GDP numbers are almost certain to show that Ontario's GDP is shrinking by at least 4% annually. EI claims are up 30% year over year, with many communities up as much as 50%. We're now at over 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost over the last four years.

The NDP has a five-part jobs plan. Where is yours?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Michael Bryant: There's no question that these job losses are extremely, extremely tough on the individuals involved, the families, the communities in particular. The member is also aware of the fact that this is affecting all countries, all jurisdictions. There are a variety of causes across the globe. But the bottom line is, it's very tough on these families.

I'll note nonetheless that as a result of the fiscal shape that Canada and Ontario are in going into these tough times, the Canadian economy contracted at an annualized rate of 3.4% in the fourth quarter, as compared with a 6.2% decline in the US economy. That's a very significant contraction nonetheless, but it is to say that in Canada, relatively speaking, we are in fact under way with a jobs program and an economic strategy that's allowed us to get hit a lot less—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Again, we've laid out a plan that will get Ontario workers back to work.

We need an aggressive 60% Ontario content in green energy, as they have in Quebec. We have a company in Hamilton that has 75% of their workers laid off, National Steel Car, which is quite capable of retrofitting their plant to build wind turbines and other things. Seventy-five per cent of their people are out of work.

We need a \$10.25-an-hour minimum wage immediately to put money in the pockets of people who will spend it in Ontario.

We also need 50% of transit, streetcars and subway cars, to be built in Ontario.

Once again, the NDP has a jobs plan. Where's the government's plan?

Hon. Michael Bryant: On the contrary, there's nothing in the New Democrats' jobs plan that has anything in terms of industry investments in companies. On the other hand, this government, for the past few years, has been investing literally hundreds of millions of dollars that have leveraged billions of dollars of investments in other companies.

The member mentions a company in his community. In fact, this company, and I'd be happy to work with them, can work with the Ontario government, which could see an investment that would jumpstart any company and allow it to jump ahead of its competitors. That's the purpose of the industrial funds. That's the purpose of an economic strategy that involves interventions to assist companies directly so that they in fact can not only weather the storm but in some cases expand.

Yes, we're getting hit, but we are not getting hit nearly as hard as they are being hit in Japan, as they are being hit in the European Union and in the United States. That's thanks in part to the fiscal situation we're in, thanks in part to our financial system, and thanks in part to an investment strategy that—

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

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. It is a well-known fact that this province's highly skilled workforce is one of our greatest assets. However, our new knowledge-based economy seems to require an ever-increasing level of education. It is estimated that seven out of every 10 jobs created in Ontario will require post-secondary education or training.

As a result, demand on Ontario's universities for professional or research-based graduate programs has increased significantly. We know that we are now competing with jurisdictions such as China and India, where there is a strong emphasis on higher learning, and we need to do the same.

Minister, how will you ensure that Ontario's students have access to the higher education that is now demanded of them to compete in the global, knowledge-based economy?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the honourable member for the question as well as his advocacy for higher education in particular. I know how proud he is to represent Carleton University in Ottawa.

The member is absolutely right. We have to continue to make investments in higher education at the university level, particularly in the graduate area. That's why I was pleased on Friday to formally announce that Ontario will be investing \$51.6 million to create almost 3,300 new graduate spaces over the next two years. This means an additional 1,925 new master's spaces and 1,373 new Ph.D. spaces. This builds on our government's Reaching Higher plan and allows for study in such areas as environmental studies, engineering and other key areas for our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Minister, last week's announcement means that Carleton University, in my riding, will receive \$1.05 million, resulting in a total of 67 new spaces in master's and Ph.D.-level programs. Neighbouring University of Ottawa will receive 277 additional spaces.

In a conversation I had with the president of Carleton, Dr. Roseann Runte, she indicated that the new funding will help the university expand research in selected areas. Although Carleton is pleased with the additional support, I know that they could expand graduate programs in other areas as well. Minister, could you please tell me why some institutions receive more spaces than others?

Hon. John Milloy: I think all members from the Ottawa area and all members in the Legislature should be very proud of the outstanding work that's being done both at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa.

In fact, in the last two rounds of graduate space allocations, Carleton University received 572 new spots, and the University of Ottawa, 1,365. In this most recent round, Ontario's largest research-intensive universities received 75% of the new spaces that were allocated, which allows us to build and leverage upon existing capacity within the system and build at those research-intensive universities, to allow us to again move ahead and prosper with one of the finest post-secondary institutions in the world.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Minister, as you know, seniors are the cornerstone on which our province has been built. As you also know, your government has driven Ontario into have-not status, destroying decades of their hard work and perseverance.

It's hard to be a senior in Ontario today, Minister. The savings they have relied on for their retirement have evaporated due to the stock market crisis, and increased property assessments have raised their property taxes. Seniors now fear for their financial security. Minister, why have you been so silent on the new energy bill when you know it hits seniors hard when they can least afford it?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I will refer that question to my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for the question, and I do agree with him about the necessity of being very sensitive to electricity use and to the implications for any ratepayer, including for seniors.

The fact of the matter is that the Green Energy Act has an opportunity to advance our economic interests and to enhance the renewable energy that is in the supply mix. That's why a cornerstone of the Green Energy Act is working and investing in local communities and in the operations of people's homes to lessen their electricity use so that the impact in terms of the overall bill is not so substantial.

I'll be very happy to listen carefully to any suggestions that the honourable member has about how we can better tailor conservation efforts to our seniors so as to lighten any of the possible impacts from rising electricity prices.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm sorry. With that answer, the minister of everything has made clear to seniors that he is not in their corner. The Minister of Natural Resources, for that matter, whose riding has the highest percentage of seniors in this entire province, has also neglected their interests by remaining silent.

Will the minister responsible for seniors commit now to educating the Minister of Energy about the hardships that this bill will cause for seniors and promise to protect them from unsustainable energy costs?

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I do want to remind the honourable member that we have increased the property tax grant for seniors. That was in a budget that I believe the honourable member and his party chose not to support.

I think it is important, no matter what technology you're behind, to recognize that energy prices are under pressure to increase. Their plan is to take coal stacks that presently go up and to stick them down in the ground. That's an unproven technology, and it sounds quite costly to many people.

What we're offering is an opportunity for conservation initiatives, to lessen the impact that people have on the earth and to lessen their use of electricity so as to balance out any of those challenges around rising electricity prices.

Like I said, my mother is a senior, as an example. She has a smart meter. She looks forward to the opportunity to be able to use that in a fashion that allows her to manage her energy use more effectively.

I look forward to further opportunities to engage with the honourable member on this very important subject.

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PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Miners at the Hemlo goldfield have contracted silicosis, a potentially fatal disease that drastically affects their quality of life. These miners can't breathe.

Last night, CBC News: Sunday documented the difficulties very sick miners are having with WSIB because the sick miners must prove they contracted silicosis from working in the mines.

Is making them jump through bureaucratic hoops the best we can do for those sick people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First off, I want to thank the member for the question, and I want to commend my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for his advocacy, his hard work, his commitment and the dedication that he has exhibited on these matters.

The health and safety of Ontario workers is our number one priority. I know our ministry staff has been working very closely with the employer, with the Hemlo-area mines, the employees, the families, in that area to make sure that they are not at risk of silica exposure.

We've collaborated with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and the United Steelworkers to exchange information and develop strategies for the Hemlo mines area. This is working. The ministry continues to monitor those Hemlo mines very closely. We want to ensure that all those miners are taken care of, that they are—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The WSIB has already recognized that miners in the Hemlo goldfields suffer from silicosis as a result of their occupation, and they have approved some of the claims.

When the Liberals were in opposition, they knew the right thing to do. They were calling what was happening an "epidemic" of silicosis, and they were calling for an inquiry. Now that they are in power, can they remember the right thing to do?

Rather than watching these sick people spend their last breath fighting the WSIB, will the minister ensure those miners are treated fairly and ask the WSIB to expedite the approval of their claims?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can assure the member is that our number one commitment is to the health and safety of all Ontario workers. We've done a great deal of work in terms of the injury rates in mines. They are way, way down—over 50% down in many cases.

Also, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty and my colleague Chris Bentley, when he was the Minister of Labour, as well as Mike Gravelle, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Ontario's occupational exposure limits—there are now 725 chemical hazards that we look at. We now review those hazards every year. Unfortunately, when that government was in power and that government was in power, they only reviewed it twice in 12 years.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Education. This government believes that the best way to build a strong publicly funded education system is to involve our education partners, such as parents, teachers and students.

In January, this government announced continued funds for Parents Reaching Out grants. More than 1,300 projects are being funded through a nearly \$2-million investment across the province for the year 2008-09. This funding will go to local school councils and also to regional parent-engagement projects. Would the minister explain what this means for children and families in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our whole approach to improving publicly funded education rebuilding has been a collaborative one, and one of the groups of people that

has been most important for us to work with is the parents of the kids in our schools.

A few years ago, what parents said to us was, "It would be great if there were a fund that we could apply to for projects that we think are important in our community." So that's exactly what we've set up. It's \$1.1 million for school council projects; about \$900,000 for regional and provincial projects. What that means is that workshops to increase engagement of parents in their kids' education happen at parents' schools. Projects that engage the whole community, especially in isolated communities, are funded by these dollars. Outreach by the local school to increase awareness of the importance of parent engagement, and translation of materials for parents who don't speak English or French as their first language, to engage those parents in the education of their—

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I know that in my riding of London—Fanshawe, parents put a lot of time, energy and creativity into the applications for these projects. People in my riding are extremely pleased that we are able to support innovative projects in the London area that will encourage more parents to become engaged. I know they have benefited from more than \$35,000 provided for the school council to initiate these projects and to engage people, to spend on speaking engagements and also school events for families, students and teachers. I also understand that these "parents reaching out" grants are a part of our plan to make it easier for parents to participate in these issues.

Would the minister tell us what else our government is doing in this regard?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, one of the hallmarks of this MPP's tenure is that he is very connected to the schools. He knows what's going on with the parents, with the community and in his schools. I just want to give him credit.

We understand that if families are connected to schools, kids do better at school, so we have established parent-involvement committees at the regional level so that, across a board, schools and school councils can talk to each other, share best practices and educate each other, because building capacity among parents is an important aspect of this work. We've funded 123 parenting and family literacy centres. What those do is help parents, before their kids start school, get used to the school, used to the routines. It breaks down those barriers, because, let's face it, not all parents are comfortable bringing their kids into the school. So those parent and family literacy centres—

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the public was shocked to

learn, as they watched Focus Ontario on Saturday, that despite your claim that 50,000 jobs would be created when you introduced your new bill, you don't have any idea as to when, if or how those jobs will be created. It appears that you are trying to seduce the public with the mantra of green without doing the necessary in-depth analysis.

I ask you, is this promise of 50,000 jobs like your broken promise to close all the coal plants by 2007?

Hon. George Smitherman: I can tell you one thing: It's not like the honourable member's promise not to close hospitals.

I thank the honourable member for the question. What we're anticipating in the first three years, starting in 2010, associated with the implementation of the Green Energy Act, is the opportunity for 50,000 additional jobs in the province of Ontario in all forms. We anticipate that the investments associated with the transmission and distribution system of \$3.2 billion will account for about half of those. In addition, we will see renewables coming to life in the province of Ontario and a very, very strong focus on the conservation side of the Green Energy Act, including \$300 million of investment in our largest industrial concerns so as to help them emerge using less electricity.

Across the landscape of these investments, we feel quite confident that 50,000 jobs will be created.

Of course, once the bill is passed, hoping the honourable member will support it, we have the opportunity to implement—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The fact remains that the minister has no idea when, how or if the 50,000 jobs will be created. In fact, it's been very astonishing to see last week, in response to his critics in the media, how very few answers he actually has to specific questions. He has no answers for the jobs, targets, prices, etc., and yet he ridiculed our critic when he wanted to send it to committee so that we could have a very informed and productive debate. He is now saying, because he has no answers, that he's going to roll out some announcements and some answers over the next three to four months.

I ask you, Minister, was this early introduction of your bill without any answers an attempt to divert attention away from your abysmal economic track record that shows you lost 71,000 jobs in January alone and that we're going to become a have-not province on April 1?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say to the honourable member, of course, that associated with an initiative like this is economic modelling. The proof is in the opportunity to implement it, and that's why I am hoping for the honourable member's support as the bill moves forward.

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We do have jurisdictions that have had extraordinary success with employment related to initiatives very similar to this. There are very powerful examples from other jurisdictions that have taken the tack of making it easier to implement renewable energy and bringing a much

stronger focus on conservation. Jobs in transmission, in distribution, in the development of new renewable projects, in the retrofit of homes and industry: These are all opportunities to give people employment. At the beginning of last week, there was a big focus on home energy audits. By the end of the week, we were receiving calls from people who wished to find out how they could be employed in such endeavours. This is an example of the opportunities.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Let's look at our Ontario universities: larger classes; increased dependence on part-time, temporary faculty; tuition hikes; and increased student debt. Now we learn that Ontario universities have been forced to acquire substantial long-term debt to deal with rising enrolments, infrastructure renewal, program expansion and capital projects, to compensate for the lowest per capita grant funding in the country. The long-term debt of Ontario universities totals over \$2.6 billion. The average long-term debt being carried by each Ontario university is \$147 million.

Your underfunding has mortgaged the future of Ontario universities. This, my friend, is a mess. What are you going to do about it?

Hon. John Milloy: As I've said before in this House, I'll certainly acknowledge that many sectors of our economy face challenges right now. But I reject the premise of the honourable member's question. Ontario boasts one of the finest post-secondary education systems in the world. Four years ago, under the vision of this Premier, we invested \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education in order to give it the boost that is needed in the areas of quality and accessibility. These are the results: 100,000 more students in post-secondary education, one of the highest rates in the western world; graduation rates have gone up 8% at colleges and 3% at universities; last year, Ontario's universities hired approximately 1,800 new faculty, more than half in the tenure stream; and I'd remind the honourable member that 37,000 foreign students come every year—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There is, my friend, a great dissonance between universities being on the verge of bankruptcy and your saying that things are great. The problem is that the average annual cost of servicing this debt is approximately \$10 million per university. A National Post article says the government of Ontario is complicit by allowing its university sector to take on more massive amounts of debt as a substitute for more government funding. Universities cannot continue like this. We thought last week that the Premier was serious about saving post-secondary education, but Ontario universities are on the verge of bankruptcy and I'm not quite sure you realize how serious this is. You are playing with the future of our students. When are you going to move

away from your stock answer and the fact that we are number 10 in per capita funding, and deal with this mess?

Hon. John Milloy: We continue to work with all of our institutions and, as I said, of course we recognize there are challenges right now in the current state of the economy. But let me remind the honourable member that this year, operating funding for colleges and universities increased by 57% since 2003. Per student funding to both colleges and universities since 2003—

Interjection.

Hon. John Milloy: Let me give the figures: colleges, nearly \$1,800, a 40% increase; universities, over \$1,400, a 21% increase. I remind the member again that I will put our record up against his record any day of the week, when we talk about an NDP government that cut student aid, that cut funding to post-secondary education and that allowed tuition to increase by 50%. We have a record we're proud of, and we're going to continue to build upon that record.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Last month, Metrolinx, the regional transportation authority for the GTA and Hamilton, announced a revised proposal to expand GO Transit service through the Georgetown corridor and build an air link that would connect Union Station to Pearson airport.

The York South–Weston community was pleased to learn that the new proposal addressed some of their main concerns and now includes a full GO station in Weston, expanded all-day GO service and a stop for the air-rail link, while minimizing street closures. Metrolinx has just finished conducting open houses to consult with the communities along the corridor. Two of these open houses were held in the riding of York South–Weston.

Minister, could you please share with us the outcome of these consultations and what the next main steps will be?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to thank the member for York South–Weston for her advocacy on this issue. It has been excellent.

During the month of February, Metrolinx held six all-day, community open house events throughout Toronto, Mississauga and Georgetown in order to hear from the public on the Georgetown south service expansion and the Union Station–Pearson rail link. More than 700 people attended to ask questions and leave comments with the people who were there, the project's technical team. The input received from these community consultations is being carefully reviewed by the project team and will then feed into the environmental assessment process, once that begins.

Public consultation has played a large role in how we're moving forward. In fact, the creation of a stop in Weston was a direct result of the concerns heard by the folks in the area and the advocacy of the member for York South–Weston. We're looking forward to even more input—

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is very important that the community continues to be consulted and informed about the next stages in the process. It is also important that the community receive clear and consistent information.

It has come to my attention that there are some concerns regarding the future of the newly proposed full GO station in Weston. In particular, the concerns are that this station would be removed once the Eglinton LRT connection is built. Minister, could you please reassure the community that the GO station in Weston will not be closed or moved as a result of the future Eglinton LRT station?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to assure the member that her community and all communities along the Georgetown south corridor will continue to be consulted and informed on the next stages of this process. I would also like to assure the member that there will be a stop in Weston and that this stop will stay open even if an Eglinton rail station is created. Anything heard otherwise is simply a scurrilous rumour. It is important that those with questions on matters like this contact Metrolinx and contact the project team in order to clarify concerns and minimize confusion.

This is one of the first projects to be implemented from the Big Move, Metrolinx's regional transportation plan for the GTA and Hamilton. Service expansion will make it easier to get around the region, create construction jobs, spur economic growth, reduce the burden of traffic congestion and reduce air pollution. We are hoping to begin work next winter with—

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

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education. I hope the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure does not answer it.

Once again, I rise in my place to remind the Minister of Education and Mr. McGuinty that you are continuing to create policies on the back of a napkin with no thought given to the long-range implication of those policies. You're well aware that parents across the province were surprised, confused and strongly, strongly object to losing the last week of summer with their children. Two short years after the creation of Family Day, these parents are now faced with sacrificing the last week of family vacation because their school boards can't find enough teaching days to accommodate the mandated PD days.

Minister, are you planning to approve every school board calendar that sends our students back to school before Labour Day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Powerful as we are, we cannot control leap years and when Labour Day falls. It's impossible for us to do that. We have an Education Act that requires 194 instructional days in the year. Each board is now submitting their calendar to us. We'll be looking at those.

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What needs to happen is that boards work with their communities, because there will be different solutions depending on the community. There are some communities where vast numbers of people are away right up till the end of August. They go to cottages—whatever; they have plans. There are other communities where that is not the case. The boards need to be working with those communities, working out the plan. We cannot control when Labour Day falls.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Labour Day is always the first Monday of September. That's an institution.

These policies have not been thought through, and the repercussions are not thought through. From the CNE to the farms in rural Ontario, employers want to know: Where are they going to find labour to compensate for the students who will be returning to class on September 1 instead of September 8? This is also crucial revenue for our students in a tough economy, revenue that their parents may be counting on to supplement tuition fees. Minister, will you be stepping in to create uniformity and require that all school boards ensure that classes do not start before the day after Labour Day, which is September 8, or will you be content to once again watch it unfold from—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the member opposite letting me know how Labour Day works.

Regulation 304 of the Education Act states that there have to be a minimum of 194 instructional days. Boards are required to submit to the ministry a school-year calendar for each school year. The deadline is May 1 of each year. Boards may request permission of the minister to use a modified school calendar, so we do have a role to play in that. The deadline for those modified calendars is March 1, so those are now in the ministry. If a board proposes a modified calendar, they also have to submit documentation that they have talked with their community, that they have consulted with stakeholders and that they have made decisions that make sense for their community. I know the member opposite is interested in fear-mongering and making this a much bigger issue than it is, but, in fact, each board needs to work with their school community, and I'll be—

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

COMPOSTING

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. The McGuinty government pushed municipalities to increase the recycling of food waste through green bin programs before developing a province-wide composting strategy. Municipalities followed orders, but now the local processing facilities process increasing volumes of green bin waste. As a result, green bin materials are being illegally dumped, incinerated and trucked to Quebec and New York state, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. When will this government finally develop a

province-wide composting strategy and address the shortage of local compost-processing facilities?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member knows, about a third of all the waste that's being generated in the province of Ontario is compostable material, whether it's foodstuffs or what have you. He has put his finger on a situation that certainly needs to be addressed. As he also knows, there have been a number of firms that have opened up facilities in Ontario just within the last couple of years to deal with compostable material. He also knows that right now we're reviewing the Waste Diversion Act to make sure that the act is up to date and, what's even better, that people do the right thing and compost as much as possible, as well as get involved in a number of the other recycling programs. It's the right thing to do; we're working with the community; we want to encourage industries to set up facilities where compost material can be brought and can be properly recycled.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The fact is that the government has plunged ahead with a green bin program without knowing how to deal with increased amounts of organic waste. Now they are making it almost impossible for new compost-processing plants to get up and running, turning down environmental approvals for minor reasons in places like Peterborough. Why won't the minister admit that his government has bungled the green bin program and has to do something to fix it?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I could never agree with that because, as a matter of fact, we think that composting is the right thing to do. As a matter of fact, in the same article that he's probably referring to, it makes reference that there have been two new Ontario facilities opened just within the last year, in London and Welland. Yes, there should be many more of those facilities opening up, and we will be working with industry and with the municipalities to make sure that we divert as much material as possible from our landfill sites. Yes, we will have to get new facilities up and running, and we're putting policies in place to actually make that happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to welcome a group of students from the Old Colony Christian school in the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. They'll be joining us this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm delighted today to recognize the work of Nishnawbe-Aski Nation in partnership with

the Trillium Gift of Life Network in raising awareness in aboriginal communities to encourage individuals to register their consent for organ and tissue donation. Together, they have produced an informative brochure, available in English, Ojibway and Cree, to encourage organ and tissue donation in the Nishnawbe Aski First Nation's 49 communities, an area covering two thirds of Ontario.

Grand Chief Stan Beardy has taken a lead role in driving the education of First Nations on the issue of organ and tissue donation. I was inspired by Grand Chief Beardy's spirit and commitment to the cause, as this issue is one that sits very close to his heart. Grand Chief Beardy and his wife, Nellie, tragically lost their son, Daniel, in 2004. At that time, they made the tough decision to donate Daniel's organs and tissues to give someone else a second chance at life. Grand Chief Beardy's ability to take a tragic loss and use his experience as a way to improve and benefit aboriginal communities across Ontario is truly inspiring, moving and no doubt a lesson to us all.

I encourage all Ontarians to register as donors. To do so, contact your local ServiceOntario health card services, OHIP office or outreach site where you renew your health card, or you can register online by downloading the gift of life consent form from www.giftoflife.on.ca.

I applaud Chief Beardy and the Nishnawbe Aski First Nation's commitment to enhancing the health and lives of not only First Nation communities but of all Ontarians.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Joe Dickson: Yet another eventful Black History Month has come to a close. Over the past month, many of our members and ministers have attended black history events and shown their support for Ontario's black community.

I'm proud to say that on February 3, I had the honour to attend the Royal Bank of Canada's celebration of Black History Month on behalf of our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and our government. I was welcomed by the two hosts of the event, RBC regional president Jennifer Tory and regional vice-president Harriet Thornhill, and I presented the appropriate scroll from our Premier.

There was a warm welcome for the greetings I brought to RBC that evening. The hosts and their guests were very appreciative of our government's support at their Black History Month celebration. I stayed for the unveiling of a magnificent mural and performances that made the event a class act from beginning to end.

Thanks again to regional president Jennifer Tory for accepting our provincial scroll and assuring that it will remain a part of the Royal Bank's black history collection.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today in defence of the health care needs of the Burlington community. Residents of Burlington have been required,

through the Income Tax Act, to pay well over \$600 million into the provincial coffers for the McGuinty health tax. When I questioned the Minister of Health as to when Burlington residents could hope to receive long-awaited funding, the minister had the gall to proudly announce that \$17 million has already been invested in our community. Well, Minister, I hate to burst your bubble, but \$17 million received out of \$600 million invested is not a very good return for your money.

No one in the McGuinty government is left to speak for the people. Weighty long-term important decisions are being handed off to appointed individuals. The minister is shirking his responsibility for health care planning and allocation in my riding and in ridings across Ontario. Minister Caplan's government is incapable of operating an accountable and transparent administration for the benefit of the taxpayers of Ontario.

Burlington residents deserve an indication of when their substantial contribution through the health tax will be returned to them to renew and expand Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital.

FAMILY DAY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Last year, this government designated the third Monday of every February as Family Day. This was done in an effort to give Ontarians a break from their hard work and afford them an opportunity to spend time with loved ones. This year, on the second annual Family Day holiday, many residents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham did exactly that through participation in the joyous winter activity of ice skating.

I was pleased to sponsor a free Family Day community skate at the Stouffville Arena. More than 400 people from across the riding, myself included, laced up their skates for an afternoon of physical activity and family fun.

The two-hour-long skate saw His Worship Mayor Wayne Emerson and children and adults glide around the arena's ice surface and catch up with family and friends over a cup of hot chocolate and a snack.

I wish to thank the Stouffville Arena and everyone who participated in the Family Day skate. I was glad to have the opportunity to meet a number of my constituents there and enjoy an afternoon of fun with them. I hope this event provided families with a chance to enjoy each other's company and create lasting memories, and I eagerly await next year's Family Day skate.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I wanted to rise today and speak a little bit about Bill 150.

I just came through the ROMA and Ontario Good Roads Association conference, and I can tell you, I think this government is headed for the perfect storm as far as their plans for the economy of our province. With almost 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs—and apparently we're

looking at a deficit of \$10 billion to \$15 billion. Now to bring in the Green Energy Act on top of all this is having a very, very negative impact.

Just this morning, my office received about 35 calls on the audit alone. That's not going over very well with a number of people who have heard about it. On Thursday of this week, I have to meet with one of my municipalities that has already had a huge problem with a couple of proposals on wind generation on the shores of Georgian Bay.

Quite frankly, the people who have done their research into these projects on the shores of Georgian Bay—it has been inadequate. There has been a lot of opposition to the wind farm on the shores of Georgian Bay. The municipality and the residents are not very happy with any plan or proposal, but to come along and have legislation in place that would fast-track a project like a wind generation farm is really sending the wrong message to municipalities. It's not a way to partner with them.

I can tell you that if you're a farmer, if you're a business operator, if you're a tourism operator or if you're a marina, you follow the proper planning procedures. We would expect anybody, whether it was a wind generation farm or whether it was a solar farm, to do exactly the same thing.

As I say, I don't think it's a good move on the part of the province, especially when we are looking at some very, very difficult times, now to put in these dictatorial programs that would go against our municipalities is very unfortunate.

WILLIAM OSLER HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in the House today to recognize the efforts of William Osler Health Centre. They became the first hospital in Ontario to successfully achieve an innovative and ambitious goal to hire 200 nurses in 200 days. This was the largest formal nursing recruitment program of its kind ever undertaken in a community hospital in Ontario.

This ambitious campaign began on May 27 of last year in response to the growing need for professional nursing staff. The hospital worked hard to reach its goal earlier than planned and it has now exceeded its target. At last count, 219 nurses have been hired.

Osler plans to continue its nursing recruitment efforts beyond this particular campaign. In fact, the recruitment for nurses is an ongoing priority for Osler's hospitals, where the need for nurses continues to grow, especially in emergency, intensive care and mental health.

At the same time that this campaign was under way, William Osler Health Centre was just one of a handful of hospitals in Ontario to be awarded the 2008 Healthy Hospitals Innovators Award from the Ontario Hospital Association. The award acknowledges hospitals that have demonstrated a commitment to creating and sustaining a healthy workplace through innovative occupational health and safety as well as human resources practices.

I would like to congratulate the hard-working employees of the William Osler Health Centre on having achieved these two important and momentous milestones.

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COURT FACILITY

Mr. Bill Mauro: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to announce details for the construction of a brand new courthouse in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Located between Brodie and Archibald streets, this new facility is expected to be worth more than \$100 million and will consolidate the justice system for residents of northwestern Ontario.

I had the pleasure of hosting this announcement in Thunder Bay earlier in February with Ministers Smitherman and Bentley as well as my Thunder Bay counterpart, Minister Gravelle. I also want to recognize and thank Minister Caplan for his work on this file while he was the Minister of Infrastructure.

The new courthouse helps our community meet a 15- to 20-year request to modernize court facilities in Thunder Bay. It's important because one central location will mean better access to justice services, with more effective operations for police, prosecutors, judges and court staff. It will help streamline procedures in family, civil and criminal courts.

I'm also proud to say that it will be built according to the LEED silver standard, which is a set of guidelines for more energy-efficient, environmentally friendly construction.

This new infrastructure will have the added benefit of significant job creation as we hire local workers to build it. Just as important, it will become a catalyst for further downtown rejuvenation. There are going to be lots of people working in the new courthouse, and they will be increasing the need for more goods and services in the south core, so there's the potential for future development and expansion for our local businesses.

This is great news for our residents, and I look forward to sharing more good news with you in the very near future from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

WASTE DISPOSAL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I would like to talk about garbage, a topic that has dominated the conversation of the good people of Estaire, an unorganized territory in my riding. The people in Estaire have been paying a user fee for bringing their garbage to Ministry of Natural Resources landfill sites through an MNR transfer station. Given the costs of operating transfer stations and landfill sites, and with the cuts to MNR, the ministry has decided to get out of waste disposal.

Local people approached me in May of last year, and together we have looked at every possible avenue for solutions: forming a local services board; forming a not-for-profit corporation for garbage; subcontracting the transfer station. And you know what? None of them can they afford. This is a \$100,000-a-year garbage disposal

problem which is being downloaded on the backs of 50 families. That's \$2,000 per household.

The deadline for closure was supposed to be last fall, then this February, and now the minister has agreed to an extension to the end of this month. We need a creative, innovative solution now, as time is running out. What do people do if there is nowhere to put their garbage, just when bears are waking up and looking for a snack? Not a good combination.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Phil McNeely: Ontario Liberals know that our quality of life depends on the health of our natural environment. That's why we have moved forward aggressively to make Ontario a leader on the environment.

Last year, the McGuinty Liberals acted so that Ontario families are able to enjoy a clean, safe environment. We are protecting the boreal forest. Ontario protected at least 225,000 square kilometres of the far north boreal region, and we are working together with our partners to map and permanently protect a network of conservation lands.

We are increasing waste diversion. There are new programs for household hazardous waste and electronic waste that will move us toward our goal of a zero-waste society.

We are protecting our kids from unnecessary risk. New legislation bans the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides and will eliminate the use of conventional pesticides for cosmetic purposes on lawns, gardens, schoolyards and parks, something that we tried in Ottawa many times, and we could not get the legislation passed.

We are protecting Lake Simcoe for future generations by calling for a plan that sets stricter environmental standards.

Ontario Liberals know that the environment is an issue that cuts across all areas of public policy. We will continue working and moving forward on the environment because there is much more to do.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies / *Projet de loi 108, Loi concernant la présentation d'excuses.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (ORGAN DONOR LEAVE), 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉ POUR DON D'ORGANE)

Mr. Fonseca moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of organ donor leave / Projet de loi 154, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé pour don d'organe.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ORGAN DONATION

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I am pleased to introduce this legislation that would amend the Employment Standards Act to provide unpaid, job-protected leave for employees who donate certain organs to another individual.

This is good news, and I want to acknowledge the work and support that I've received from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, David Caplan, and the staff at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Job-protected leave for living organ donors would provide support for those compassionate Ontarians who are giving the gift of life to others.

Organ donation plays an important role in saving lives and improving the quality of lives of transplant recipients. The Ontario government is committed to boosting organ donations, and so provide a longer life and an improved quality of life to our fellow citizens.

At the present time, there are approximately 1,700 people on organ transplant waiting lists. These are our friends and neighbours, our mothers and fathers, and all too often our sons and daughters.

Organ donations save lives.

Living organ donors are an increasingly important source of organ donations, comprising approximately 30% of total transplants. In fiscal year 2007-08, out of 863 transplants that were completed, 260—or more than 30%—came from living donors.

The McGuinty government is committed to expanding organ donations in Ontario. We want to increase life-saving transplants and reduce wait times for patients on the organ transplant waiting lists.

If passed, this amendment would provide donors with up to 13 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave. The leave would be extended for another period of up to 13 weeks with a medical certificate confirming that the additional time is necessary because the donor is not able to perform their duties. This would give a total length of leave up to 26 weeks. The leave would apply to persons who are donating certain organs, such as livers and kidneys.

All employees covered by the Employment Standards Act would be entitled to the leave. Leave provisions would be enforced in non-unionized workplaces by the Ministry of Labour. In unionized workplaces, enforcement would generally be under the applicable collective agreement.

I would like to emphasize that the impact this legislation would have on the business community, or on any employer, is minimal. As I have noted, in fiscal year 2007-08, there were 260 transplants with donations coming from living donors. When employers were consulted, they supported job-protected leave for living organ donors. They did have some concerns. These included the need for reasonable notice prior to leave, that medical documentation to determine the length of leave was there and that the leave should be unpaid. We listened, and their concerns helped inform the development of this proposed bill.

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We have also responded to the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations, which was established in late 2006. This panel surveyed the public's views about organ donation and ways to improve and increase organ donation in Ontario. The panel heard extensively from living organ donors. None regretted donating an organ at all and they would do it again under the same circumstance. However, each and every one experienced hardships they had not anticipated when they were making the decision to donate.

The panel made numerous proposals to increase organ donation, including that the government enact legislation to guarantee job security for living organ donors. In August 2007, Premier McGuinty announced up to \$4 million to implement an organ donation strategy based on recommendations from that panel. As part of the organ donation strategy, the government launched the program for reimbursing expenses of living organ donors. This program established a fund to reimburse living organ donors for reasonable, actual, out-of-pocket expenses with their organ donation.

Our purpose was to remove potential barriers to organ donation and now I'm bringing forward amendments that would provide donors with job-protected leave while performing a selfless act. Living donation has many advantages such as reduced wait times, reduced patient suffering, increased transplant success and reduced health costs. Most importantly for the recipient, living donation is a lifesaver. The people of Ontario who recognize the value of each and every life and are willing to give of themselves to maintain that life deserve our support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the minister on this bill. The intent of the bill is good. We all know that many people have languished long times on waiting lists for organ transplants, so I think the intent of the bill is good. As in any bill, the devil is in the details, so when we see that and have a chance to look it over and to debate that, with our caucus—my caucus hasn't had a chance to see it. It was my understanding that we were going to see the bill on Wednesday but it was today. We'll have an opportunity to look at it in caucus. I'd like to have the input of caucus and other members as to their impact on that.

Like I say, again, I think the intent of the bill is good. It's like any bill: It's well-intentioned, and we'd be hard-pressed—I'd be hard-pressed, anyway—to make an argument against that. I know many people in my family and my neighbourhood—and I worked with people when I worked in industry—who had family members or even themselves resort to some type of organ transplant or were on a waiting list. Anything that will relieve that for these families and to bring about a better quality of life for them, I would have no problem in supporting.

Just as an aside, I was thinking about that up-to-13-weeks-unpaid-leave that they would be eligible for. We had the temporary agencies bill introduced last week. Perhaps some of those people who replace those people would have to come from the temporary agencies. Anyway, on that, I would like to leave my remarks for later, after we've had more chance to study the bill.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats here at Queen's Park have been advocates for organ donation and radical reform for some good chunk of time now. Who wouldn't vote for the bill? But I dare say these diversionary, feel-good, fluff items that are being introduced don't serve the public well. The issue isn't unpaid leave for living donors. I would ask the minister at some point, perhaps, to identify a single worker in this province who was fired because she or he took time off from work to have a kidney or a piece of a liver cut out. Come on, now. This is silly. This isn't going to shorten the waiting list—adults and kids, 1,700 a year on waiting lists in this province—dying every day.

Most of us here—I dare say most of us—are old enough to remember when organ transplants were a mysterious, mystical thing. You'll remember Christian Barnard, the heart transplant doctor. That first patient lived a couple of days, and that was considered a miracle. The reality is that the technology for organ transplants in this province is state-of-the-art—it's mundane; it's routine. I dare say that I have a great deal of respect for a living donor. That is truly a gift.

I've got to give credit for George Marcello. You all know George Marcello. He's walked this country back and forth several times now, advocating for increases in access to organs. George Marcello was one of the people

who provoked the compensation of living donors for their out-of-pocket expenses, and we, of course, support that. What we need is a scheme where people have at least some modest income replacement during these 13 weeks.

The minister's own comments indicate that employers were consulted and they supported the job protection proposal. That suggests to me that the issue isn't whether or not those employers are going to fire somebody; the issue is compensation for lost wages.

We live in a regime that's called presumed denial. It is presumed that someone doesn't want their organs to be used when they die. That is an antiquated perspective. New Democrats have been talking about what Europeans have done. Israel, as far back as the early 1950s, said, "We, in a caring community, presume that our organs are going to be used." Why would anybody think to the contrary?

When I die, there's going to be a '94 Chev pickup down there on Bald Street, and the organs. Anybody who needs the pickup, come and get it. It has probably been better maintained than my organs. But if you want my organs, get them too. I'm going to the tattoo parlour and getting a dotted line on my belly that says, "Upon death, open here."

Kids are dying every day. Kids are walking around with pagers, living against hope that that pager might buzz. From time to time they get an inaccurate buzz. Do you understand the disappointment when it turns out to be a false alarm?

We have got to do what most of western Europe and, increasingly, eastern Europe have done. We've got to make it easier for doctors to rescue organs. Only if you sign off saying, "I don't want my organs to be used"—I don't know what kind of mean, selfish, miserable SOB would do that. There should be a sticker on the back window of their car saying, "I have no intention of letting anybody use my organs upon death." There isn't a single spiritual opposition to the prospect of organ donation. There's no faith that condemns it. In fact, all faiths support and advocate it.

I'm going to use this bill as an opportunity to talk about presumed consent, to talk about truly ending the waiting list. Every day, as we speak—today in this province—good organs are being burned and buried because, notwithstanding the millions of dollars in Don Cherry's and all the campaigns, and we know from polling that the vast majority of Ontarians want their organs to be used, people aren't signing the organ donor cards, or the organ donor cards aren't available in a timely way.

We New Democrats are going to use this to talk about presumed consent and about truly saving lives here in the province of Ontario and across this country.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table a special report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

entitled *The Last Line of Defence: A Review of Ontario's New Protections for Species at Risk*.

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PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

"Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

"Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren."

I support this petition.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has the highest average ticket revenue per game in the National Hockey League; and

"Whereas the Toronto Maple Leafs are ranked the most financially valuable team in the NHL; and

"Whereas many Hamilton and greater Toronto area hockey fans are unable to attend professional hockey games due to a lack of adequate ticket supply; and

"Whereas the Hamilton and greater Toronto area boast the biggest and best market in the world for hockey fans, with Maple Leafs Sports and Entertainment bringing approximately \$2.4 billion to the local economy over 10 years; and

"Whereas a new franchise in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area is valued at \$600 million by some economists; and

"Whereas competition in both business and sports is healthy for both the Hamilton and greater Toronto area economy and sports team performance; and

"Whereas, despite having the most loyal fans in the world, the Toronto Maple Leafs have not won the Stanley Cup in over 40 years; and

"Whereas Hamilton and greater Toronto area fans deserve competitive professional hockey teams;

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

"Request that the government of ... Ontario express its strong support to the board of governors of the National Hockey League for the relocation or expansion of a second NHL hockey team in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area in order to realize the economic advantages to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and to provide healthy competition to the existing Toronto NHL franchise."

I support this petition and will sign it.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from constituents in the riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

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

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have received another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada; and

"Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario

every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario; and

“Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada; and

“Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario residents are shortchanged by \$773 million per year; and

“Whereas the federal government provides economic development support for people living in the north, Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the west, but provides no economic development support for southern Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly.”

I concur with the petitioners, and I will affix my signature.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with power generation at Bala Falls. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Bala Falls (north dam area), herein ‘the site’, is currently designated by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) as a suitable location for development of a hydroelectricity generation facility pursuant to applicable site release policies; and

“Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Bala Falls make the site very valuable for its social, historic and tourism value; and

“Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is arguably \$10,000 below the provincial median income; and

“Whereas construction of a powerhouse on the site is unreasonable as it would adversely affect the prosperity of the residents and other stakeholders of Bala by restricting services and access to the town during construction and may forever diminish the tourism value of Bala Falls for the district of Muskoka and the town of Bala; and

“Whereas construction of a powerhouse on the site would adversely affect the residents and other stakeholders of Bala by causing undue psychological stress resulting from disruption of life during the construction and resulting from the permanent destruction and loss of use and traditional enjoyment of the native shoreline vegetative buffer and natural rock formations at the site; and

“Whereas the MNR site release policies are poorly written and do not provide adequate public input and safeguards for protecting the best interests of the community and other stakeholders; and

“Whereas the MNR may have acted in bad faith when it authored its site release policies by unfairly targeting sites for release where the MNR wishes to offload its dam operations and maintenance obligations onto the private sector; and

“Whereas the MNR is not positioned properly to create policies that affect the provincial renewable energy strategy, or, in the alternate, failed to create workable policies that adequately prioritize the hydro generation potential of the province’s lakes and rivers; and

“Whereas the selection of the site at Bala Falls and 18 other sites ahead of hundreds of other potential sites in Ontario may be inappropriately motivated by political gain on the part of the governing party; and

“Whereas the quantity of energy expected to be produced at Bala Falls under the current proposal is not sufficient to justify the adverse effects the current proposal will have on the community and other stakeholders;

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

“That the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario rescind the current provincial policies pertaining to the release of crown land for construction of new hydro generation facilities, and that members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario rescind the release of crown land at Bala Falls for use in the development of a hydroelectricity generation facility pending consideration of alternates that might achieve a better balance between the best interests of the community of Bala and the needs of society.”

PROPERTY TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of ward 3, of Evelyn Dutrisc, in the riding of Sudbury and Nickel Belt, as follows:

“Whereas 2009 is a reassessment year in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the assessments will be phased in over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012; and

“Whereas the assessed values for current value assessments collected as of January 1, 2008, were obtained during years of high real estate activity in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the downturn in the current global economic climate has greatly affected the real estate market, and subsequently, the assessed values in the province of Ontario;

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

“That the Minister of Finance for the province of Ontario roll back assessed values to the base year of January 1, 2005.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk’s table with page Zaman.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: This will be shorter.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are a growing number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities;

“Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are allowed to possess handguns;

“Whereas a growing number of illegal handguns are transported, smuggled and being found in cars driven in our communities;

“Whereas impounding cars and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing illegal guns on the spot by the police will make our communities safer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, a bill entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so that we can reduce the number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities.”

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

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FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have yet another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

“Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

I do support it and I will affix my signature to it.

BATHURST HEIGHTS ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from the good folks at Bathurst Heights:

“Whereas there are over 2,000 adult ESL students being served by the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre, operated by the Toronto District School Board, in partnership with the province...;

“Whereas this is the only English as a second language (ESL) learning centre in this area ... located directly on the ... subway line...;

“Whereas newcomers in Toronto, and in the Lawrence Heights area, need the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre so they can succeed in” job opportunities;

“Whereas the proposed revitalization of Lawrence Heights threatens the existence of the centre;

“Therefore we, the undersigned,” request “that any revitalization of Lawrence Heights include a newcomer centre and ensure that the Bathurst Heights centre continues to exist in the present location.”

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D’EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am appreciative of the opportunity to finish this last couple of minutes of my comments, which I started last week.

I want to continue by saying that the timing of this legislation is concerning. It’s concerning both in terms of meddling with employers in a challenging economy and also how swiftly Mr. McGuinty wants to implement this bill. The implementation is to be a mere six months after the bill receives royal assent. That seems a little quick to me. I would say that the stakeholders have given this bill far more thought than the government, by the quality of their arguments. It’s a true shame that the McGuinty government has chosen to waste this Legislature’s time with non-urgent issues when our economy is in a tailspin.

I also have trouble reconciling the notion of penalizing employers at a time when our job market is in such distress, a peculiar and sad statement about the McGuinty government. Please note that the temporary agencies that are contracted by the provincial government are exempt from these new regulations. What is that about? It has been obvious to me and my colleagues for quite some time that there are rules for the McGuinty government and rules for the rest of us, but I have never seen it codified quite this way before. That is very unfair and it is sheer arrogance on the part of this government.

I thank the stakeholders who did their research on Bill 139 and provided such valuable feedback. I hope that the government takes their concerns to heart, as my caucus colleagues and I have, and that they will be making suggested changes to this bill because it is a challenged bill.

To the government and to Mr. Fonseca, I say: Back to the drawing board. This bill isn’t even close to being ready. It is wasting precious time in our legislative agenda that should be dedicated to getting our economy back on track.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm going to be speaking to this bill further on behalf of New Democrats in just about eight minutes' time, and look forward to that opportunity.

I think in the discussion of the bill we'd better look at ourselves. This Legislative Assembly should do some housecleaning of its own, because the Legislative Assembly, of course, uses temp workers hired by temporary agencies. These workers are inevitably underpaid; they're not given the same rights as full staff of the Legislative Assembly. They work the same hours, some have worked for weeks and months, but this very Parliament uses temp agency workers who are being ripped off, scammed, not only by the temp agency, but by the Legislative Assembly itself. Shame on us. We indeed should be putting our own house in order and should be demonstrating leadership.

The other observation and reality, of course, is that as more and more jobs are lost here in the province of Ontario, working for anybody becomes increasingly a novelty. As unemployment skyrockets, working women and men are going to become increasingly desperate for any employment under any circumstances and under any conditions. They will be competing with each other and they will be underbidding each other for work. That's the kind of desperation that's developed in a provincial climate where our government has abandoned the workers of the province and where the government has abandoned any hope for those workers seeing their jobs maintained, never mind the prospect of them being restored.

This bill is not just about temp agencies per se; it's about the nature of a failing economy that this government has done nothing to address.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to comment on the speech from the member for Burlington on Bill 139, which is the temporary help agencies bill put forward by the Minister of Labour. I would agree with the member for Burlington that the timing of this bill could, in fact, hurt employees versus helping them, and it could hurt businesses at a time when we're losing all kinds of jobs in the province of Ontario. We lost some 70,000 jobs last month. I don't think we should be rushing something through that could have a negative effect on those people who are currently employed through temporary agencies.

I note that under our labour law, severance is payable at three months, and there is a trending toward longer terms at temporary agencies, so this certainly becomes an issue. This government and this minister recently passed the WSIB bill that's going to be an additional cost on business as well. On that one, they're not implementing it for three years—I think, conveniently, after the next election, so I see maybe a little compromise and delay in bringing this one in. I certainly hope that there's going to be fulsome time spent at committee so that those people who have concerns with this bill will be able to voice their opinions and hopefully improve it, because the last thing we need at this time, when the economy is so weak,

is to bring forward legislation that's going to further hurt our competitiveness in this province of Ontario. So I hope they will take the time to make sure they listen to those people who work for, and those people in the business of, temporary agencies.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments? The member for Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to thank the member for Welland for his comments and also the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I agree that there are agencies that are managed by folks who are opportunists and who will take advantage of situations. There's no question that that's going on. But I really don't believe that they're in the huge majority; I really believe that most agencies are abiding by the law and are very much so law-abiding citizens and they follow the rules. They have successful businesses with folks who join these agencies as temporary workers by choice, not being forced to do this. For a lot of them, it suits their lifestyle, or this is their preference in how to seek employment. I think what we're doing here is going in with a sledgehammer to fix something that can be fixed far more easily and be focused on those folks who are not law-abiding and who do not follow the rules.

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I too hope, as does the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, that this bill receives fulsome hearings, that there is an ability for people across our province to comment on this. I know I have received many such requests. There should be an opportunity given both to people who are working as temporary workers and the agencies they work for to be able to come and speak to the inadequacies of the way the bill is written so far. It is my hope that the government listens and that, by the time we are through with the hearings, the amendments are taken for what they are, good suggestions, and that we can move on and make this bill into something that we can all be proud of.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: First, it's a delight to be able to speak to this bill because I know that page Olivia has her parents visiting today. It's always nice, and I know the other pages would hope they all get a chance to bring folks or kin here if at all possible.

Olivia, of course, and her folks are residents of the riding of Trinity–Spadina. That's Rosario Marchese's riding. I explained to Olivia how we have a tradition here that the page has lunch with his or her member during the time that they are here. We usually do it in the dining room downstairs. They haven't made an arrangement yet, Olivia told me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We have.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, you have. What date is it, Rosie?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just a couple of days ago.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You did it a couple of days ago? Oh. You don't do it when the folks come, huh?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, I talked to them, because—you should have let me go.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You should have been here a couple of days ago. Your MPP would have bought you lunch.

I've just got to say this. Twenty-one years later, I never fail to be amazed by the quality of pages that we have here. It's just truly amazing. And over the course of that time, like with so many others here, you go to a university campus or some town somewhere in the province and someone will come up to you and tug on your sleeve and say, "Mr. Kormos, do you remember me?" Of course I don't, because you're in grades 7 and 8 when you're a page here, and then you are in university, you're a graduate. They remind me—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: But you're still here.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Garfield Dunlop says I'm still here. I obviously haven't progressed the way these pages have. They're going to go on to pursue real careers. But it's truly fascinating. You have pages come up—they've done it with so many members here—tug your coat sleeve and say, "Remember me?" Of course, once they explain what year, which Premier, which Speaker—but the pages also, and you folks should know this, pick up more parliamentary procedure in their four and five weeks than more than a few members of the assembly have picked up in decades. They're just tremendous people. Olivia has been an absolute delight, and I hope her folks are very proud of her, as I'm sure all these young people's folks are.

We're talking about temp agencies. That means temp workers. That means people who don't have full-time permanent jobs in most cases, but for that, again, interesting little angle and spin on it here.

Talk about us getting our own House in order. You know, Speaker, don't you? We have people working in this building who are hired through temp agencies. You know they receive but a fraction of the wage earned by their co-workers who are full-time employees of the assembly. You know that, don't you, Speaker? They do the very same work, and they're not filling in for a couple of weeks while another worker is off on sick leave or maternity leave. They are working here for weeks and months at a time. I've met them; I've talked to them. We've got a human resources department, for Pete's sake. Why are we hiring workers through a temp agency? Can the Minister of Labour ever justify that? I don't blame him, because it's not within his bailiwick.

Mr. Mike Colle: Talk to the Speaker, will you?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I am speaking to the Speaker. We've got a human resources department, fully staffed. Why we're hiring temp workers who are being paid a fraction of what their co-workers are making just boggles the mind, which brings me to Eurest, the private contractor running our food services downstairs.

I remember, just like you do, Speaker, when the Conservative government dismantled the staffing of that cafeteria and restaurant downstairs. I want to make it very clear that, unlike many rumours and unlike the reality in some other Parliaments, that food service downstairs was never subsidized by the taxpayer. Even when the staff

there worked directly for the Legislative Assembly, we—and it's not as if we couldn't afford it—paid whatever it cost to produce the food and pay the workers there. The Conservative government dismantled that and contracted out the service. And you'll recall as well—because I recall sitting with them right up there—those workers, some of whom had worked for 15, 20 and 25 years, most of whom were women, most of whom were new Canadians, were told they could keep their jobs, but at a fraction of the wage that they had been paid.

Now I'm told by some of those same workers downstairs that they're having hours cut back and that Eurest is hiring part-time staff. We know their wages are deplorable. Again, I don't mind paying an extra quarter or 50 cents or whatever it is the most recent price increases were for a bowl of soup or a sandwich, but I sure as heck expect those workers to get a piece of that.

We'd better take care of our own house first and get our own house in order. I think that would be a subject matter for BOIE, Board of Internal Economy.

For the life of me, I can't see why we're letting a contract out to a private company that won't commit to full disclosure of things like wages, that won't commit to a pattern of wage increases when there are price increases, and that won't commit to maintaining full-time jobs for hard-working people.

Look, all of us go downstairs to that cafeteria, and the staff are just stellar, aren't they? They treat us with such respect, with such warmth and with such politeness. They work as hard as anybody could ever work, and in the food service industry that means working pretty hard, on your feet all your shift.

It seems to me that we, as a Parliament, should ensure that workers in this building, whether they're working for the Legislative Assembly through a temp agency or whether they're working for a contract servicer, a contract provider, like our food services—oh, yes, it was the Conservatives that contracted it out, but it was the Liberals who, after five years, have done nothing about bringing it back in to a Legislative Assembly service.

You know full well food ain't cheap down there. It's not as if somehow we're getting discount food—and we don't deserve discount food; everybody here makes a pretty good wage, a pretty good salary. I'm talking about in the chamber, not necessarily the people who work for us. I am not whinging. Did you get that word, Speaker? Whinging. I'm not whinging about the prices, but I am whinging about the fact that those workers are very much part of that class of workers who are being treated as second-class workers.

As the economy gets harder, it's going to become more and more frequent. My colleague Mr. Marchese and I were just talking during petitions about how when you have these kinds of tough economic climates, this is where labour relations suffer. You know why? Because in a tough economic climate like this, with huge levels of unemployment, it's easier to generate busloads of scabs.

Even good people, when they're afraid of losing their houses, start reflecting on the prospect—people who

would never in a million years ever think of scabbing or crossing a picket line. Even good people in tough, tough times—oh, and I'll never countenance scabbing. You've heard me quote Jack London's definition of it, and I don't want to have to do that again. We'll wait a couple more rounds before I repeat that. Scabbing, of course, is one of those dangerous things to labour relations, because it means that there's no incentive on management to settle. You get people underbidding each other for the same work. It becomes easier and easier to force people to work for less and less.

Cheri DiNovo, our member from Parkdale–High Park, has advocated for effective, meaningful reform of the temp agencies for a long time—since her election here.

Look, we're going to support this bill on second reading. It has got to get into committee, because there's a whole lot of work that remains to be done, as has already been noted by Ms. Savoline, amongst others.

1400

We are particularly concerned about the exclusion of, amongst others, home care workers—section 74.2—the contract services that are provided by CCACs. We already saw the vicious attack on CCACs with the competitive bidding model. Victorian Order of Nurses, Red Cross—who else, Mr. Marchese? You recall the lengthy list—done in. Mrs. Caplan, the former Peterson minister, was called upon to investigate the matter and to report back. She maintained that the competitive bidding model was the best possible model, when we know full well it isn't. So we have serious concerns about section 74.2, and we question the purported premise of the government in that regard.

It is imperative that the committee hearings focus on, amongst other things, the exemption of home care workers, something that the SEIU, CUPE, OPSEU, ONA and others are adamant about. They need an opportunity to talk about the people they represent. In those very difficult working conditions, why they would be exempt just boggles the mind. It beats me. I can't for the life of me figure out any honest reason for exempting them.

Again, these are people who work hard, especially in the contract services area and in the temp agencies area, where they're earning a fraction of what their peers are earning—and in home care, where they're travelling to several homes possibly in one day, dealing with a high-needs Alzheimer's person in the morning, dealing with another person in the afternoon, dealing with people who are in any number of physical and mental health conditions, and doing it knowing full well that they aren't being given enough hours with each client to do justice to that client.

You know these home care workers too. They go the extra mile. They're the ones who bring little gifts to people whose homes they attend. They're the ones who stay a little longer if it's the end of the day or the end of the shift and they can get away with it with a particular client, even though they know that the agency isn't going to pay them for it.

Any of us who have or have had aging parents who have been fortunate enough to get a few hours of home

care a week know who these people are: some of the hardest-working people, some of the most professional people in our community; people who are being called upon to do jobs that many of us not only couldn't do but wouldn't do—and they're exempted.

The issue really isn't just temp agencies; the issue is the Employment Standards Act.

I like the minister. The minister is an ambitious and hard-working member of this Legislature. I have no hesitation in saying that. The problem is, the minister doesn't call the shots; the Premier's office does. We know that. You can attend all the cabinet meetings you want and it ain't worth spit, because it's vetted by the brain trust in the Premier's office.

You know that yourself, Speaker. There's a member of this Legislature who has produced a very, very important piece of legislation that deals with fire alarm systems—well, not the alarms, but the water systems. Everybody supports it. It could be phased in with new home construction, it could be phased in in any number of ways, to control or contain the supposed costs argument. Notwithstanding that member's best efforts—and she's a hard-working member too—if the Premier's office don't give it the nod, it simply don't happen, which is why when people call me about those types of efforts, on this particular bill, this water system, I say, "Look, call me if you like. Don't blame the member. But I'll tell you what: Here's Dalton McGuinty's office number. Lean on him, because that's how it's going to happen."

What we need is a thorough overhaul. This is why I speak in such complimentary tones of the minister, because I am buttering him up for what we really would dearly love to see and what he could have as a legacy piece of legislation, and that would be a major overhaul of the Employment Standards Act, all-encompassing, instead of little bits and pieces, an Employment Standards Act that applied to every worker in this province. Because one of the concerns with the temp agencies act is the increasing trend to treat workers and employees as contract persons. That way, you get them in under the radar and you have them work for less than minimum wage, because, of course, they are contractors. A whole lot of home workers, people in the needle trades—Rosario Marchese is very familiar with that group of workers. They're a big chunk of his constituency: people, usually women, who sew garments at home. You see, they are contractors, so they are not entitled to any Employment Standards Act legislation. They end up working for \$2 and \$3 an hour. And they work hard. They work darned hard, sewing designer labels into high-end couture so the Bloor Street carriage trade, Yorkville crowd can show up on the lifestyle/social pages of the Toronto Sun or the Toronto Star on the weekend at their opera house opening or at their charity ball, while some woman sat in a basement apartment sewing that garment for a couple of bucks an hour.

Please. How can we talk about temp agencies and regulating them and protecting the interests of workers

who are employed through temp agencies without talking about the minimum wage? It's always, "Oh, not now. Now is not a good time." You see, the problem is that minimum wage workers didn't receive a single increase in minimum wage for 10 years plus. So I appear on one of these talking-head shows with the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Catherine Swift et al.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I like her.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Garfield Dunlop likes her. He would. She is on the far right wing. She doesn't want workers to get increases in minimum wage either.

So I appear on these talking-head shows, and the CFIB types, many of whom I like except that they are so right-wing, say, "Well, you know, now is not a good time because employers can't afford to pay more." But, you see, I have to point out that workers were subsidizing the employer for 10 years plus, weren't they? They don't have a response to that. Think about it. Minimum wage workers who didn't receive a penny increase for over 10 years—in that instance, it was literally like paying money out of their own pocket to their bosses. Now it's time to pay the piper. It's time to catch up.

That's why New Democrats are adamant that the minimum wage, right now, right today, should be \$10.25 an hour. And we know—because, you see, the vast majority of employers of hard minimum wage workers are not small business people. Most small business people pay a dollar or two dollars above the minimum wage. We're talking about family businesses, for instance. The vast majority of minimum wage workers, for whom they live to the letter of the law and not a penny more, are the Tim Hortons and the McDonald's of the world, the big chains, the ones who can most afford to pay a decent wage—still not a living wage—to workers who haven't received a penny increase in 12 years. Twelve years they went without a penny increase.

And every penny of that minimum wage earned by that minimum wage worker is spent. They weren't out buying RRSPs today, let me tell you. They don't stash their money in offshore bank accounts. They don't take vacations in Nassau in the Bahamas. They don't cross-border shop. They spend every penny in their own communities, usually in their own neighbourhoods, usually in those same small businesses that we're talking about. What better way to provide some local economic boost than to increase the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour?

1410

So I tell you, we're going to vote for this with some real hesitation, because we think it's imperative that this get into committee. Those committee hearings should be broad based. They should travel the province because—how many times have I got to say it?—reality for the folks up in Attawapiskat and Peawanuck is light years away from the reality for people in southern Ontario. I say that that committee, if it's serious about seeing the impact of this legislation and the legislation's failures, should be ensuring that every Ontarian, regardless of how small the town is that they live in, how far north they

live, how remote they live, has an opportunity to have their views heard and, more importantly, considered.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair.

I wanted to enter the debate today. My colleague and I don't often see eye to eye on public policy, though we are quite collegial. I just wanted to say this is the second bill today that has been introduced in reading, or I guess this is a bill that is being debated, from the Minister of Labour. It's also the second bill today that we've discussed because there was first reading of another bill. I was sitting in the gallery while he was making his remarks about organ donation, and while we may not see eye to eye on this piece of legislation, I certainly listened with great interest in and support of his comments with respect to organ donation and the real issue in terms of making sure that we encourage as many people as possible to donate their organs and make that as easy as possible, so I appreciate that.

I'll be up to speak in a few minutes about my opposition to this piece of legislation and some of the circumstances that we're facing here in the province of Ontario and some of these bills. As my good colleague from Welland notes, this is another piece of legislation that is introduced to distract us from the challenges we're facing in the economy. Rather than us working hard together to get us out of some economic strife, the Premier's office has mandated this piece of legislation to divert our attention from some of the real challenges this province is facing.

I just want to conclude in again saying that I fully support my colleague from Welland and his views on organ donation and I appreciate all of the work that he has done over the years to make that issue an important one that many of us need to address in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Further comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague on the comments he has made for those men and women who work in precarious working conditions, because they do need many of us to defend the work they do. The member for Welland reminds us that 37%—maybe he mentioned it or didn't—of all workers are part-time, temporary workers or others who classify themselves as independent workers. It's a large, large figure.

The reason why that is true is because all employers are looking for cheap labour. It's about paying them the prices you don't want to pay your full-time employees. It's about making sure that those people are working in substandard conditions. He mentions the fact that even in this Legislature, we hire people on a part-time basis and pay them so very little. He talked about the foodservices and some of the problems we have there.

I remind the government and those listening that half of our college teachers are part-time. It's cheap labour and the government condones it. The reason why community colleges are hiring on a part-time basis is because

they don't have the support from the government to be able to hire full-time professors. Some 20% to 25% of our university professors are part-time. That's why they went on strike at York University for a long, long time.

We condone it. We think it's okay because we don't want to pay workers adequate wages. That's what this is about. Some people think it's okay. If you're an employer and you hire people cheaply, that's okay. But those workers need a voice when they don't have the benefits, when they don't have the support, when they get laid off, when they're fired without any reason. These are the things that we will be speaking to again.

Thank you, member for Welland—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Questions and comments?

The member for Welland has two minutes to summarize.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate the generosity of my colleagues in their comments. It's Monday. I always look forward to Mondays, for that very reason. By Tuesday and Wednesday, the climate changes considerably and they're less inclined to be as generous. I perhaps attract that, or am as much the cause of it as anything.

Public hearings: I encourage people to start getting a hold of the clerk's office, indicating—if this bill goes to a vote today or in the next few days, we will be saying no to third reading so that it has to go to committee. I think the minister intends for it to go to committee in any event. We need broad-based hearings. That's been referred to by the Conservatives, when Mrs. Savoline spoke, and I've underscored it. I suspect that Mr. Marchese is going to be speaking to it and I suspect he'll reinforce that as well.

We're talking about, in many cases, people who are hidden away, a class of invisible people, because they're the people who, as temp workers—not always. They're the people who clean hotel rooms; they're the people who do the work in the middle of the night. They're the people who work in the basements and in the backroom, not in the front of the business or in the restaurant—not always, but as often as not.

Unions like UNITE HERE have worked very, very hard trying to give these people a voice. Of course, without card-based certification, it's very hard for these people to organize into a union. The government doesn't think card-based certification is good enough for these folks, either—good enough for the building trades, but not good enough for the poorest workers and the hardest-hit workers.

We've got to have those full hearings and they've got to travel about Ontario or else this government will have displayed thoroughly genuine insincerity in its approach to this important matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to join debate today on Bill 139, legislation that will amend the Employment Standards Act.

Let me say at the outset that I think this piece of legislation goes along with several others of its kind

which do not address the real needs of our economy. It has essentially been introduced to fill up time in this chamber and I will not be supporting it. I don't think it looks at the economy as a whole and how we can better provide, in this chamber, a better economic climate.

This is the same ministry that in the last year has imposed an \$11,000 tax on small business. They have rapidly increased the minimum wage so that businesses in my community are speaking out and saying that they may have to lay people off because they will not be able to afford their labour.

Earlier today, this minister announced another piece of legislation to which, in the coming days, this party and I'm sure the New Democrats will provide sober second thought, and of course now, this bill.

We have several concerns. I don't have to tell anyone in this chamber about the sad state of our economy. The situation we are in, yes, has been dealt with by economies worldwide, including in other parts of this country. But that does not mean that the McGuinty Liberals can just abdicate their authority in this chamber by producing one-off bills that in the larger economic landscape do nothing for the taxpayers, the residents and the workers of this province.

We have a number of concerns, in the official opposition, with this legislation, including the cost to Ontario businesses and the subsequent job losses that this piece of legislation could cause. As you know, in the month of January alone, the people of this province grappled with the fact that 71,000 of our friends, family and neighbours lost their jobs. They lost their entire income. These are people, we must remember, who are paying mortgages; they are trying to put food on the table for their children; they are trying to put other kids through university. This is a real challenge, and the bill in its current form can actually do the opposite of its original intent. It could scare businesses away from hiring temporary employees because it may make it more expensive to do so. We can't have these agencies fold when so many Ontarians are relying on a second chance. As I mentioned, the McGuinty Liberals have already dealt a few serious blows to small businesses through the Ministry of Labour in the last year.

1420

I like to join the debate when I know that legislation will directly impact my residents. I like to bring their views to the floor, as I'm sure all of my colleagues like to do as well. I received a letter from Comfort Keepers: Comforting Solutions for In-Home Care, in my constituency in Nepean-Carleton. My constituents write me a letter: "I am writing to implore you to oppose Bill 139, 'An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters' which is currently before" the Ontario provincial Parliament.

The letter goes on to say: "We believe that the proposed amendments are based on the experiences made with a number of unscrupulous temporary employment agencies which have made a living by taking advantage

of their untrained, unsupervised workers (and to some degree their clients). By contrast, our company's philosophy is to conduct ourselves in an ethical and professional manner and, more importantly, give our staff the kind of flexible work they are seeking, be that daytime, evening, or holidays: in other words, schedules which meet their needs while, at the same time, meeting the needs of our clients/patients.

"The following are important considerations," Comfort Keepers goes on to say:

"1. These changes will add further costs and burden to small businesses such as ours, which ultimately will need to be reflected in the pricing to our clients who are seniors, often on fixed incomes, and who may well no longer be able to afford our services.

"2. We are serving an important segment of our society: seniors who would prefer to age at home and who have found reliable, trustworthy and cost-effective ways of getting" the help they need.

"3. If seniors migrate toward public alternatives, this will put tremendous pressure on the government's ability to provide home care and accept residents to long-term-care facilities...."

I'm just going to deviate from this particular bill for one minute to make my point. In the city of Ottawa—and I've got a few colleagues here from Ottawa—we know that we have significant pressures on our long-term-care facilities as well as our hospitals. It's not a secret; it's been mentioned several times in the newspaper and I'm sure, as many of my colleagues who have talked to our CEOs and the presidents of our hospitals know, it's a real challenge. What we need in the city of Ottawa and we need probably right across the province is an integrated approach which not only builds more capacity in our long-term-care facilities but also helps seniors live independently longer.

When you read this letter from Comfort Keepers, they're talking about how they are able to work through the current system that we have and are keeping more seniors at home rather than in nursing homes and helping us with our long-term-care deficit; it's really important that we take into consideration the views that I've just put on the table from Comfort Keepers. I implore the minister, who I'm pleased to see here in this debate, to take these concerns into consideration as this bill goes to committee.

One of the things that has disappointed me is that through this debate the Liberals haven't been participating. They've skipped their rotation, not only in debate when the NDP or the Conservatives were using their allotted time, but then they also skipped their rotation when it was their turn to debate. I can't imagine that I am the only member of this Legislature or that Conservatives and New Democrats are the only members and caucuses in this Legislature who are getting feedback from this legislation. There are some real concerns here.

I'd like to move on. Another group approached our caucus with some of their concerns with this legislation. I'm happy that the minister is here to listen to this,

because there is a real concern with the removal of the "elect to work status" and how it will affect notice of termination.

The constituent writes, "This cost burden will make it impossible for clients to continue to use agencies which they have come to depend on to remain competitive in a global economy. The use of temporary workers helps them manage peak periods and fluctuations."

Granted, all of those stakeholders who oppose this bill know the bill is going forward. They know, in essence, that they've lost the game. But I think what we're trying to do in this chamber, and what I hope the minister will take away from this, is express the concerns that these stakeholders have and maybe find a way we can improve the legislation so that there will not be a negative economic impact on small and medium-sized businesses across the province of Ontario.

I remind the chamber that this is a period of time that we have not seen in many years. We are in a serious recession. People are losing their jobs daily in this province. We must not put more obstacles in the way of those who are employing Ontario's workers.

This constituent goes on to say: "This will remove the flexibility that many organizations have come to require in this global economy with goods arriving from various ports. Many of these organizations will leave this province if that flexibility is lost and move to a more business-friendly environment. With what is occurring in the US they will continue to receive an even greater incentive to do so.

"Numerous large organizations have temporary workers as part of their business plan, including many with unionized environments.

"Those organizations that do not move will ultimately be forced to consistently turn over its workforce in an effort to minimize such impact. This will force all parties to immediately turn over the staff prior to three months of employment to avoid the issue altogether."

I think the minister would have to agree that that is a serious concern.

We are also told, "How can such a policy truly benefit a worker that is trying to develop the skills to gain better full-time employment, when they are displaced every 10 weeks?"

Let's go back to the example of those offering home health care. As we know, seniors who are aging would prefer to have someone they are familiar with, comfortable with and who they trust looking after them. I don't think there is any benefit in seeing a 10-week turn-over in that type of environment, where in some cases end-of-life care is what these temporary workers are giving.

There's also a concern that many of these workers are new Canadians with good work ethic and skills but lacking the communication skills clients would require for them to obtain full-time employment. Working temporary assignments as a starting point provides them with an opportunity to contribute, pay taxes and feel proud of themselves.

1430

This comes from one of my colleague Peter Shurman's constituents—it's a direct quote—who actually owns a temporary agency. He lists several more points, including statutory holiday pay becoming mandatory effective June 2, 2009:

"Our agency has paid statutory holiday pay to a percentage of our workforce based on attendance, longevity, etc. so we will be able to digest such a notion. However, the cumulative effect of this with the other proposed changes will be economically devastating to our industry and to our clients."

The Association of Canadian Search, Employment and Staffing Services, ACSESS, executive summary says, "There are three technical shortcomings within the bill which require improvement; otherwise, these areas will cause an overall failure to achieve the stated objectives. These shortcomings unintentionally create an overly complex set of rules that are administratively unmanageable for any employer and may be impossible to monitor and enforce. These shortcomings will also unintentionally cost thousands of jobs and cause significant hardship for the people the bill was specifically designed to protect." Again: "These shortcomings will also unintentionally cost thousands of jobs and cause significant hardship for the people the bill was specifically designed to protect." That is such an important and relevant point to make when debating Bill 139, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies).

The minister ought to be concerned about that. I don't have to remind him that in the last year, the province of Ontario has seen hundreds of thousands of jobs disappear. We've seen our economic growth in this country go from first to worst. We've actually become a have-not province, though we were once the economic engine of Canada, and we've seen a limited but patchwork response from this government in actually dealing with some of the greatest challenges our economy has faced. We deserve better as a province.

This bill needs to go to committee. It needs to see some of the necessary amendments passed. I would urge the members opposite in the government to understand that to fix the state of our economy requires more than just one-off pieces of legislation, whether it's the minimum wage, whether it's the Green Energy Act, whether it is this piece of legislation or it's the WSIB legislation. The fact remains: Our economy is at its weakest. We need real help for the real people who are suffering.

That's why I will not support this bill: because I do not believe it addresses the challenges which we are facing right across Ontario and which deserve and require serious debate in this Legislature. It requires a budget to be tabled almost immediately, and we've only seen delay and dithering on that front.

Madam Speaker, again I would like to thank you for the opportunity to debate. I do hope that this debate will continue and that we will see members of the government actually participate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I say to the member for Nepean–Carleton, Ms. MacLeod: Don't hold your breath. Clearly this is a far more controversial bit of legislation than the brain trust in the Premier's office had planned it to be. New Democrats have concerns about the bill—not the same concerns as the Conservatives do, but all that this indicates is that there have to be full committee hearings, that this somehow can't be short-circuited and rushed through committee with, oh, a dozen or so hand-picked presenters.

I'm prepared to sit down and hear what the temp agencies have to say. I'm not afraid of what they say. I'm prepared to—more important, in my view—sit down and hear what the workers have to say.

I know that Ms. DiNovo will be following this bill carefully as it progresses through the process. Mr. Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina, is going to be speaking to the bill for the modest 20 minutes allowed him, not because he's Mr. Marchese, but because that's what the rules here say, that you can only speak for a maximum of 20 minutes, unless you're doing the lead. I know he's got a lot to say. I'm looking forward to hearing the member for Trinity–Spadina, because I know there are a whole lot of people in his riding who are directly affected by this legislation, just as there are, dare I say, in every riding in this province.

Full committee hearings, broad-based, travelling across the province, because what happens—you see, governments don't come back to this sort of legislation year after year. It's going to be 10 years, 15 years before this issue is ever addressed again. Let's try to get it as right as we can this time around.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Comments or questions?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the member from Nepean–Carleton's comments on this temp agencies bill.

I think one of the things I got out of her message was that it's important that we debate this type of legislation, but here we are talking about temporary agency types of jobs. I understand it should go to committee. We'll have to get out and do our job as parliamentarians and make sure we get the bill right, and there are obviously conflicting views on it.

My worry here today, though, is, every time I open the paper I'm basically seeing another manufacturing plant or small businesses losing tens of thousands of jobs per week now. We have a crisis here.

One of the things that's really disturbing me is that we're leaving our provincial budget so late. I thought that we had to have our travelling road show, our Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, all done so that we could have an early budget. We had meetings prior to Christmas, which was a change, with the understanding that we were coming back here to have a budget presented immediately, that would sort of parallel what was happening in Ottawa. Now we're hearing it's not going to happen for another month—yes, another month this week—and I don't think that's acceptable to the

business people and to the citizens of the province of Ontario who have witnessed some 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs in a world economic crisis.

I'd like to be debating the budget here today. That's what I'd like to be debating. Let's get this temporary agencies bill out of the way. We'll make sure we get it right and get it to hearings, but the reality is, we need to be spending a lot more time on the \$90 billion or the \$100 billion it takes to run this province and where the money is going to come from and how we can save those jobs here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Comments or questions?

I return it to the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues from Welland and Simcoe—Grey—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: North.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Simcoe North; I apologize. My colleague from Simcoe North made, I think, the best point of the day. We should be debating the budget, the budget that will come out 25 days from now, or 22 days from now, or 23 days from now, whenever it is—it's March 26, and it's far too long.

Again, he makes the point that committee hearings for the finance committee were rushed out the door before Christmas, supposedly so that they would have recommendations for the finance minister and we could have an early budget. Well, "early" means late with the Liberals. I'm just very concerned with this legislation. He makes a valid point. We should actually be debating a bill that speaks more to the economy than just one-offs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm a New Democrat who's happy to be debating this bill. I'm always pleased when, as New Democrats, we're able to push the Liberals to do something that can at least be classified as progressive. It takes a long while to push Liberals, you understand, and it takes a whole lot of pushing and a whole lot of political pressure to get them to do some things. Eventually they deliver on some modest bills like this one, including Bill 150, which I will speak to either today or another day.

1440

It's always a pleasure to be able to comment on these things. When we look at some aspects of the bill, where they talk about ending fees charged to workers by temporary assignment agencies, do I agree with that? Yeah, I think it's a good idea. Reducing barriers to permanent work for temporary agency workers—okay, it's a good idea. Whatever barriers we can reduce to permanent workers is good. I'm not quite sure how successfully that particular aspect of the bill is going to work, but who could disagree with that?

Ensuring public holiday pay for all temp agency workers, whether on assignment or laid off from assignment—I think that's a good idea. People should be entitled to benefits such as ensuring public holiday pay. Requiring agencies to give workers information about assignments and basic rights sounds basic to me. It's hardly radical—

pretty basic stuff. Ensuring that temp agency workers will get some termination and severance protection—I kind of think it's a good idea.

Requiring that both the agency and the client company are legally responsible when a worker is penalized for trying to enforce his rights—these things are okay. Again, they're not radical, but they're okay and they're moving in the right direction. That's why I say that, as is typical of Liberal bills, they move you in that direction, and it's sometimes very difficult for New Democrats to defeat them because, in and of themselves, they're good to do. It should be doing so much more, and it never will. It will take them yet another term, should they be re-elected, to make some more progressive changes to the Employment Standards Act or the Ontario Labour Relations Act, and they will make those changes only if New Democrats are pushing and only if the Toronto Star has an editorial from time to time saying to the Liberals what they should do. When that happens, it's good.

I'm happy that the Liberals listen to the Toronto Star editorials, because when the Toronto Star beats them up, they have no option but to find a way to deliver. Now, they never deliver completely, but that's okay. The Toronto Star will say, "That's a good as a first step," and they'll buy peace for a couple of years until the Toronto Star decides, "Maybe we can push them a little more." So we're lucky. From time to time we're able to get the Toronto Star to help New Democrats as well, so that we can eventually encourage Liberals to do the right thing.

But it comes with pushing. It comes with a whole lot of political pressure. When I think of the 37% of workers who are part-time, temporary or contract workers, that's a whole lot of people who live and work in precarious conditions. Sometimes I think many MPPs live such sheltered lives that they don't know too many people who live in temporary and part-time employment—precarious work environments. My sense is that sometimes some of those here in this Legislature, both on the right and in the middle, don't know too many of those workers. I get that impression. We're so cozy in our own homes that we don't worry about whether people are getting an adequate wage to have a modicum of the standard of living we enjoy.

I think about that from time to time. I think about how this government could allow community colleges to hire part-time staff, who constitute half of college teachers, and think that's okay. How could Liberals believe that's good for the quality of education of those students when you've got part-time workers, some of them doing two jobs, which is usually the norm, and that that makes a good contribution to the quality of education of the students in those colleges? It cannot be good. It's cheap labour; that's what it's about. The Liberals would never say that, but that's what it is: cheap labour. And it deals with the fact that governments are not providing the support to those community colleges and, as such, community colleges have had to hire part-time college professors for many, many years, and it was getting worse. It is getting worse, was getting worse until the time when

OPSEU, many college professors and others said, “They need to have the power to organize, to bargain.” That took a long time. That didn’t come easily. The Liberals were not quite happy to give them that right, and, of course, that’s typical of Liberals. They give one right and then make sure they take away three, making it difficult for New Democrats to oppose the bill, because it allows them to unionize while taking other rights away. How do you oppose one without getting caught in facing another problem? But that’s what Liberals do.

University professors: 20% to 25% of the university professors are part-time. It’s the same problemo. They don’t have any money. They’ve been underfunded for so long that governments, and in this particular instance a Liberal government, have been quite happy for universities to be able to hire on a part-time basis.

I just asked a question of the minister today, where we’ve discovered that universities have a \$2.6-billion deficit and each university, on average, is in debt to the tune of \$150 million—big dollars; big, big problemos in our university system. We have the largest class sizes in Canada, and the government feels happy about that.

Each and every day, the minister gets up and says, “We’re doing great; we’re doing really good.” He says that every day. Every time I ask him a question, he’s saying, “It’s great”—the largest class sizes in the country. We are numéro 10 in the country in terms of per capita funding. The minister stands up and says, “No, we’re doing good; we’re doing great.” He says that every day. Every day we ask the minister questions about the quality of our education system, about student debt, and every day he stands up saying, “No, things are good.”

But we need to worry about people who work in precarious employment, because these are human beings who are working for modest wages, desperately trying to gain enough dollars to pay their rent and feed themselves and their kids. They can’t even provide for basic necessities. We have a rise in food banks unlike we’ve ever seen before. We saw a rise under Mike Harris; we see a rise in food bank use under the Liberals that we’ve never seen before. Yet the government boasts about how great they have been in managing that economy under Harris before and now under McGuinty. For years they’ve been boasting about how great the economy was and how great people are doing, and here we have the highest use of food banks that we’ve ever seen. Imagine how bad it’s going to be in the next year. If you think the Bob Rae years were bad, wait until the McGuinty years come in the next year and a half. It’s going to be pretty tough. You might have McGuinty join the NDP after this stint of bad economic problems.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They wouldn’t take him. Surely, Rosie, you wouldn’t take him, would you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We don’t get too many. We lose a few, but we don’t get too many. This is true.

The economy is in a shambles and it’s tough for working men and women. Our economy is not served well when we pay people poorly. You’ve got MPPs arguing that you have a whole lot of businessmen and women

who are struggling, and never a word about the poor people who work for them for minimum wage or less and are afraid to speak up, never talk about whether or not they are able to pay for their rent, let alone pay for their mortgages, because they can’t afford to own a home. Yet we have the fortitude on the right here—my right—to speak about how tough it’s going to be for businessmen and women.

Of course it’s tough for them, and under these conditions it’s going to get tougher, but if it’s tough for them, how is it going to be for that worker who is earning a minimum wage and works in substandard conditions where he or she is afraid to speak up if he or she doesn’t get overtime pay? We don’t talk about their rights. We talk about middle-class people worrying about paying their mortgages, but we don’t worry about working men and women who can’t even afford to pay their rent. That’s how cozy we are around this place, because we only relate to people who earn our salaries, and they’re middle-class professionals.

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We don’t seem to connect to the underbelly of our economic system, those who work because it’s cheap labour and it’s convenient for people who are making money off of them. It’s not just here in Canada. It’s done all over the world. Men and women are used for cheap labour, and in this economy it’s going to get worse. And where you don’t have a union to bargain for you, to defend you whenever there’s a miscarriage of justice, you are on your own. Only 30%, 35% of people are unionized. The rest have no union, no one to protect them, no one to speak for them. They are on their own.

Under these economic conditions, where we are deindustrializing, we’re losing our manufacturing jobs that were well-paying and were unionized. That was the middle class. We’re losing our middle-class jobs. We think globalization is good; globalization has deindustrialized Canada and is deindustrializing most of the European countries to the extent that we are losing our middle class, which was, in my view, a social necessity for having what—I predict in 10, 15 years, social wars between those who have, at the very top, the 10% of the population, and the rest of the people, the 60% or 70% down below those economic levels where, when they are desperate, they will do desperate things.

Many young Tories have forgotten why those safety nets were put in place a long time ago. In the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s there were safety nets that were put in to protect the institutions and to protect the well-to-do, to protect the people with money. Now we’re forgetting that that’s why we had put in place workers’ compensation or unemployment insurance benefits or pensions and the like. Now people are saying, “We can’t even afford people’s pensions.” Defined pensions: “We can’t afford that. Let’s put all of our money in RRSPs”—so we could lose it all when faced with this economic meltdown. So people who don’t have a defined plan—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Like you, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Like most of us here, but we have better wages than most out there.

They now are encouraged, as part of their pension plan, to make their contribution, and maybe the employer puts in a couple of thousand, to put it into their registered retirement savings plan—as if somehow that money isn't gambling money. It's gambling money, my friends. It comes and goes. It's gambling. It's casino money. It's paper money. It's people who play with our money. Some people who have a few bucks think that somehow capitalism works for them. It doesn't work too well for you either, because the people with the hedge funds, those are the ones who move money around from one place to the other in an instant, in the trillions, destroying all of us in seconds, not minutes—or in minutes, if not seconds.

This money is not protected anymore. Workers are not protected. The middle class is no longer protected. If the middle class is not protected, think about these workers who have no protections whatsoever. So I say to the minister, am I going to support your bill? How I could not support these few modest measures? We just appeal to Liberals to do a little better, a little more. We appeal to them to look at other countries in terms of efforts other countries have made to deal with some of these worker-related problems.

Ontario does lag behind European policy-makers on both the national and European union levels. Their policy-makers have developed a range of strategies to extend protections and rights to economically dependent workers in new forms of work organization. This is largely being done through measures to expand the boundaries of the scope of employment and bring some legal protection to workers previously excluded.

In countries such as New Zealand and Finland, they've expanded the scope of employment standards to address atypical and non-standard work. Germany expanded its definition of "employee" to reduce the opportunity to disguise the employment relationship. The International Labour Organization has developed conventions on home work, part-time work and employment agencies; the European Union has established directives on part-time and fixed-term contracts to bring equity between atypical or non-standard work and permanent employees, and is currently working on a temporary agency work directive. These are the kinds of things we should be looking at.

Employment is being disguised as independent contracting or franchising, as employers seek to bypass labour relations laws. Many of these practices seek to shift the costs and liabilities off the employment relationship on to intermediaries and workers who can least afford it. Employers rationalize these practices as necessities to improve flexibility in an increasingly globalized world, but workers' experiences show that outsourcing, indirect hiring and misclassifying workers takes place in sectors with distinctly local markets: business services, construction, retail, warehousing, transportation, health care, and the manufacture of goods consumed locally. This is why we need to look at what other jurisdictions have done, and Europe often leads in this particular area.

We also need to look at how we enforce anything that we do, and we have lacked enforcement powers for a long, long time. Even if we pass these modest measures, who's going to enforce any of these practices embodied in this bill? Nobody is going to be there to enforce them. Does the minister make a commitment to hiring 100, 150 or 200 inspectors to make sure that aspects of this bill and other related labour practices are going to be—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're saying yes?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We did it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You did? Oh, okay. This is why, I guess, you've introduced this bill, because you have the enforcement. If you had hired these people, we wouldn't even need this bill, for God's sake. If you'd hired these inspectors, we would already be exposing problems from years ago to the present. Come on. You talk about hiring these inspectors. You haven't hired—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Squat.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Squat. Exactly. If you're going to enforce any aspects of this bill, you're going to have to hire a few inspectors, and by a few, we think it should be 100 to 150 to 200 new inspectors to be able to do the job; otherwise what you're doing means very, very little.

We also worry that regulating temp agencies' work alone may act as an incentive for employers to shift practices to other, more unregulated forms. In other words, we need to integrate legislation that deals with temporary workers into a broad update of employment standards to protect all workers. Unless we do that, all these little Liberal measures are not going to amount to much. It will make you feel good—some of you at least—but it's not going to make the workers feel that great.

We need to make sure that we protect those workers who live and work in precarious conditions, because it's an economic benefit to all. When we raise the conditions and the salaries of the working poor, we raise the conditions of all of society. We all benefit.

So I urge the minister, as he speaks or talks or negotiates about these hearings, that we have more than adequate hearings, that we have more than one or two meetings here in Toronto to give people an opportunity to talk about these issues that we, New Democrats, have raised—and, yes, to even give Tories the opportunity to make sure their ideas are heard as well. So we look forward to the minister saying, "We think hearings across Ontario are good for all of us," and I hope he will do that.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Comments or questions?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm sure people who have been watching and listening agree that the New Democrats' concerns about this legislation warrant it going to committee for broad-based committee hearings, for thorough consideration, and not just here in Toronto, but to give those people, many of whose working lives have been nothing but temp agency work—and again, increasingly

for worker after worker after worker, their life is one of temporary work. Permanent jobs under the McGuinty government have all but ceased to exist; there has been a crisis that this government has not responded to.

New Democrats are insisting that this bill travel the province. Otherwise, the people whom it really affects—oh, the lobby groups and the organized groups and the trade unions: they'll all be able to come here to Queen's Park. The temporary agencies and whatever little groups they manage to put together: They'll come here to Queen's Park. And, oh yes, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business will come here to Queen's Park—but the little people, and I don't say that disparagingly, the hardest-working people, the people whose lives hang by a thread, paycheque to paycheque.

It's remarkable: You can't talk about people who are hired out by temp agencies without talking about those payday loan operations because, as often as not, these are the same people who get ripped off by payday loan operations. This government has done nothing to protect them from those vultures either, have they? People are being victimized. I'm talking about workers, many of them women, almost all of them poor. We're not talking about high-end head-hunting agencies that go out and find executives who can rip off taxpayers—a Hollinger. We're not talking about the Conrad Blacks; we're talking about the little people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Comments or questions? The member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I wanted to raise an issue with Bill 139 because the minister is in the House, and he's listening intently to the debate led by the member for Trinity–Spadina. It's in reference to 74.2, "This part does not apply in relation to an individual who is an assignment employee assigned to provide professional services, personal support services or homemaking services as defined in the Long-Term Care Act." They are specifically referencing community care access centres. I'm wondering why the Liberals are attempting to bring forward a piece of legislation that is saying that the private sector is going to have a certain set of standards but the community care access centres who use temporary employees are not going to be held to the same standards. I would hope that the minister would clarify that in the House here today because I find it hard to believe that we're saying that the private sector is going to have different sets of standards than the public sector. It couldn't be because they understand the repercussions of what this would mean to the community care access centres and the added costs that would be incurred if they were having to maintain the same standards with Bill 139. I'd love to have that clarified here in the House today or certainly when Bill 139 goes forward to committee. I can't, for the life of me, understand how they would justify CCAC temp workers not being held to the same standards as temporary workers in the private sector.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Further comments or questions?

I return to the member for Trinity–Spadina for a summary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We are appealing to those part-time workers and temporary workers to come and tell their stories. This is an opportunity for people to be able to come for five or 10 minutes and talk about what it is that they do, talk about some of the abuses in the workplace, talk about the lack of government support and talk about how we can improve this bill so the lives of men and women are changed in a much more positive way.

The member from Dufferin–Caledon raised an issue that the member from Welland also talked about, where section 74.2 excludes a worker who is an assignment employee assigned to provide services under contract with the community care access centre or who is doing work governed by a contract to a CCAC. We don't understand why they're excluded. We want people to come and talk to us about that. We want the government members to come and defend their position. We want to hear the stories that you have to tell us. That's what hearings are all about. If you can do that and if you can come to those hearings, you'll be able to help cozy MPPs live a little bit more consciously about the kinds of things that you have to face. Because, as Kormos says, our work here is not as hard as some of the work that some people do. I wouldn't go as far as he does when he says that we don't work hard, but it's a different point.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Show me your hands.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: These are a working man's hands. These hands come from a father who was a construction worker.

But we want to hear those stories, and I'm hoping that you'll come and depute, and call us if you need help to get on that list.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Are there any other members who wish to participate in this debate?

The Minister of Labour has moved second reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): Shall the bill be moved for third reading?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): So ordered. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN
ECONOMY ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE
ET L'ÉCONOMIE VERTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 26, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / *Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to join this debate, late though it is. We deferred our lead last week because we were trying to get some further information on this bill, which the minister described when he was promoting it as being a bill of magnificent and gargantuan proportions that was maybe the biggest thing to hit Ontario since the ice storm of 1998.

I'm not sure just what he was referring to, because the bill was introduced last Monday. We had never seen the bill prior to that. Nobody sees the bill, as you know, until it's introduced in the House and tabled.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Caucus certainly doesn't.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It certainly doesn't. We had no opportunity to caucus, nor did the members of the third party.

So we asked for a little bit more time and wondered what would be the need and the rush to get this bill through post-haste without proper debate of any real significance and of any real substance. We referred, as a matter of fact, to the government's own precedent.

You have to understand, Mr. Speaker, as I know you do, that this bill amends or repeals 15 other acts currently on the books in the province of Ontario. This would be described by some as an omnibus bill that requires extensive and total and complete debate before proceeding. So what we did is, we asked for the government to follow its own example. I know it's hard sometimes for us to say to the government, "Please follow the example of the previous government or a government that sat in another Parliament," and we understand the reluctance of them to do that. But all we asked, Mr. Speaker, was for them to follow their own example and do what then-Energy Minister Dwight Duncan did when he introduced Bill 100, and I know you recall that bill because I believe you spoke on it.

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What Minister Duncan did at the time was he recognized that the bill, which again amended a bunch of acts and covered a whole lot of bases in the electricity sector—he took the step of allowing that bill to go to

committee prior to second reading, after first reading. He felt, and rightfully so, that the bill needed to be digested and analyzed and properly debated throughout the province—and I participated in many of those committee hearings as well—so that all of the relevant people, stakeholders and citizens in the province of Ontario who had some issues with the bill or maybe just believed that there was a way they could improve the bill on behalf of the rest of the people of Ontario, had an opportunity to speak. Sadly, given the energy and infrastructure minister—but for the purpose of this bill we will just call him the energy minister or we may call him the minister of everything because he apparently wants to take over the responsibilities of all ministers in this House and answer all questions, even when they're not directed to him. Sadly, given the opportunity to do the right thing, did he choose to do the right thing? No. He had the opportunity. We gave it to him. We were being very magnanimous about the whole issue. We want to get to the bottom of things. We want to do what is best for the people all across the province of Ontario. We gave him that opportunity and he said no.

You know I'm not one to quote other people out of context or something like that, but what he was really saying was, "We need this bill and we need it passed now because we don't want people across the province of Ontario to take a good, hard, long look at this piece of legislation. We want to sneak it in by cover of darkness, if possible, but we realize we have to do some debating in this House. We want to sneak it through and hope that by the time the people realize it, it'll be passed."

We, as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, cannot allow that to happen without exacting at least the minimum amount of debate that we can get this government to participate in. So that's what we're doing, that's why we're having this debate now. We had hoped to go to committee first—and I'll touch on committee a little later in my address—but I think that, at the very least, we're here where we are now and we can't change that even though we disagree emphatically with the actions of the government. But at the very least, as this progresses and as we take this bill through this House—and we have no doubt, we're not delusional here. We know that this bill is going to pass because Premier McGuinty's office will have made sure that every member of the government side knows that they're either voting for this bill or they're not well that day. They're not going to be allowing people to vote against this bill, we know that. So given the fact that the numbers are on their side and not on our side, we know this bill is going to pass, and so be it. So that gives us an opportunity then to take this bill out across the province for other people to look at it.

The minister kind of chided us or chastised us for even expecting that we would get further information on the bill before bringing it before this House; he kind of belittled our request. Subsequent to that, it appears that the minister was having trouble understanding the bill himself. In questions from reporters, when asked about the warrantless entry, he couldn't seem to understand it.

Earlier today, in referencing a question, the minister talked about trying to compare the warrantless entry to a situation that existed in a bill under the previous government in 2002, which was one that allowed investigators to go in to protect consumers where there was nefarious actions on the part of generators or billers—totally unrelated to what we were talking about today. The warrantless entry into people's businesses would be to see if they've done an energy audit: to rifle through their personal possessions, to uproot drawers and go through untold documents to see if they can find an energy audit. This will not do a single thing to improve or reduce greenhouse gases or make it greener. It's just an energy audit.

The bill doesn't compel anybody to do anything in their home. It's just that they have to pay hundreds of dollars to have an energy audit done. Much of it could be done by yourself. You can walk into a house if you're looking to buy it. You can read the CMHC stamps in the windows. It will tell you what year those windows were produced. You'll know how old the windows are. You'll have a pretty good idea of whether they need replacing—and that's if they're a double-sealed window. If they're older, if they're a single-pane window, we know that they're not energy-efficient, and you don't need an audit to tell you that. You can also determine the date and the relative condition of a furnace much easier than having an energy audit. If it's old and tired, it's probably a good question to be asking for more details on the furnace as you negotiate that real estate transaction. Those provisions are there today. You can ask those kinds of questions in any kind of real estate transaction. In fact, you could ask for an energy audit to be done. It doesn't have to be mandatory.

A good question is where we're going to get the people to do these mandatory audits, or maybe that's what the minister is talking about when he talks about the 50,000 jobs that he believes—excuse me. Last week it was 50,000 jobs will be created; later in the week, it has the potential to create 50,000 jobs. Now that's pretty broad: "potential." The Toronto Maple Leafs have the potential to win the Stanley Cup this year. Does anybody believe that they're going to win it? No. They have the potential. They can still make the playoffs and they can still win the cup. There's nothing to preclude them from winning the Stanley Cup, other than the fact that, as we know, it ain't gonna happen, just as we know that he's not going to create those 50,000 jobs. I'm a Leafs fan, but I'm realistic enough to know that it's not going to happen.

Then, on Focus Ontario on Saturday night, the energy minister was asked by Sean Mallen of Global TV about those 50,000 jobs and how he's going to create them. I want to quote. Sean Mallen said, "Okay, but my question that I was leading up to was 50,000 jobs. How do you know it's going to create 50,000 jobs? Where will the jobs be?" The minister, who only a week earlier was saying, "Absolutely guaranteed, nothing to worry about"—and that's just the start—what did he say? "Well, how

does one ever know these things?" That's kind of confusing because, you see, on one hand the minister was absolutely certain and that's what he talked about in this act: "We're going to give you certainty."

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Like coal-fired generation—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah. So when you say, "How does one know these things? How does one ever know these things?" I don't think that's certainty. In fact, the minister is starting to doubt his own blather.

The minister talked about—but he got a dressing-down on this one, I think. I think the Premier called him into the office and he said, "George, I know you want to be the minister of everything. You're trying to display that. You probably even want to be Premier. But as long as I, Dalton McGuinty, am Premier, you ain't going to be making those kinds of statements."

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You see, the minister said last week in his press conference, "This would mean"—and listen carefully to this, Mr. Speaker, because you don't want to miss it. You'll be able to tell those people back home what your minister said. He said—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: The member is welcome to debate the bill but he is clearly in violation of standing order 23(i), "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member," which is exactly what he's doing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I think the member is in order, but please try to stay on track. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. Please advise the minister of points of order to read that book before he stands up. Anyway, you see, he understands that I am somewhat hypothesizing because I wasn't actually there. But we can read between the lines; I think we're allowed to do that.

The minister was taken to task in the Premier's office. The Premier said, "Don't you be making those statements there, George. It doesn't look good." So here's the minister, he's going out there saying, "This will lead to a 1% increase per year in your hydro bill." It's laughable, absolutely laughable.

So the Premier thought, "We can't have George going around saying these things, because people are starting to say, 'Wow! Come on! Jeez, we knew we couldn't believe them when they said they were going to close the coal-fired power plants, but maybe we thought they'd actually learned the lesson and they were going to try to stick to the facts.'"

It's not rocket science. You're going to spend—and this is the minister himself—billions and billions and billions. If Carl Sagan was still around, you'd think it was him talking. The minister's going to spend all of this money. And you know what, folks? "It ain't gonna cost you a dime." Does anybody really believe that? We all know that there is no free ride. You don't get anything for nothing in this world.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Someone's got to pay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But somebody's got to pay. When you decide that you're going to take an energy system, and try to bring in a whole lot of expensive generation to replace cheaper generation, the price must go up. He alluded to that when Mr. Sean Mallen on Focus Ontario asked him about the price, because of the fact that in Germany—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —the price is 24 cents—thank you very much—24 cents a kilowatt hour; in Denmark it's over 35. Mr. Mallen asked him about that and he said, "Well, you've got to remember, we're not going to have that amount of renewable power. They've got way more than we do." So he's admitting renewable power is going to be expensive, but he's also saying that you really aren't going to bring that much online.

I don't know what he considers a high enough percentage, but in Germany, renewable wind produces less than 8% of their power. Even though it has almost 30% of the installed capacity, it produces only 8% of the power. This is the thing that the government doesn't want to talk about. Everybody in this House is in favour of a cleaner, greener environment. No party is greener than the Progressive Conservatives.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You will recall the former government and the Lands for Life act. You will recall the former government's Smart Growth, to curb the broadening and the growth of cities all over this province. To this day, there is only one minister—and that was Elizabeth Witmer, when she was the Minister of the Environment—who actually ordered the closure of a coal-fired generating station in this province. These folks have not ordered anything. Only one minister did it, and that was Liz Witmer. Now, the Liberals were there for the photo op when the stacks came down. They were all lined up making sure they had their picture taken, but it was Liz Witmer who ordered that station shut down and closed. So let's not forget that there is no party that recognizes the need for protecting the environment more than the Progressive Conservatives. However, we won't just tell you a story. We won't try to snow you or even, I dare say, possibly mislead people. We won't do that. We're going to tell them the facts, and we're going to allow people to make decisions based on the facts.

Let's go back a little bit in time, because I'm trying to frame this in a way that people understand. I know you understand, Speaker, and I don't think you're a part of it. I think that a big part of you would really like to stay away from it, but I know you're in a party that is pretty well controlled by one office. But I think there's hope.

Anyway, let's go back to 2003 and the iron-clad Liberal promise to close coal-fired generation stations in the province of Ontario by 2007. The Premier claimed that he based that promise on expert advice from people in the energy field who could absolutely ascertain that it was doable. I asked then-Energy Minister Dwight Duncan in estimates two years ago, "Will you provide the names of those said experts that the Premier alludes to?

Provide those names to the House." I asked it in estimates, and the minister said to me, "Absolutely." Well, just like that elusive Stanley Cup, I'm still waiting.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, the guy's name was Kinsella.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It could have been Warren Kinsella, but he's too busy trying—I understand he wants to be a food critic now, and go around insulting hard-working people in the Chinese community. But that's Warren Kinsella. What can we do about him? I'll get my name on his blog again this week, maybe.

Let's get back to the issue: the feed-in tariff the minister talks about. Let's get back to those 50,000 jobs. They're bouncing around. They really don't know where they're going to create the jobs. They don't even know if they're creatable, and they certainly cannot state that those jobs are permanent or sustainable. You have to understand that if some of those jobs are going into the erection of wind towers, once the towers are up, the jobs are done. They're wishing and hoping that they can create 50,000 jobs. But as Randall Denley, an excellent columnist for the Ottawa Citizen, said in his column, and I'll paraphrase, you might think you want to create 50,000 jobs, but wake up; you lost 71,000 jobs just last month in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. How do you balance that?

They're going to create 50,000 jobs, maybe—that's what they claim—but I don't think there are too many people left in the province of Ontario who believe too much of what comes out of the Premier's office or from the minister of everything. He wants his name changed from George Smitherman to C.D. Howe, because he wants to be the boss of everything.

Anyway, I don't think there are people out there who believe—

Mr. Peter Kormos: What about Boss Hogg?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Boss Hogg? Well, I don't know about that. That's Dukes of Hazzard. That's an American icon. We're sticking to Canadian icons, Peter.

I don't think there are people who believe much that's coming out of that office these days, certainly not when it comes to their being straightforward. I don't want to get ruled out of order here; I don't want the minister of points of order to stand up. I want to make sure I don't say anything that's unparliamentary, but people just don't believe them. If somebody never believes anything you say, you know what they think you are? That's kind of what I'm trying to say.

1530

Mr. Peter Kormos: That you're lying with dogs.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, exactly.

So, Randall Denley just wonders where these guys are coming from with not only their job projections, but the fact that they're throwing this whole thing out as a smokescreen, a distraction, a diversion from their sorry economic record. I'll quote the first line of his piece:

"When a politician is in deep trouble, he typically seeks to create a distraction. Trouble doesn't get much worse than the type that Ontario Premier Dalton Mc-

Guinty is facing. Desperate to change the channel from continuing job losses and a ballooning provincial deficit, McGuinty this week championed the Green Energy Act.”

He doesn't want people talking about the economy. He doesn't want people talking about job losses in Ontario, and every day, the news gets worse. Where's Dalton McGuinty?

I tell you what he doesn't appear to be doing: doing something. He doesn't seem to be doing something about the economy, because, while every other jurisdiction that recognized the state of the economy not only here but elsewhere—and I concede that; I want to be fair—moved post-haste to bring in an economic stimulus package and a budget to ensure—you know, you don't send the carpenter to fix the electrical panel. When the job requires new expertise, you send in a new expert, and you certainly have to have a different tool box.

What was passed in the budget of last year is irrelevant. This party and John Tory and this party have been calling for a new budget from this provincial government for weeks and months, and they sit back and somehow hope that Stephen Harper does their work for them. Well, Stephen Harper's tired of bailing them out. It's time that you guys took the little pacifier out of your mouths and stood up and took your first steps and got on with the job yourselves. It's time to grow up. You can't sit back there and wait for Stephen Harper and the federal government to do all the work for you. That's got to stop. People in Ontario expect better.

They want to talk about the minister talking about some of the plans. There are some things in here that, I have to tell you, I think have some merit. I like much of the biomass aspect of it because it's not just about creating energy, but two of our most historically significant and important sectors of our economy and the Canadian way of life, the Ontario way of life, would benefit by that, namely the agricultural sector and the forestry sector. They're two sectors, Mr. Speaker, that you know, because you have certainly agricultural; I don't think you've got much forestry down there, but I could be wrong. But you certainly have agricultural, and you know how important they are and you know how they are struggling.

Those kinds of aspects, I think, because they are two-pronged in their approach, have some merits, but we do need to get the details. We need to put some meat on the bone. You just can't have the minister going around and sending out his minions and telling them that “our Green Energy Act is the panacea for everything that ails people in the province of Ontario,” because we know that that's simply not true.

Let's get down to some more issues—and it is tough to keep these things all organized. We've had so much input, I have to tell you, from across the province from people concerned about this act. I have to believe that the honourable members across the way, and even the minister of points of order, have certainly heard something about this act from people in their constituencies who are opposed to it and are opposed to different aspects of the act.

I want you to go home this weekend to your constituencies and talk to the people out there and ask them, and be straight with them. Don't give them the song-and-dance spin—and that's no pun intended for the wind developers, but don't give them that spin coming out from the Minister of Energy about how everything here is great, because at the end of the day, how much of Ontario's energy are you actually going to make up? We know it's got to be much, much less than 7%, because that's what Germany's getting. He said, “Oh, that's way out of there; it's not even going to be close to that.” But we need to know how much people are going to be paying for this.

The Premier talked about his mother. I've never met his mother, but I'm sure she's a wonderful lady. But—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Disappointed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know that, but she may have reason to be.

But I will say this: The Premier likes to cite his mother as an example because it paints him as being the wonderful son and the wonderful family man in the all-Canadian sort of family portrayal, but he has to tell his mother all of the facts, too. He's saying, “My mother shouldn't be focusing on the rate of electricity,” and now we know it's going up, when you're saying, “My mother shouldn't worry about the rate; she should worry about the bill.” He was alluding to the fact that Germans pay a much higher rate for hydro, but their bills aren't higher.

Well, I don't know if any of the people on the other side of the House were born in Germany. My wife was born in Germany, and I know that at least one other member of our caucus was born in Germany. I sent a picture over to the Premier. I drew a little picture for him. I drew this little, wee house and I put underneath it, “German house.” Then I built this great, big house and I said, “Woodbridge house” or “Markham house.” I said, “That's why you can't compare the household energy bill in Germany with the household energy bill here.” When it comes to power consumption in a home, size matters.

You've got to be straight with people. Don't try and snow them. Don't try and hornswaggle them and lead them down a garden path. That's wrong. You can't be doing that. You've got to be straight with people. So don't compare an energy bill of a house in Germany and an energy bill of a house in Ontario.

They talk about how they want to emulate some of the things that Barack Obama is doing in the United States.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hope.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Barack Obama—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: “Yes, we can.”

Mr. John Yakabuski: But they only want to pick part of it. Then Minister Smitherman tells them on Global's Focus Ontario, “It's all about getting to be greener and cleaner, but the Conservatives want to turn those stacks upside down in those coal plants and capture the CO₂.”

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: That's not even possible.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Huron—Bruce says that's impossible. Maybe she should talk to Barack Obama, who has made an absolute commitment. As

Barack Obama said, "Do you know what? If we can put a man on the moon, we are going to find a way to economically capture carbon." That's what Barack Obama said.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There's so much anger over there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, there's so much anger. I can understand why. When you put something out and it bounces back at you with a little bit of a pushback and the people of the province of Ontario are clearly not happy and they ain't buying what you're selling, of course there's anger over there.

Here's a little example of the feed-in tariff and how it has worked in Germany. This is what the province wants to do. They want to use a feed-in tariff, which means they're going to set a price and they're going to pay it. It's not going to be a bid process. They're just going to say, "This is what we'll pay." They're not putting caps on how much they'll accept. They're just saying, "This is what we'll pay," and they'll pay different amounts for different areas based on the suitability or the availability of the source, being the wind.

1540

I'm going to read this because I don't want anybody to assume or think that it's me talking here, because I certainly don't consider myself that much of an expert to be able to draw these conclusions, but obviously, they're out there. This is from Germany's Solar Cell Promotion: Dark Clouds on the Horizon:

"This article demonstrates that the large feed-in tariffs currently guaranteed for solar electricity in Germany constitute a subsidization regime that, if extended to 2020, threatens to reach a level comparable to that of German hard coal production, a notoriously outstanding example of misguided political intervention.... Similarly disappointing is the net employment balance"—the net employment balance—"which is likely to be negative if one takes into account the opportunity cost of this form of solar photovoltaic support.... We therefore recommend the immediate and drastic reduction of the magnitude of the feed-in tariffs granted for solar-based electricity....

"In 2007, the estimated share of wind power in Germany's electricity production amounted to 7.4%.... In contrast, the electricity produced through ... photovoltaic was ... 0.4%.

"Under this regime, which is based on the Renewable Energy Sources Act ... utilities are obliged to accept the delivery of power from independent producers of renewable electricity into their own grid, thereby paying technology-specific feed-in tariffs far above" their "own production cost.... Ultimately, though, it is the industrial and private consumers that have to bear the cost induced by the" tariff—"through an increase in the price of electricity. Wind power has so far exerted the strongest effect on electricity prices."

The people have a right to know what this is going to mean in electricity prices.

I just want to read something from an article that I got with respect to Germany's plans. They're always talking

about how they love the German example, but Germany has gone down the road very far with respect to renewables, and it has created some challenges for them:

"German State Agency Calls for New Power Stations.

"Germany must press on with building up conventional power generation alongside its push for a renewable energy expansion to avoid supply shortfalls and rising prices, German energy agency Dena said on Tuesday"; that's Tuesday, February 10 of this year.

"Demand increases and supply volatility arising from a growing share of erratic production from renewable sources still make new coal and gas-fired power stations necessary, Dena managing director Stephan Kohler said during a trade fair.

"The state agency upheld forecasts Germany could be short of some 12,000 megawatts, or 15 large units, by 2020....

"New build of fossil fuels-based power plants is essential to cover demand peaks, to avoid an efficiency gap due to old plants running longer and to speed innovation...."

"This is also to avoid rising power prices and to ensure Germany's role as a base for industry is safeguarded."

"Kohler illustrated problems with wind energy, saying 23,000 megawatts were nominally installed, but high pressure fronts in January curbed wind speeds. On one day, only 113 megawatts capacity was active"—113 megawatts out of 23,000.

You can't rely on that, and the Premier has said it himself. I know he sometimes wants to distance himself from things he says because they get him into trouble, because sometimes he doesn't do his research, and I don't think they did the research on this one. But he has said, "Wind is not dependable. We can't depend on wind." Wind is a wonderful source of energy if you take away the negative. There are no fuel costs; there are no emissions; there's no waste. There's no waste product after the production of the energy. But the biggest problem it's got is the one that you cannot get around, that it is totally indispensible. You can't control it. In an electricity system, you know that you have to be able to ensure that the power that is needed is in the system when it's needed.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Oh, I tried that. Let's not put up any windmills.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll give you a couple of numbers for our own system here. We have 887 megawatts installed in the province of Ontario. I'll just give you some numbers from 2009, on February 28, a Saturday: at 3 o'clock, 42 megawatts; 4 o'clock, 25; 5 o'clock, nine; 6 o'clock, 21. That's what we were getting. Granted—I want to be fair—we've also had some very good days. But it speaks to the issue. We have good days in our nuclear plants every day—every day—because we can depend on them to put out the power we need 24/7, 365 days a year. The fact that we have a good day with wind or several good days—and February is traditionally a pretty good month for wind historically. It's a different

problem in the summer months, when the wind doesn't blow as much.

I would encourage all of you to actually go to the IESO's website, and you can get the hourly reports for any generator in the province of Ontario. It will tell you what each unit of each nuclear plant, each coal plant, each hydroelectric facility, each gas plant and each wind facility is putting out at any given hour. I think it's important not just for the people, but also for the members of this House—it's accessible; it's not hard to find—so that you understand yourselves that we have a hybrid system. We support that, but there are limits to how far you can go with the weaker forms of generation, the ones that have such an inherent weakness, which is indispatchability.

We have to ensure that we have control of the power, because power without control is nothing, and Mr. Kormos, I know, would agree with me. Power without control is not good; in fact, it's dangerous.

How much time have I got left? I do want to talk about some of the issues that have been raised to us by members of the public and/or stakeholders. I would request, possibly, to have unanimous consent to go on for an extra hour, if I could, because there are many things in this bill that I'm not going to have time in the time allotted. So I would certainly entertain that as a possibility.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Did you ask him?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I haven't asked him. Can I ask him?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would move for unanimous consent that I have an extra hour to cover all of the points, because I know they're interested. I'm trying to help them. I want them to be able to help their constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member is asking for unanimous consent. I hear a no.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I heard the minister of unanimous consent over there say no. It's the same minister who knows the standing orders, or thinks he does.

I want to talk about some of the things that people have written to us about. I want to be clear that I am not a scientist. I know that we actually have a scientist in our midst here, and I had the pleasure of sharing the company of the member for Richmond Hill, Mr. Moridi, at the Canadian Nuclear Association conference last week.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He supports nuclear too.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'll bet he does. He is a nuclear physicist, I believe, by profession, so he is an expert in some of these fields. Perhaps he needs to be talking to the minister of everything, and maybe he can educate him as well. He's a very, very interesting man, and I must say I enjoyed the conversations we had at that conference.

1550

The point that I'm making is that I'm not an expert; I'm not a doctor and I'm not a scientist, so I'm relating some of these things, but I want you to know that they're out there, Mr. Speaker. I can't speak from a position of authority on some of these issues, but they are coming to

us in copious quantities. The e-mails are coming left, right and centre, as they say; high, wide and handsome, as my brother likes to say. He must be talking about himself. But anyway, we're getting these e-mails with regard to a number of concerns, and one of the concerns is the effect that these turbines may or may not have on people's health. We haven't raised this in this House because I'm not sitting here and saying that I can confirm, but I think it is important that the government recognize that those people are out there and they need to be heard. I can't say that these things are happening, but I most certainly cannot say that they're not happening.

I just want to read a letter from—not a constituent of mine, but these things come to me as the energy critic as well:

"So far the Premier and his ministers have simply denied the existence of these problems" related to health problems. "Premier McGuinty, in fact, stated that there are no reliable peer-reviewed studies authenticating these health concerns, yet the government has not brought forward any such studies that prove his counter-argument. The fact is that enough uncertainty"—and again, this speaks to the minister's word, "certainty": "We want to bring certainty," he said; I'm certain he used that word—"The fact is that enough uncertainty exists that it should compel the government to undertake a fully comprehensive and independent examination of noise, flicker effects, stray voltage and other factors that are known to affect people's health, regardless of their source.

"Wind turbines, once built, are and will be with us for a minimum of 21 years, according to the act. Three or four months of study now could save disastrous results that would be extremely expensive to reverse."

That is from Donna and Larry Close in Flesherton.

They also go on to question the McGuinty government's contention that they'll create 50,000 jobs. I kind of like this one, so I'm going to read it:

"McGuinty and company are pushing forward their green energy and wind turbine agenda on the basis that it will create more than 50,000 jobs over the next three years. First, how this number was calculated remains a mystery, but it is expected that it came from proponents in the industry. In a pre-introduction speech to the Toronto Board of Trade on February 20"—so Mr. Close watches these things closely—"Mr. Smitherman offered up a shopping list of professions that would gain employment from this green energy initiative. There was no offer to justify the conveniently round number or to identify where those jobs might occur, whether they would be part-time or full-time, how permanent they would be or any of the other details that would enable us to audit the success or failure and to hold the government accountable." Pretty reasonable statement. "To his credit"—this is the part I really like, actually—"Mr. Smitherman did not include in his list any butchers, bakers or candlestick makers, but their exclusion did not make his claims any more believable."

So you can see that there's a lot of doubt out there about the government's ability to follow through on what they're promising.

Another part that is very troubling—oh, my goodness, I haven't even got off of page 1. We're going to have to look at that unanimous consent again. Ministerial powers—and this is not a prop, Mr. Speaker; it's part of the legislation. In no less than 20 sections of this bill—listen carefully to this—the minister has broad and sweeping powers to direct. This allows him to have total and sole discretion about what he does.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Would that he would use it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Would that he would use it. Do you think George would use it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't think so.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do you think he likes power?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He likes that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, man, I'm telling you: 20 sections—unbelievable. As the person who wrote this for me said, "You asked me to provide you with a list of the new powers being centralized in the office of the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Ontario's new super-minister."

You have to take a look at this, folks. For the sake of every citizen in the province of Ontario, for the sake of the rest of you members of the Liberal caucus, do you really want one single member to have this kind of power to direct everything to do with energy in the province of Ontario? I don't think so.

Just leafing through here for a minute—give me a moment, because there's a lot of stuff here. That's essentially why we need more time, of course, Mr. Speaker.

I have e-mails from Ann and Larry Towell, Donna Gage and John McGee asking us to please take a look at what this government is doing in this bill.

One of the things in those ministerial powers—I've got to tell you this, Mr. Speaker, because you'll be concerned. Have you ever been to Algonquin park? I knew you had. Well, I didn't actually know that, but it's sort of like that potential the minister likes to talk about. Under this act, the Minister of Energy could—could—order that turbines be built in Algonquin park. If you're familiar with the park, and I know now that you are, there are some really good ridges in the park that would actually be conducive to significant amounts of wind. Are we serious that we're thinking of building turbines in Algonquin park?

Now, I know the minister is going to say—and other members of the Liberal Party are going to say, because they're told what to say anyway—"Oh, we're never going to do that. We're never going to use that power." Well, if you're never going to use it, why are you putting it in the act in the first place? Why are you opening the door to something as nefarious as building turbines in a provincial park?

I can tell you this: In the community of South Algonquin, which is in the shadow of Algonquin park, the minister has condemned the local council for voting not to allow turbines in their community.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How could he do that? Condemned? Really?

Mr. John Yakabuski: He wrote a letter to them.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Stripping? A little strip?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think it was necessary, I say to the member from Trinity–Spadina, but that's the way the minister reacts. As soon as somebody challenges him, he's just gotta show that he's the boss.

That's something we're really concerned about. I want to get to something here, but my filing system is, well, about as good as it is in my office, I guess. This is from Julius Grodski: "I like to express to you the need for a well-evaluated approach to the matters of energy, as the issue is getting a dramatically different outlook elsewhere in the world (e.g. Denmark and Germany) with the recognition that the wind farms have not reduced either the need for fossil-based plants," which I talked about earlier, or "total CO₂ emissions."

In fact, in those countries, even though they've done all of this renewable energy, they have not reduced those emissions as a result of that. Interesting stuff, isn't it? Because this is how the minister purports this act is going to do everything to clean up the air.

1600

Now, they talk about building all kinds of gas plants. There are some genuine concerns out there. I think everybody out there knows this, but I'm not sure, so I'm going to repeat it if I have said it already. But we do know this: that for every megawatt of non-dispatchable power you have, you must back that up with a megawatt of dispatchable power, something you control. So if you have 4,000 megawatts of wind, you'll have to have 4,000 megawatts of something that is dispatchable, and I don't include nuclear in that, because for the most part it's non-dispatchable. It likes to run with the gas pedal to the floor; that's how it runs best and most efficiently. I know that Mr. Moridi would agree with me there. If you don't trust me, talk to your colleague. He's a good man.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, I hope he uses the two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

So the gas situation is thus: that at dawn we have about—and we have enough gas storage for about eight days under normal use. If we had to produce a whole heck of a lot more of our power from gas, would it not stand to reason that we may actually jeopardize the ability of people to heat their homes and water if we got a particularly chilling and cold winter? You've got to be able to balance the supply with the demand, and natural gas requires storage. These are real, genuine issues that you need to think about when you're planning an energy act in the province of Ontario.

I've got a really good e-mail here but I just can't find it. It was from a person who certainly knows the business, but—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take your time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can't waste it, because then I'll lose the—I don't think you'll stop the clock while I look for papers, Mr. Speaker, will you? I didn't think so.

This one e-mail says, "The more I read in this bill and the various commentaries, the more frightened I become about:

"1. Pushing residents and municipal councils completely out of the site selection process for renewable projects...."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You didn't get a standing ovation; you orchestrated one, I say to the member for Ottawa–Orléans.

"3. The new inspectors to be hired to go anywhere they please to enforce the act, carrying with them the threat of huge fines"—\$10,000 to \$25,000.

"4. Completely changing the economic regulation mandate of the OEB." Absolutely right. Read the bill, folks. It's disturbing; it's scary.

"5. The clear intent to use electricity rates as a means of income redistribution.

"6. Greatly increasing the ability of the minister to issue directives to the OEB, IESO, OPA etc. without cabinet approval.

"7. Forcing energy audits and related bureaucracy onto an already suffering real estate market.

"Smitherman is personally taking complete control of the electricity business and no one is going to get in his way."

That's what that concerned member of the public said, and it's hard to disagree with him that that's what is happening here. It's not exactly a coup attempt, but it's something afoot.

Today the Minister of Culture—who's also the minister responsible for seniors, as you know, Mr. Speaker—was asked a question. This is unbelievable: The minister responsible for seniors was asked a question and she directed it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; bounced it, punted it. Do you know that before Jim Watson, the minister, could get out of his chair—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I would ask the member to get back to the bill that he's speaking on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I think you're going a little bit off kilter. I would just ask the member to get back on track.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister punted it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but before he could get out of his chair, the minister of everything was up, answering the question. It just didn't seem to matter what was being asked. He's the guy who's going to answer it. I know you guys want to have work and you like to be here, and I really appreciate that, and I think it's important that you come here. But you're probably going to be told at the next cabinet meeting that your presence but not your answers are going to be needed; your presence is welcome, but your answers won't be needed because George will answer everything.

That's what's happening here in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and the people out there who are the most affected by this—and I'll make this point again because I, believe it or not, am down to my last minute.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's terrible, that someone would cheer when a speaker is going to end. It never happened in this House on our side. We would never do that.

Because there is so much at stake and so many people affected by this—people in my riding who own mills, people in my riding who are on low incomes; they're everywhere in the province—it's time for you people to have a sober second look at this. We realize you're going to pass it. Now, get it to a committee. Let us take this bill throughout the province from far and wide in every kind of community, to rich and poor. Everybody who can have a word on this, let them have a word on it. Let the stakeholders who are affected by this, the businesses, the manufacturers who you've almost put out of business in this province with your tax policies, let them all have a chance to have their say on this bill so that, before the end of the day, we get the best piece of legislation possible, not something that just George Smitherman likes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mike Harris should not have changed the rules in this place that obviously restricted the ability of the members to be able to speak as much as they possibly want. Why he changed the rules is beyond me. That was a whole hour, and people need the time. You noticed the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke needed the time, and needed more time because he's got a whole lot of stuff he wants to say. That's why I was upset with Mike Harris changing the rules.

But there are two things I agree with that I want to say to the member, and nothing else. I'm going to have 20 minutes—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just say the things you agree with.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Two things: One of them is that he quite rightly said—because the minister pointed out that the bill would only increase ratepayer costs by 1%. He did say that. The point is, if the government hasn't yet seen the price at which they will buy green energy and won't say how much green energy will come online, then how on earth do they know the electricity rates will only be upped by 1%? I agree with that very reasonable, plausible remark he made. Given that the feed-in tariffs for wind and solar are two to three times higher than the cost of coal-fired electricity, how is it that the increase in hydro rates will be so low? These are good questions, and I wanted to agree with them.

I was going to go on with that, but the second thing—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Is this another agreement?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, the other one I agree with: This is where the minister is certain that they will create 50,000 jobs. He was certain about that, but uncertain about so many other things. These are the two things that I want to agree with you on, and I'll have 20 minutes to state my differences with your party in the next six minutes or so.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the many points raised by the member for

Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. In the time I have, I'll focus my attention on two specific points.

As has been said from the outset, and by my friend opposite, the Green Energy Act is to establish a new framework to transform our energy needs, get off fossil fuel, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs and protect the planet. I don't know about the members on that side of the House, but that's what my constituents have sent us here to do. The feed-in tariff, which is at the root of that transformation, is a very specific mechanism by which we will be able to alter the way we produce and generate electricity in this province, and it is something that was scarcely mentioned in my friend's speech.

I thought I might just identify for him that other places around the world—this is in this month's Walrus magazine: "The engine of this radical transformation is the single most effective climate policy measure yet devised: a straightforward law called a feed-in tariff that obliges power distributors to purchase electricity from renewable sources for a fixed time, at fixed rates above market prices...."

"It has also crossed the pond, after a fashion, inspiring Ontario's pacesetting standard offer program," our last foray into this.

We are now building upon this transformational stage that we established some number of years ago. I can tell you that the leading-edge folks in Germany—for example, Hermann Scheer has said, "It is the most successful new job creation program we ever had, and the most ... effective job creation program."

That's what we should be undertaking in this province. That's what the Green Energy Act is all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

First of all, we do hear significant concerns about the cost, but there's been a lot of research on this, and I hope the members have looked at a lot of research. I don't know if you've seen the extent; I know I have worked on it. A California study talks about the impact of wind turbines on red-tailed hawks. For those who don't know, wind turbines are basically extremely conducive with red-tailed hawk habitat, and they're the number one animals that are affected by them. I doubt very much whether you have.

I want to mention some things that I hope the government looks into—I know the minister is paying attention. A previous government committed funds for a crown wind review. What that did, in a different ministry, was determine sites that are best applicable to wind turbines throughout Ontario. If that research goes to waste, then we're just spending money for no good reason at all. I hope they would look into that research and ensure that the research that was done there is very much used throughout the province, because it's going to help out a lot.

Another aspect of wind turbines that I have some strong concerns with: Part of it is much like in the mining

sector. For those who don't know, people in the mining sector will go out and stake claims just to tie up the land, never intending to use those claims. The one thing you want to make sure of with the wind turbines, when you're using them out there and you put them in sites, is that some people are not taking the sites so that others can't use them. It's a free and open market, and you want to make sure it's taking place.

Another area: There are some communities that could benefit immediately from this, and those would be First Nations communities. A lot of these are dependent on diesel generation for their energy, which is only taken in on winter roads. They take an entire year's supply of gas into these communities to keep them going through all year long until freeze-up and they can get in. If you put wind turbines on these sites immediately, they will have a substantial impact on those communities over a long period of time.

Last, in the time I'm allowed, is the question about why the park's issue was in the ministry not in Natural Resources. That's just political Ping-Pong—I'm sure everybody knows about it—so that person can say, "No, it's the other minister, not Natural Resources that's responsible for it being built in the parks."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: When the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Mr. Yakabuski, speaks, this Legislature clearly listens. From time to time they're provoked, and that's fine by me. There's nothing wrong with provoking people in this chamber. Sometimes it's a mere matter of waking them up.

Look, New Democrats are very much at odds, in many respects, with the Conservatives around electrical energy policy, no two ways about it. Yet at the same time, it's clear that this Bill 150 is not what so many out there would have wanted it to be.

Fifty thousand jobs—horse feathers. That number was plucked out of the air. It's as arbitrary a number as could ever have been selected—on a good day, maybe 50,000 people doing those audits.

My neighbours and I live in 100-year-old houses with wood sash frames and everything that's characteristic of a 100-year-old house. You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. I don't need an auditor to tell me—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —that old sash-hung windows with the—because it was beautiful. I'm only the second owner of this house. The old woman who sold it to me had been born there, and so it was still in her father's name, because she inherited it. I know what the problem is with my house. I don't need an auditor coming to tell me. Like Mr. Marchese says, if I go near one of those windows on a cold, blustery winter day, I know exactly what the problem is.

Mr. Marchese of Trinity–Spadina is going to be speaking to this bill in short order. I suggest that folks would be well advised to listen to him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing has two minutes to respond, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Trinity–Spadina, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Oshawa and Welland for their input on my address earlier.

I'm not going to get into any more details at this point because I only have a little bit of time left, but I want to reiterate the fact that when Tories and New Democrats are clearly seeing deficiencies of the same kind in a government bill—and the members for Trinity–Spadina and Welland talked about that—it's obvious that there's work to be done on this bill. Therefore, I would implore the members on the other side of the House—and I know you're hearing about it, too. You have reservations about this bill. You have concerns. Your constituents have concerns. You have some real fears about what this might mean to people in the province of Ontario.

This is not a renewable energy bill. This is so much broader and so far-reaching and gives so much unfettered power to a single minister that it is something that all members, of all parties, of all stripes, should be concerned about. We cannot simply allow this to be passed without serious debate, significant committees throughout the province, so that we get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to say I was really looking forward to this opportunity to speak to Bill 150.

You look at the objectives of the bill, and you think it's really good. You look at the fact that we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in order to minimize the already damaging effects of climate change, and you say, "Yes, whatever is in this bill that does that is good." We urgently need to increase the proportion of Ontario's electricity that is provided by safe and clean renewable energy—and you say, "Yes, we do." We need to expand and maximize energy conservation in the province; the minister says, "We agree with them, yes." And we urgently need to support the development of a green economy in Ontario that provides decent jobs for the future. Yes, of course we agree with that.

Bill 150 calls for government investment to upgrade the electricity transmission and distribution grid to support a greater proportion of renewable energy. We think it's good. The bill aims to create a culture of conservation by greening public buildings, improving energy efficiency standards for appliances and making energy efficiency a priority of the Building Code. It sounds great. Bill 150 seeks to ensure that renewable energy projects are environmentally sound but don't take years to get off the ground. We agree with that too.

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The government says the act will spark the development of a vibrant and growing green economy in Ontario. That sounds good. But apart from the good words and the lofty goals, the question is begged: Will this act actually stimulate the kind of green energy transformation that

our province so desperately needs, for both economic and environmental reasons? I don't believe the bill does that.

The government said the other day, through the minister, "With this single bold move, Ontario would join the ranks of global green power leaders like Denmark, Germany and Spain." You look at that and you say, "My God, this is amazing stuff," but this bill doesn't do anything that compares to what any of those countries are doing. If you look at Germany, they produce 24,000 or 25,000 megawatts of wind power alone. Do you understand? This is huge wind power: 24,000 megawatts. The minister compares this little initiative to what Germany is doing. The minister says it will put us into the ranks with these other nations. It doesn't do it. It can't do it.

Germany, by next year, will produce 5,000 megawatts of solar power—5,000 megawatts of solar power alone. At best, with all of these suggestions, you will be producing 500 megawatts of power every year for the next 16 years, and you want to join the ranks of the big nations? It's laughable when you say those things.

I heard the former Minister of the Environment saying the same thing but a couple of minutes ago, that we're going to join the other great nations with this initiative. Either she doesn't know what she's talking about, or she's perpetuating a myth around what it is that you purport to do. Either way, it's wrong. You're not doing that.

In fact, there are no targets. There are no timelines. There are no minimums in terms of what you want to accomplish. There's nothing in the bill that talks about what, at minimum, you want to accomplish and by when. There's nothing of the sort in the bill, but the minister was very clear. He said that 75% of power comes and will come from two sources: hydroelectric, which we support, and nuclear, against which New Democrats take a strong position.

There are caps, and those caps are clearly articulated by the Liberals and the Tories. Tories are big lovers of nuclear, too. They just won't say it out loud too often—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh no, we say it loud.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—but they love nuclear, too. So there is a cap, and that was strongly and clearly articulated by Monsieur Smitherman, but in terms of how much energy we're going to be producing from wind, biomass, solar or any other generation of power, there's no comment on that. There's no comment on geothermal energy at all, no comment on it at all that I could see in the bill, unless Liberals know something about this that I haven't seen. No comment on that, either.

So in terms of how far we want to go, how much we want to accomplish and what are the timelines and the targets, there's no talk of it, but there are targets for nuclear. Fifty per cent of the energy will come from nuclear. That is very clear. I, as a New Democrat, have been against nuclear for a long time. You have a whole lot of Liberals and a whole lot of Tories singing the praises of nuclear. You've got a whole lot of Liberals and a whole lot of Tories, including the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—and he's tall enough to be able to reach that far—singing the praises of nuclear.

God bless him. He's not ashamed; he's not shy. Neither are the Liberals. They say it's clean. There's nothing clean about the waste-producing energy that comes from nuclear. We've got two chemicals that destroy human life, tritium and plutonium, and those come as a result of mining—so much of what produces this incredibly wasteful radioactive material, that lasts 10,000 years, if not longer. No Liberal or Tory knows what to do with that waste. No Liberal or Tory ever talks about nuclear waste as being dirty. They think it's clean. They smile as they speak about it, as if somehow they're safe, and there's never going to be a problem with what happens to that nuclear waste. It's being stored in bins; we don't even know where they are. Maybe some Liberals know where they are; maybe they'll tell me where they are. If that doesn't pose a risk to anyone, please articulate it for me.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Attorney General, stand up and do your two minutes. Do 20, for God's sake, because you have so much to say. Stand up and do 20 on this. If you know where they are, stand up and speak to it. I don't think you have a clue, quite frankly. I don't think 99.9% of you have a clue where it is, because I don't. All I know is that nuclear waste is not clean, Minister Attorney General. You know too, but you all have to sort of be like parrots, simply saying whatever the industry and others tell you: "Oh, it's just clean energy." Even the Toronto Star supports you and says it's clean energy.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: They understand.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah, they understand.

It's dangerous stuff. It kills. The production of it is very, very polluting. And the expense of nuclear—we are still paying for Darlington today. It's expensive. No Liberal or Tory talks about how expensive it is. With all the billions of dollars we put into Darlington, and the \$40 billion these Liberals and Tories want to put into the development of new nuclear—with all those billions, imagine what we could do if we invested it in these objectives that the minister puts forth as if somehow he really believes in it. If we took those \$40 billion that he wants to spend on nuclear, we could subsidize every homeowner who wants to put solar in his or her home. We could literally pay it, for free, pay them to do it.

A constituent of mine who was talking to me just the other day said, "I put in \$40,000 worth of solar panels. Is the government doing anything to support people like me?" I said, "I'm sorry. There's nothing for you."

How many people with money, who want to do the right thing and want to put solar in their homes—they could be doing it if these fine Liberals would just support them. If they diverted but a small amount of those dollars that are going to go to nuclear and had every building, every owner who owns a building, every household person who owns a home, everyone who owns any piece of property anywhere who says, "I want to go solar, to reduce my footprint. Will you help me?"—if the government diverted but a pittance of those \$40 billion, it could be done.

You've got Tories and Liberals saying, "Yeah, yeah, some of this new energy is going to cost money," especially the Tories, and the Liberals say it too, but no one says that nuclear is even more expensive than these other, alternate forms that are cleaner.

The Ontario Power Authority said that 34,500 megawatts of power, of offshore wind, exists to be harnessed. That's a lot of wind power that could be harnessed. There's a lot of solar power that could be harnessed.

We are running out of oil, natural gas is a diminishing resource, and they're polluting. These are the other forms of alternate energy we need to look at. We are fossilized in the view that only nuclear can help us deal with our energy problems. Liberals and Tories have a fossilized view of this, and they cannot think otherwise. They don't know how to think differently. They believe nuclear is indispensable, and that is the framework they use and cannot change.

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I was surprised the other day when I read letters to the editor, because the Toronto Star allowed many of the critics of nuclear to write their opinions around it, and the very people who think that nuclear is clean allowed these individual people to say the following on nuclear:

"Nuclear generation is not a zero greenhouse gas emissions option as stated in your editorial. It is not clean and green. Mining and processing uranium contaminates air and water. Concrete, of which copious quantities are used to build nuclear plants, is an egregious polluter. Efficiency has never met expectations. Costs to build and maintain plants have always exceeded estimates (by many billions). And the disposal of radioactive waste is not incorporated into the equation." No one has ever incorporated radioactive disposal and how we deal with it into the financial equation.

"Most articles on renewables focus on wind and solar but neglect micro/mini hydro generation. There are hundreds of appropriate dams and waterways throughout the province that can be harnessed with minimal environmental impact. Hydro in all its configurations has always provided reliable and relatively inexpensive electricity.

"Our economy is at a critical stage. Massive expenditures for nuclear will only compound our financial woes. Rethinking our approach to energy production is vital. Opposing it is as futile as standing on railway tracks holding up the hand to stop the train roaring down on us. It's time to step aside, grab a handle and get on board"; Gary Magwood from Belleville.

Another individual says the following:

"If Smitherman really wants to focus on green energy, then he has to stop the dinosaurs from reserving large areas of Ontario's grid for nuclear and gas. The Pembina Institute and at least five other reputable groups are trying to make Smitherman and other fossilized experts from the last century understand how to deal with peak oil and climate change. Together the groups claim to represent over six million citizens.

"I would suggest that the Star begin a series of back and forth columns between the minister, or his delegate,

and a representative from one or more of the environmental groups that have been pushing the serious study called 'Renewable is Doable.' The public would surely see this as an excellent service."

Another individual says the following:

"Nuclear power can never be green. Nuclear power plants produce extremely toxic radioactive wastes such as plutonium 239, which remains radioactive for half a million years. Even though nuclear power has been operational for nearly 50 years, the nuclear industry has yet to determine how to safely dispose of this deadly material. While you bring up the cost of green energy, you neglect to mention that nuclear is also subsidized by the ratepayer. The average electricity consumer in Ontario is paying \$400 per year for past nuclear fiascos. And nuclear power is the most capital-intensive, most expensive way possible to create new jobs. A transition toward labour-intensive renewable energies and efficiency programs promises massive job gains." That's Angela Bischoff; Ontario Clean Air Alliance.

Another: "Just ask those unfortunates who live downstream from a uranium mine how green nuclear power is." That's Cameron Miller from Toronto.

"With Ontario's energy consumption falling and the nuclear industry's energy costs soaring, it's time to recognize that the nuclear industry, even in Ontario, lacks a truly viable long-term future." That's Andrew Cagney from Toronto.

"Instead of nuclear, let's please put those billions into renewable energy. It will create jobs and is a proactive investment—like our trans-Canada railway—that will put us ahead of the pack for generations to come. Create a green energy bond. Bonds got us through World War II. They could get us through this war on our environment and our future. A province-wide energy retrofit will help every citizen. It's time to think outside the box and find solutions, not to wring our hands and huddle under familiar, but outdated, old security blankets." That's Gwendolyn Kaegh from Markham.

Another: "Your statement that nuclear power has 'zero greenhouse gas emissions' is simply untrue. Nuclear has major environmental impacts throughout its life cycle. Ontario has better energy options. It needs to make them the centrepiece of its future energy plans"—Mark S. Winfield.

"According to Dr. Helen Caldicott (author of Nuclear Power is Not the Answer), 'within 10 to 20 years—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: I quote standing order 23(d), which forbids reading "unnecessarily from verbatim reports of the legislative debates or any other document."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): On that point of order?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think that we're trying to engage in debate, and if it's the Liberals' intention to suppress criticism of this debate and discuss the energy policy put forward by the Liberals—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): It's not a point of order.

I respect the member from Mississauga–Streetsville's point of order, but I believe the member was speaking on behalf of the bill that we're debating today.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I'm really pleased with your ruling. I thought it was a silly point of order that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville made.

I've got two minutes, and there are other individuals: Farrah Khan, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment—I couldn't finish it in time—and Martin Gagné from Toronto also spoke about this particular issue.

We need to be able to do things differently. If the government is serious, we need to invest seriously in renewables. Renewables are easy to get on board, and fast. Nuclear is expensive, it's waste-producing, it kills, it's radioactive, and it takes 10 years to bring it on board. These other forms that we're advocating for are much cheaper, and we should be supporting every homeowner, every owner of a building who has a building with government subsidies, in order to allow them to do the right thing—and use the \$40 billion of nuclear expenditures on renewables in a way that we would be supporting homeowners and those who want to reduce their footprint, in a way that the cost is minimal, in a way that would allow people to feel good about what needs to be done to reduce our emissions and to reduce our footprint.

This bill but touches very modestly on what it is that we can do. It hardly is a beacon of what should be done, and can hardly be compared to nations like Germany that are far, far ahead of where we will be in 16 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: The member for Trinity–Spadina, like the lead-off speaker from Toronto–Danforth the other day, has basically supported what is in this Green Energy Act.

I'd like to just go through some of the things. Expanding renewable energy: It's the feed-in tariff; we all realize we need some work there. As-of-right grid access: We need that. The service guarantees from LDCs and Hydro One and the IESO: We need those service guarantees. Streamlining approvals for renewable energy projects: Nobody will deny that there aren't problems throughout the province right now there.

We need a renewable energy facilitator who will work with possible producers of energy and help them, not have all the resistance that is already in there now. Streamline approvals for large transmission projects: This is extremely important. We have to get the grid ready for the new era. Remove local barriers to small-scale renewable energy projects: There's some discussion there, but certainly we have to help the people who want to produce renewable energy. Smart grid implementation: We have to get ready, to set the stage for electric cars, solar panels on roofs and distributed generation. Nobody is suggesting that we shouldn't be making this \$5-billion investment in our grid.

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Incentives for small-scale renewables: Absolutely. Updating Ontario's building code: Nobody has touched on that, but this is part of this. Greening Ontario government and broader public sector building facilities: We've done a good job in the past three or four years on that. We now have to get into our universities, our hospitals and our schools and help them get their buildings as efficient as possible. Establish sustainable funding for conservation: Nobody has argued about that. These are all parts of the bill. Establish mandatory electricity conservation targets.

We're on our way. This is a good bill. We're not hearing any discussion, certainly from the third party, on all those issues, and I really appreciate that support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the opportunity to make a few comments with respect to the Green Energy Act in general, and the comments made by the member from Trinity–Spadina in particular.

Let me say from the outset that those of us in the Progressive Conservative Party are not against the concept of green energy. It's sort of a motherhood statement. Who wouldn't be—so that any criticisms that we have should not be taken as criticisms of the premise of the act that we should be investing in more green sources of energy but just with respect to some of the underlying assumptions and the methods of putting this Green Energy Act into place.

With respect to some of the comments made by the member from Trinity–Spadina, I can say—and I don't think this will come as any surprise to him—that I do not agree with some of his comments with respect to nuclear energy, because, after all, it does provide about 50% of our energy here in Ontario for now and for the foreseeable future. But what I would say is that the Green Energy Act and the green power that it contemplates haven't been put into the context of a whole energy mix for the entire province of Ontario.

For example, where does nuclear fit in? What are the plans for bringing nuclear on at a higher level in the near future? What about the coal-fired plants and the promise that was made to, first of all, close them in 2007? Now the so-called plan is to close them in 2014. We still don't know really where that stands.

So while we agree with the idea of introducing new green energy, the fact of the matter is that the sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow. We need to know where we're going to be able to get a reliable source of power for both businesses and homes in the future if we're going to be trying to attract new investments to the province of Ontario to get our economy back on stream.

I would submit that what we have is a feel-good act that sounds good, that's really just a distraction to the fact that this government has been ignoring our economy, the disastrous shape it's in, and has no plan to deal with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I told people that they should listen when the member for Trinity–Spadina speaks, Rosario Marchese. He in fact outlined the NDP's position very articulately. If there are Liberals over there that think that Mr. Marchese's comments somehow provided comfort for their weak, feckless proposal, they are sadly mistaken and indeed on the verge of being delusional.

Look, this is another PR exercise. This is like a bill that says—remember those old Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland movies, right? Back in the old days. It would be, "Come on, Mickey, let's put on a musical," and all of a sudden there would be a musical; there would be background music, and Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland would be singing and dancing, and there would be munchkins all over.

This is the same sort of thing; this is fantasy stuff; "Let's talk green." This has about as much credibility as legislation that says, "We've got it now; we're going to end poverty." Not how, why, when or where; "We're going to end poverty." And who's going to vote against that? Of course not. Don't be silly.

Like was just said, of course we all support green futures, but doing it is what New Democrats are concerned about. That's what Marchese is speaking to. That's what Peter Tabuns spoke to the other day when he did his lead. In my own inarticulate way, I'm going to do my incompetent best to speak to it as well in around a half-hour's time after the next speaker.

What I find amazing is that there are some nuts-and-bolts issues here that are part and parcel of this bill, like this \$300 audit that for some reason the government members don't want to speak to; nuts and bolts like 50,000 new jobs, which is bull spit—that's what they call it where I come from—which the Liberals don't want to speak to. I will.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to add some comments to the debate and speak to a number of the issues that the member for Trinity–Spadina spoke about. I would start by saying when we have a bill as extensive and comprehensive as Bill 150, it's important in this Legislature to focus in on some of the key specifics:

- the creation of an attractive feed-in tariff regime that will entail further consultation with the OPA to design that feed-in tariff system, as appropriate, that it be done in that way;

- establish a one-stop, streamlined approvals process so that we can get those renewable energy projects that we all desire built into the grid and so that we can see this new type of energy come online;

- establish a right to connect to the electricity grid for renewable energy projects that meet the technical and regulatory requirement, which is imperative because it is no use to any of us to have a renewable energy product that stands alone in a community and doesn't connect to the grid so that that electricity can be transmitted to others who would choose to use it;

- establish, for the first time, province-wide standards for renewable energy projects;

—help local communities to build and operate their renewable energy facilities; and

—offer incentives to small-scale renewables, such as zero- or low-interest loans to assist homeowners in financing the capital costs of residential renewables, and that's a key issue that the member spoke about and said was absent.

I would encourage those in this House to pull out the act again and take a look at the detail that exists. If you do, you will then understand why leaders such as Dr. Hermann Scheer, the general chairman of the World Council for Renewable Energy, has said, "Ontario's Green Energy Act represents North America's most ambitious and far-reaching enabling legislation and will place Ontario as a world leader in renewable energy development, industrial innovation and climate protection."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member for Trinity–Spadina, two minutes to respond, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was reacting to the member for Etobicoke when she earlier on said, "With this single bold move, Ontario would join the ranks of global green power leaders like Denmark, Germany and Spain," which is what the minister said, which is what she just did a second ago by quoting somebody else about how far-reaching this is. The point is that it's all puffery. It all sounds great, but because of your commitment to build new nuclear, Bill 150 is but a modest proposal on the issues of generating power from wind, solar and biomass. That's the point I make to you.

You can say all you want, including the member for Ottawa–Orléans saying I haven't spoken to all the questions he raised. I did; I spoke to all the issues he raised. The point I make to him and to his party is this is but a modest proposal. Your commitment is to nuclear. That's what you have done, and that's what you've said.

If you had said to me, "We're not building any more new nuclear plants," then I would believe that this bill would have the potential that you speak of, that the objectives you put forth are serious. But they're not serious because most of your energy will come from nuclear, and the new nuclear you're going to build, not just revamping the old ones. Do you understand what I'm saying? You can only achieve so much. There is an automatic ceiling, and you have no minimum.

I did not get a chance at all to speak to the problem of the reasonable domestic content. We're urging this government: If you're going to do something, make sure that it's 50% or 60% of domestic content requirements, as they do in Quebec and as they do in America. If Americans can do it, you can, too. "Reasonable" means up to 25%. If that's what you mean, just say it. Don't just use words like "reasonable" as though somehow they means something.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

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Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and to speak to Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. At the outset would I like to commend the Minister of Energy

and Infrastructure for developing this bill and bringing it to this House.

In the past almost 130 years since the invention of current electricity, we have been burning coal and we have been pumping pollution into the air. The atmosphere around our planet, as we all know, is limited. It's time for us and for all nations around the world to stop burning coal and polluting our environment.

The main objective of this bill is exactly that. We are going to introduce and we are going to build, as much as we can, renewable energy. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke mainly on wind energy, and the member from Trinity–Spadina spoke about nuclear energy. It appears to me that he means or he considers or he includes nuclear as a part of green energy, which I tend to agree with. When we talk about renewable energy, it's not only wind energy or nuclear we should consider; there are other types of renewable energy, such as solar, hydro, biomass, biogas, landfill gas, geothermal and also tides. So we are going to look into the utilization of all kinds of renewable energy.

But one thing we should consider is the point that the wind doesn't blow all the time and the sun doesn't shine all the time, so we have to look at other sources of energy that are reliable and we have to always make sure that our baseline energy is always there. When referring to solar or wind energy in Germany, as the member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned, there is one particular point to which one should pay attention: Germany imports enormous amounts of nuclear energy from France. That's why Germany can rely heavily on its wind and solar energy. Otherwise, they couldn't.

The other point I would like to bring to the attention of the House is that this bill is going to create 50,000 green jobs, and this is going to include research and development, manufacturing, assembling, installation workers, and service, and it's even going to include the finance sector as well.

This bill, once it is passed and implemented, is going to set a strategy for the future of energy production and energy distribution in this province. One of the important features of this bill is that it's going to increase the number of sources of energy production in this province enormously. Now we are dependent on a few power plants—nuclear or coal or hydro or gas-fired plants—but, with the introduction of this bill, our sources of energy production are going to be in the hundreds and thousands as we increase our sources of supplies. This bill, once it's passed, is going, as I said, to create a strategy for the future of energy in this province.

I'd like to share my time with the member for Huron–Bruce, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I am very pleased to enter the debate on the Green Energy Act, Bill 150.

There certainly have been a lot of comments made from the other side of the House. One of the things I wanted to talk about for just a minute was with respect to

the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He said that this bill wouldn't be going to committee. I know that he probably thinks that, because they sent hardly any of their bills to committee; they only sent 39% of their bills to committee. So I know that when they stand in the House, that's the first thing that comes to their mind. But I tell you, there couldn't be anything further from the truth. It will be going to committee, and I expect that the member will make sure that those comments are heard and repeated often to his constituents, because we wouldn't think it would be appropriate to do anything but.

With regard to the member from Trinity–Spadina, I do often question: What form of energy are you in favour of? I know it can't be conservation, because when they were in government, they cancelled all the conservation programs. So I stand in my place and I hear the conversations and I think, how could that be? How could the only form of energy that they would be in favour of be conservation? In fact, when they were in government they cancelled all the programs.

We know that the Green Energy Act is a very comprehensive act that will deal with the energy that will be required by the province for a number of years to come. When we hear comments like, "Well, it's just like motherhood. How could you vote against motherhood?"—but I tell you, I'm going to be watching, because I have a sneaking suspicion that some of the members from across the way are going to vote against motherhood when this bill comes up. We'll just keep a very close eye.

As you know, in my riding of Huron–Bruce we produce 25% of the total energy that is used in the province of Ontario. Since we were elected government, 434 megawatts of renewables are coming from the riding of Huron–Bruce, and I can tell you, all the members of the House, the riding of Huron–Bruce is looking to do even more business. So when we see the Green Energy Act coming forward and starting to specifically address the barriers that are affecting the growth of the renewables sector today, we celebrate it—and we're not alone in this. As all the members of the House know, I come from a rural riding. But do you know what? I just want to share a news release on behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and what their position is on the Green Energy Act. I know that we often hear the members from across the way talk about the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and their comments, but this time they're silent. They didn't have a thing to say, but I'm going to share with you what this news release says, and then I think we'll know why.

"Monday's announcement by Minister George Smitherman, Energy and Infrastructure, of the Green Energy Act, is viewed by Ontario farmers as an excellent opportunity to accelerate their entry into the energy production market, says Bette Jean Crews, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA).

"When the act is fully operational, Crews says it will 'create new opportunities for our farmers to participate

even more in Ontario's green energy revolution. Through their (increased) involvement in energy production, Ontario farmers will create new manufacturing opportunities and fuel other economic initiatives,' she says. 'OFA will work with the government to ensure necessary safeguards accompany green energy developments to preserve farmland and protect the interests of rural residents.'

"Premier McGuinty has acknowledged that making the switch from building cars to building wind turbines may not be readily acceptable"—and certainly from the opposite side of the House today we have heard some of that. "‘Everyone needs to recognize the modern economy is in a transition phase,’ Crews observed.

"Farmers, by welcoming wind turbines, biodigesters and the production of crops used for the production of energy on their farms without reducing food supplies, have demonstrated their flexibility and desire to be part of a new economy in Ontario, Crews says.

"OFA has been calling on the province to provide new and expanded opportunities for agriculture to contribute to the economy, and 'this act moves us in that direction. We're grateful and want to work with the province to provide OFA's advice on proper land use as Ontario farmers continue to provide food, fuel, fibre and now energy sustainably,' she said."

So congratulations to the OFA. I was quite pleased to see that they understand. They also understand, in moving toward the green energy portion of it, they're also going to be very well poised to start to look at carbon pricing. Certainly, since I was elected in 2003, this is something that our communities have wanted to become involved in. They see this and they understand that in order for Ontario to continue to lead in the energy sector, this is a very important component that must be addressed. When you think about where the opportunities are in all of our communities in Ontario, this is certainly something that has worked well in other countries, and we see this as definitely moving forward. By not moving in this direction, we feel that it will leave our communities without the proper set of tools they will need in order to work with the transition in our economy.

1700

One of the things that I want to talk about for just a second—they wouldn't think it was the member from Huron–Bruce standing up if I didn't speak about nuclear. When I look at the 50% that has been established, that will be the nuclear production, we recognize that nuclear is stable; it's steady as she goes. It's not good for peaks and dips, but it's a steady power source that you can count on, and that's why it has been established as what we call the baseload.

Certainly, when we speak about nuclear waste, as many of you know, in my riding we are working on how to—we currently deal with low- and medium-level nuclear waste in my riding. We are working on furthering the increase of deposits that we will be receiving, and that's something that we are working on right now. That's for low- and medium-level waste.

The comments that have been made about the supply mix—the supply mix was introduced a couple of years ago. We understand, as all members understand, that it would have to be fine-tuned over the years. Look at what's happening with the need for energy today, how much it's dramatically shifted. Obviously, the supply mix has to shift with that. We recognize that, and the tools are in place so that that can happen.

I would not be doing my job if I did not speak to what we call CO₂ sequestration. I know that the members from across the way—this is something that is thrown out there, that it is in fact a possibility. As many of you know, a few of us were able to go to Washington and be part of the environmental caucus, and this is something that came up, the CO₂ sequestration. I know that a member from across the way was sitting in the room. It was clearly explained that day that it is a very long way away from actually being put into use, that we could sequester that much that it would be an advantage. The only bit that is done now—it's just used when it's added, the CO₂, to the coal. In order to say that that would be a solution that we could do today—I think it speaks to why they continue to perpetuate what they did when they were in government. We know that coal emissions were up under the NDP, and they were also up under the Tories. Putting forward a solution that we know is not a viable solution today only perpetuates that. It's like, well, if you wait for that, things will get better that day, or if you wait for this, things will get better that day. What we have in fact are renewable energies that have been proven. They've been proven in other countries. We will go forward with those renewables.

We heard from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture about what the opportunities are in rural communities. We can talk about anaerobic digesters. We have seen a couple of anaerobic digesters that are up and working in the province of Ontario. I can tell the members of the House here that my agricultural community wants to see more of that. Quite frankly, they have just become so frustrated at all the barriers that they have faced, moving forward renewable projects; it just has become too difficult a journey for them to take, even though they understand that moving forward in an environmentally sustainable manner is the only way that ensures a bright future for them.

Bringing forward the Green Energy Act starts to speak to that. We know that we have the science in place. We know that we have the commitment in place to move forward, that there is a huge uptake of the renewables. People want to make a difference; companies want to make a difference. So we see the barriers and now they are going to be addressed and we move forward.

Just in the few minutes that I have left, I also wanted to speak to the energy audits. I know that I have heard from across the way the conversation, "But you know, when your house is drafty, you know if this and that, you put on a little sweater, you put a few slippers." I would have to say that that is specifically the type of behaviour that we need to stop. I simply can't understand. Where I

was raised, you are penny wise and pound foolish if you walk by a window that you know has a draft and you don't do anything about it. Where I come from, that's what you would be called. When you have the opportunity to receive government funding to come in and look at your home to determine what you can do to make your home more energy-efficient, not only does it affect your pocketbook; it also affects your quality of life. Quite frankly, I am a bit surprised, because I did think, coming from that member, that he was not penny wise and pound foolish. So I do encourage him to get an audit and have a look at his home.

Overall, the Green Energy Act speaks about the transformation of Ontario. It talks about what we can count on for the future of Ontario. It speaks about how we can have a sustainable environment while improving the environment, recognizing that we need jobs. And what are those jobs of the future going to look like? That's what the Green Energy Act lays down. It lays down a road map of how we're going to get there and what we are going to address as the concerns that have been raised when we started down this road a number of years ago.

I know that the members have voted against it repeatedly. When it comes forward for any environmental changes, then we see votes against. Once again, we bring forward the Green Energy Act, which is going to bring about change. It will set the stage for the future of Ontario to be able to seize the opportunities that will open up as the transition begins. We certainly have heard President Obama speak repeatedly about the opportunities of the green economy. We know in Ontario that we have the capacity to go forward, to be a part of and a great contributor to the green economy. In my mind, when I stand up to vote in favour of Bill 150, it will be that I'm ensuring that we have laid the road map of how we're going to go forward environmentally sustainably, and I know that I'm not spending my children's future, as has been done by the previous side—both sides of the House, by continuing to go in a manner that they know is not environmentally sustainable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member for Whitby–Oshawa?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the statements made by the members for Richmond Hill and Huron–Bruce. The member for Huron–Bruce suggests that we're going to vote against motherhood, and I would suggest that there's a major difference between an empty, hollow motherhood statement and an act with real motherhood issues that are actually being dealt with in the bill. That is something that is an entirely different matter altogether.

Secondly, with respect to comments made by the member for Richmond Hill with respect to the 50,000 jobs that are alleged to be created by this new act, I would say that whenever we ask, "How are you going to do that? Show us the basis of your calculations. What kind of jobs are going to be created by this?" what we get is just a derisive sniff by the minister, as if we're asking a stupid question. That's a real question; that's something

Ontarians want answers to. This is a major shift in policy if we're going to be entering into this kind of a field, especially with the other types of energy out there also needing attention. Fifty thousand jobs—it could be two jobs, it could be 200,000 jobs for all we know, but I would suggest that it's just been grasped out of the air. It could be any number, because they have absolutely no idea where these jobs are going to be coming from. There's certainly no idea that it's going to be anything more than maybe some green energy auditors who are going to be coming in.

1710

We've certainly received a lot of feedback from homeowners, from the real estate industry and from people who are involved in these sorts of these things, who are worried about what's going to be happening. What's the utility of having one of these audits done when you live in a old house? I also live in a century-plus home. I know what needs to be done with my home, but all I do—I don't need to completely redo it—is turn down the heat and put on a sweater. The reality is that there are houses that you're never going to be able to make as energy-efficient as you like to think could be done, I would say to the member from Huron—Bruce, by just having this energy auditor coming in.

Ontarians also can't afford that right now, because people are losing jobs by the hundreds of thousands. It's not realistic. It's a very nice statement. It makes everybody feel good, but there's nothing of any substance behind it that's going to make any real difference to people in terms of green energy jobs or really becoming more efficient in terms of energy. Again, it's just a hollow motherhood-type statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I think I've finally figured it out. I have been reflecting on it and reflecting on it, and I was worried, as so many others were, about those hundreds of thousands of jobs lost and factory after factory, mill after mill shut down—steel mills, pipe mills, paper mills. I think I understand how this is all part of Dalton McGuinty's electricity conservation program, because most of those factories that have shut down were major electricity producers. Now the government thinks that it's going to make amends by having people running around the province doing so-called energy audits.

I don't know how other people grew up here. I grew up knowing that if you want to check for leaks, you hold a match around the window frame and see where the wind's blowing in, and then you pull the frame off and you caulk it. Now we've got this wonderful new stuff, this expanding foam. You caulk around the sill plate in the basement and you insulate the roof—not the roof; you insulate the top of the ceiling. I take great pride because my house is the house with the most snow on the roof, and what that means, of course, is that I've got a well-insulated attic.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's very good.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right.

I don't need an auditor to tell me that. Good Lord thundering Jesus. These people have this obsession with so-called quasi-experts. Bob Vila has been telling you how to do it on public television for the last 20 years. My grandmother knew how to do it, and she was illiterate.

Let's talk about 50,000 jobs—again, a number plucked out of the air. It could have been—what the heck, guys; why don't you go for 60,000? Why don't you just, all of a sudden, decide that 50,000 was an underestimate and go with 60,000, because there's no more credibility to that than there is to your 50,000 jobs.

I'm looking forward to the comments from the next Conservative, and then I'm looking forward to speaking to this myself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd just like to read this document here, which is the energy audit done on my home, 2181 Saturn Crescent in Orléans.

The energy audits are a great way of doing this work—and this is called Bill 150. I'd like to say right now that the reason Bill 150 is there is that the energy audit really costs you \$150. You hear \$300 thrown around. It's \$150. I had it done. I paid \$300. I got my cheque back: \$150 from the province of Ontario.

The federal government, NRCan, has been working on this for 15 years. It's a great plan. There are over 15 contributions that each of the governments will make, and it all goes around the energy audit. That auditor has to come in at the final and look at it: "Have you done these things in your house? Have you improved the energy efficiency of your house? Then you can get these—many dollars." Sometimes it's \$4,000 or \$5,000 on a \$9,000 or \$10,000 retrofit. The payback is three, four or five years, and you get the benefit for the rest of your life. So these are recognized as being a great way to do conservation. It's a great way to do the education of conservation.

Obama talks about doing 100 million homes in the US. Because, really, it's conservation. It's the same as drilling for oil and finding this great amount of oil: You're saving energy. Conservation is energy number one. That's what we have to remember. So these are excellent ways of doing this. I'd just like to read from Thomas Friedman the third reason that Tories don't believe in climate change: "Conservatives ... simply refuse to accept the reality of climate change because they hate the solution—more government regulation and intervention." It is regulation, it is intervention, but it's a great way to make your house cozier, of more value, and to save energy and create jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In response to the pathway and the road to recovery with Barack Obama, I might add, to the two members of the Liberal Party, that they've entered this province onto a slippery slope. I don't need to remind them that their economic track record has taken this province from being the first in economic growth to the worst in Canada, and thanks to them, we're now accepting have-not equalization payments.

But let's get back to their energy home audit, this \$300 tax that is going to be faced by all homeowners as a result of this legislation. If Ontarians want to know the real picture, which they will, because this party intends on painting it for them, they could listen to the Ontario Real Estate Association:

"Gerry Weir, president of OREA, 'warned the audits could end up costing sellers thousands.

"It's not the initial cost of these audits that concerns us,' Weir said in a release. 'These audits will be used by homebuyers as bargaining chips to significantly reduce the final selling price.'

"Weir said there are no standards or regulations for energy audits in the province today. Without those standards, the result of an energy audit would be meaningless.

"The audit could see trivial matters, such as improperly insulated windows, give a homebuyer the opportunity to request \$10,000 or more off the asking price of a home by claiming they need to install new windows before they move in."

I'll leave you with this:

"Today's economic downturn is a terrible time to introduce this measure. Home sellers are already worried about lost equity in their homes,' said Weir. 'A move like this, which will reduce their value even further, will not help them in any way.'"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Huron-Bruce has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I want to thank the speakers from Whitby-Oshawa, Welland, Ottawa-Orléans and Nepean-Carleton. I sincerely thank you for your comments.

I just want to reinforce that there will be committee hearings. The public will have the ability to speak to this bill. What I want to know today is, can we count on the members from across the way? Will they vote in favour of Bill 150? I want to know whether or not they are going to stand for the environment or if, once again, they will vote against the environment.

I have to say to the member from Nepean-Carleton that to stand and give us on this side of the House a lecture is just a little too rich. We know that if previous governments had invested in our electrical system, if they had made the necessary upgrades, if they had made the conversions and altered the supply mix, we would not be having as much to do within Bill 150. They will stand in this House and say they contributed to renewables. I can tell you that they're in my riding; there are four or five of them, and it's such a joke that Rick Mercer commented on it. He said, "Do you know why they call it Hydro One? Because they have one turbine."

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the 20 minutes to speak to Bill 150. It's got a number of titles. If you take a look at the back of this very large piece of legislation, it's titled the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. The

long title talks about building a green economy, and that's a bit of a stretch, because 85% of Canada's energy does come from fossil fuel: natural gas, coal and oil. There's a long title, of course, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green—it's quite a long title; I'm not going to read the rest of that one.

1720

You turn the page in this legislation, and there's a third title. I've never noticed this in legislation before. Under the explanatory note, there's a third title: "The bill enacts the Green Energy Act, 2009"—there's no mention of green economy. That's going to have to be changed in committee, and the sooner we get at that, the better. That's confusing. There is a fourth title that's been bandied about: the green power grab, the green tax grab act, 2009, and before we're finished, this piece of legislation will have a number of other handles.

It goes on to amend, we heard this afternoon, 15 pieces of legislation and counting. I think if you count, there are probably 20 pieces of legislation that will be changed: the Electricity Act, obviously, the Energy Act, the Building Code Act and the Planning Act.

We heard mention, just recently, of President Obama. Clearly, Mr. McGuinty is attempting to hit the ground running, to try and out-Obama President Obama on energy. However, we know that there are some differences. Mr. McGuinty remains unconvinced with respect to President Obama's clarion call for clean coal. Our Canadian government has indicated they continue to work on clean coal and will work on clean coal in conjunction with the US government, which makes sense because North America is known as the Saudi Arabia of coal. I will remind those opposite, you didn't close those plants in 2007. They're still running and they're still dirty.

The proposed Green Energy Act talks about housing. It talks about the building code. It's an act with respect to sunshine, with respect to wind and with respect to what's labelled as an incentive. This incentive is titled "mandatory home energy audits to be done before the house is sold." OREA, the Ontario Real Estate Association, as we know, takes a very dim view of mandatory home energy audits and how they will skew the marketplace to the detriment of seniors, first-time homebuyers and low-income people. I don't see the incentive here. I don't see the carrot. It's obviously more of a stick, but perhaps we will see some money grants down the way.

So we're debating a bill to build a green economy. I do wish to talk a bit about some of my work. A number of years ago, I built my own home with my father and my son, and I built a passive solar home, sheltered from the wind. I'm suggesting, "Do as I do, not as I say." I know the member for Welland made mention of snow on the roof. I think he was referring to his house. We know there's fire down below, but he was referring to snow on the roof.

Before I built my house, I took over my grandfather's farm in 1976, and I lived up there in a small 1830s-style house, 20 by 30; that was the building code of the day, if

you wished to receive a land grant. I had a wood stove. That was it. I spent a lot of time looking at snow and where the frost would lie with respect to the topography. I very clearly made note of where the sun rises and sets depending on the season, which way the wind blows and in what direction, depending, again, on summer or winter. I had spent a couple of years teaching environmental science, so I had an interest, pulled up lots of books and launched on essentially my dream to build my own home.

But I learned a lot from that old 1830s house. It was known as the Lampkin house. The Lampkin family took over that land in 1830. It was a military grant before that. My family purchased it 100 years later, in 1930. The house was 20 by 30. The long side, the 30-foot side, faced due south; one door and two very large windows faced south. The narrow end of the house faced into the prevailing west wind, and from maps and from at least one existing tree, I know that the orchard was on the west side. I also assume that was not only to provide apples and pasture for sheep, but also to shield that house from the wind.

A number of years later, I could determine that they built the summer kitchen straight to the north with a root cellar underneath. In the summer that root cellar was very cool; my dog always slept down there. Interestingly enough, I learned in winter—and we had some very cold winters back in the 1970s when I was living up on that hill—my dog also slept in that root cellar because it was sheltered. The summer kitchen had a door to the west and a door to the east. You'd open both doors in the summer and you'd get this beautiful breeze. In our part of the country just north of Lake Erie, our winds are prevailing southwest; in the winter, much stronger, of course, and due west.

Another thing about that property: In a particular chunk there are 50 acres covered in black locust. Those black locust were brought up by the pioneers and planted because they grow very fast and they provide an excellent source of firewood.

All of this was done on that particular property, and I've been living up there, as I say, since 1976. I studied the history. All of that was accomplished not through any mandatory audit, no home energy audit required. It was really a survival thing. You depended on woollen clothing; your only source of heat was wood, using an axe, a saw. When the house was first built, I'm almost positive there was no wood stove. It depended on a fireplace, a very large Count Rumford fireplace that was used when the land was cleared, including much of the stumps would have gone through that fireplace. When I disc up soybean ground in the springtime in our south field, I can see a very, very large black area in the soil. It would be about the size of this chamber. That's where all the logs and trees were piled over perhaps 10 or 15 years to be burned off.

So I had eight or 10 years to study the lay of the land, as I mentioned, to study where the sun comes up, the wind direction, summer and winter. It's on the side of a

hill. I could determine where the frost would settle, where the cold areas were, and I also made notice of the snowdrifts. I felt that was very important. Whether this would be accomplished through an energy audit—and I know many of us perhaps think of houses being built on a street in town or in a subdivision, but there are many, many other very complex factors when one is laying out a farm or buildings on a farm or building a house, and the first thing you do, in my view, if you're making any plans at all, is you plant trees: coniferous trees on the windward side, deciduous trees to the south. You do not want very tall coniferous—spruce, for example—on the south side of your house: You'll be in the shade, and you can feel that.

So I set up a bit of a plan for an energy-efficient house. Again, I was thinking far beyond cracks in the doors and windows and far beyond insulation, although I used two-by-sixes. That was not the building code of the day, but I wanted to get the maximum fibreglass pink in between those studs. I also strapped the exterior with two-by-twos and laid two-inch SM—this is the closed-cell blue insulation. It was something I could do; I had the time. I wasn't spending my money on anything else at the time. I just had an interest, and there was no mandatory requirement for me to do any of this. I don't expect everybody, first of all, to build their own house or to know how to build a house. Secondly, I don't expect people to put these kinds of resources into energy efficiency.

1730

One of the first decisions my wife and I made: When we dug footings when we excavated, we dug into the side of the hill. As for that old 1830s house—and that 1830s house is still on the property; I don't throw things away—I jacked it up and moved it back 100 yards. We oriented our house lengthways, not so much facing south; we decided to have the long side of our house facing south-southeast. The reason for that: When you live down near Lake Erie, in the wintertime when you want that sun, you get sun until noon, and then because of the lake, it clouds up. So I decided not to face south but to face south-southeast. If someone did an energy audit on my home, I would hope that they would take that factor into recognition because it's not as simple as just orienting your windows south.

Eighty-five per cent of the glass in the house faces south-southeast. We designed the house with only two windows that face north and two small windows that face west, into the prevailing wind. It's a relatively large house: about 3,600 square feet. This is the danger when you build your own house: It's hard to stop. However, no basement; we felt no need for a basement. Because we dug into the side of the hill, our main living area, the main floor, essentially would be considered a basement or a walk-out basement. We didn't build on top of the hill. We built partway down the hill on the east and the south side to shelter us from the wind and to access that sunshine. Again, would an inspector give me points for that? I'm not sure.

There are two concrete walls to this house: on the north side and on the west side, into the side of the hill; hence, no windows on the main floor. We poured concrete wide enough for two-by-sixes—not two-by-fours; two-by-sixes—again to accommodate that fibreglass pink.

Code of the day—I'm not even sure if it required insulation on the inside of a concrete wall. Of course, we insulated the inside, but I also made a decision to insulate the exterior of the concrete, again using this blue SM, this closed-cell insulation material that could handle the weight of the earth as I backfilled. Again, whether I would get credit on an energy audit for all of that insulation on the outside of my concrete walls, I'm not sure. I don't know whether the government or bureaucracy or paperwork can accommodate these kinds of factors.

We poured footings and laid down gravel. One thing that my wife and I did: Before we poured the concrete floor, we tamped it down. As I say, we did most of this ourselves, although I did not pour the concrete. We laid down sheets of two-inch SM on all the floor areas, primarily on the south side of the house, where I knew that that winter sun would hit the concrete floor, which I subsequently covered with tile, the reason being that I wanted to use that winter sun—again, my goal was passive solar—to somewhat heat the floor in the morning.

Further to that, I felt that heat storage was so important in this home that I used the model of a Russian fireplace, which is a massive pile of stone and masonry. We poured very large footings to accommodate a very large chimney system in the centre of the home and then I poured a gigantic concrete box within the centre of the home, with spaces for a fireplace and a space for a wood stove. The forced-air heating system was part of that wood stove structure. Again, I don't know whether these forms that are being proposed are going to accommodate these kinds of factors.

At about that time, the municipality decided to tear down my one-room public school just up the road. We purchased 10,000 bricks and recycled the bricks. Those bricks were laid in 1916, when the mortar was sand mortar. So my wife cleaned 10,000 bricks. It's fairly easily done; it's not like the mortar today. You can't get the mortar—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Your wife cleaned the bricks? What did you do?

Mr. Toby Barrett: My wife cleaned all the bricks, all 10,000. Her shoulders were bigger than mine at the end of that project.

I notice that on many houses they put the bricks on the outside of the house for whatever reason. In our system, we put 10,000 bricks inside the house as a heat sink, laid the bricks around this gigantic concrete box that has the wood stove—my source of heat—and then I filled the cavern with just about every piece of farm machinery I could find on the farm: plowshares, cast iron, anything that would absorb heat. Again, would an energy audit pick up on some of these factors?

I did allow myself the luxury of rebuilding that Count Rumford fireplace that still remains in the old house. I rebuilt that one as well.

I just want to stress, before anybody even thinks of building a house—now, whether this would come up in this government paperwork audit—to plant the trees first. Determine where the wind is coming from and don't plant coniferous trees in front of your house; that will shade them. Don't plant them in front of your neighbour's house; you're going to block his sun. Don't put a high-rise building in front of your neighbour's house if he's aspiring to put solar panels on the south-facing incline of his roof. Check the angle of your sun; sunshine is so important. And I do want to stress—we built the second floor garrison-style. I extended the second floor about four feet out to the south and then built a roof angle. That blocks the summer sun. I don't have air conditioning in this home. We've been in it since the mid-1980s. We don't need air conditioning, but the angle allows that low winter sun, again, to come in, to warm up my insulated concrete floor, and to warm up a lot of those 10,000 bricks I was talking about.

Cloud patterns are very important if you're designing an energy-efficient house. Orient your windows to where the sun is and try and determine what time of day the clouds come up.

Wind direction is very important, not only for winter-time, but also for cooling. I mentioned the pioneer house. As I recall, the summer kitchen goes north. You've got a west door and an east door; it's open in the summer to let that breeze go through.

Be very cognizant of the soil types, the topography, the lay of your land. I don't have a sump pump, for example, because I'm partway down a hill. I use the Big "O" for drainage, and in the spring and the fall, those cold winter days, the cold air moves down. The frost is below the house.

Always have your front door facing south. In my view, it's handy for firewood, warms up that front entrance, and you can pile your firewood there and your sidewalk remains frost-free. Again, I hope the energy audit would pick this up. If the main door faces north, it's going to be snowed in. The laneway will probably be on the north side, and that will be snowed in, and you're going to expend more energy with hiring a guy to come in to clear it out. I don't know whether this is going to be covered by this legislation or not.

Before you build, collect those building materials. Recycle. I spent probably 15 years collecting doors at yard sales and auto wreckers: Triple M—I've been in and out of all of them. Get a hold of those old cast-iron grates; haul them out of buildings for your cold-air returns. Buy a used truck, maybe two trucks, and a tractor. Scrounge the windows, again, for inside windows. And again, the doors are inside doors. Recycle lumber; tear down a couple of barns and get some good barn beams. Make sure you've got a real good wood stove.

As far as these bureaucrats that designed this form, think about sunshine and think about the wind. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), six and a half hours of debate on this bill having occurred, I am now required to deem this debate adjourned unless the House leader indicates otherwise. House leader?

1740

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We're prepared to let the debate continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: That was a truly remarkable and informative 20 minutes. It's a side of the member from Haldimand-Norfolk that I simply wasn't aware of. I think his comments are very, very important.

Look, all the audits in the world won't change energy consumption. It's not like a safety check when you're selling a car—because, you see, you can't convey ownership in a car without the safety check being provided. In other words, an unsafe car can't be sold as a car that's driveable.

I don't agree with OREA's rather panicky reaction, because any astute homebuyer, when they see old single-pane windows, is going to say, "Well, you know, this really should be upgraded to double-pane or triple-pane," and use that as a negotiating point.

This treatment of audits as a panacea, as something of a diversion, is particularly bothersome.

I'm going to have a chance to speak to this bill in a little bit of time.

Folks down where I come from have a lot of old housing, a lot of wartime housing. Trust me, they'd love to get new windows installed. They'd love to get high-efficiency furnaces, rather than their old mid-efficiency furnaces. But they all just lost their jobs at John Deere. They lost their jobs at Atlas Steel. They lost their jobs at Welland Tubes. They lost their jobs at Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines. They lost their jobs up at the canning factory up in north Niagara. An audit is not going to tell them anything they don't already know. They know that those single-pane windows are drafty and not energy efficient, but they don't have the jobs that are going to enable them to pay for the refenestration of that house.

I'm looking forward to speaking to this in short order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I too want to add comments to this debate.

Let me tell you, no one should criticize this bill, because we want protection for the consumer and we want to plan for future generations.

The previous government never, ever looked to the future for our needs in electricity. I remember way back when we were in opposition, we said to the government, "Are you planning for the future? Are you doing anything for the needs of the future?"

Interjection: No, they didn't.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: They never did.

I remember in December 2002, when the previous government was trying to sell Ontario Hydro, we had to pay \$1.33 a kilowatt hour. We had to purchase the

electricity. We had an agreement with Quebec Hydro. They cancelled the agreement for 1,250 megawatts.

The third party—we had an agreement with Manitoba. They cancelled the agreement, and today we have to spend all that money for the future of our people.

The audits would be protection for the consumers, because when you want to purchase a house, first you go to city hall and you look at what they're paying in taxes, what they're paying for electricity, what they're paying for water, and this time we will make sure that the new buyer will know if there's heat loss in the house. The purpose of having the audits is the protection of our consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Bill 150 will remove all oversight of wind turbines from the municipalities, and I have a lot of concerns with that, because as many of you will know, Dufferin county has hosted a number of turbines in Ontario and is participating in renewable energy in our province to a large degree—but important details, such as what the setback should be from homes to a turbine, are all being left to regulation.

We're supposed to trust the Minister of Energy and believe that after we've discussed and debated Bill 150, he's going to set the regulatory changes and the setbacks and we need to trust him. Well, if there's one thing that I've learned in a year and a half—I can't trust anything that the Liberal government is saying and doing, and I would like to have specific details so that we can debate those issues here in the Legislative chamber.

The municipalities in Dufferin-Caledon, like Mulmur, Caledon, East Garafraxa and Amaranth, have all done very detailed planning and community engagement where they have talked about how they can incorporate renewable energy into their municipality while still keeping their municipality unique. They are not saying, "We're going to do a planning document that bans renewable energy"; they're saying, "Let's incorporate it into what our community is and what our community stands for." Bill 150, the way it's set out right now, is going to remove that ability from the municipality completely.

I've heard from almost all of my municipalities in Dufferin-Caledon saying that they resent this intrusion on municipal planning and they resent the fact that the Liberals are assuming the municipalities are incapable of planning for their future in renewables.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I thought the member from Haldimand-Norfolk really made a valuable contribution to the debate. Too bad his colleague from Wellington wasn't listening to him and didn't comment on it. I think he made some great suggestions. I wish he had listened.

He really hit the essence of this bill, and that is trying to change the mindset, the paradigm in terms of how we build our homes, how we use energy, how we conserve energy. Obviously he's put a lot of thought into this, going back a long time, and how he built his home with

the sheltered north face into the side of the hill rather than building it on top where you're exposed to all this wind and energy loss. I really think that that type of thinking is what we need. It's not the old thinking, like the member from Dufferin up there, who thinks the old way; we need the new way of thinking.

In some ways it's going back to what our forefathers did, where they didn't have unlimited amounts of energy and they had to do a lot of work to chop all that wood to heat their homes. So they looked at the natural environment—as the member said, the sun lines and the direction of the wind and the local temperatures, the local environment. As a result of that, he's come up with an energy-efficient home that conserves and saves energy rather than just building the old way like the member from Dufferin there; she just wants to bulldoze and build and build. “Stop and think,” he's saying. Listen to your own member. He has stopped, he has thought about this and he's done something that we should all be doing, and that is looking ahead as we learn from the past because we can do things more efficiently. We can't keep building all this energy capacity, but we can conserve what we have by doing things smartly. I commend him for doing it and for sharing that with us; it was really appreciated, what he did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I think part of my point, and I know that we here as legislators—and a number of MPPs have been here for a number of years—why are we here? Much of our role in this debate is to create new legislation and to create new regulation, and oftentimes when you have that power or when you have that hammer, every problem looks like a nail. When we try and address issues or as this bill is designed—and I heard this in a government briefing this morning—it's designed to drive behaviour. That doesn't work with many people. It doesn't work with me. I find that I do seem to get my back up.

I want to reiterate the incredible power of not only information but education. When I began my researches in the 1960s—and I had the advantage of teaching the subject for a few years—there was no Internet. I purchased a large number of paperback books. I went through these books, and I can tell you that in every book that I read, 100 or 150 pages, there would really only be one idea in the whole book that was worth using. Most of it is garbage and theory—people who perhaps have never built a house but they'll write a book on how to build a passive-solar house or an energy-efficient house.

My point is that, not only in our school system, we have tremendous access to knowledge and information and ideas. Let's not rely solely on laws and regulation and paperwork to achieve some of these laudable goals.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats have been very clear about our passion for finding new sources of

energy, renewable energy sources; about our passion about dirty electricity production, and our concern about that.

Once again, the energy audit will, in most instances, tell people what they already know, either based on their experience living in that home or, after a thorough inspection of that home, if they're a purchaser. We know the fundamentals. Come on. But it's not going to address the conservation issue or the greening issue because there's nothing about an energy audit that says that there's going to be the work done or the investment made in that house to improve its energy efficiency; as simple as that.

The second observation is that increasing numbers of Ontarians, most of whom want more energy-efficient homes—nobody likes paying electricity bills and natural gas bills and propane bills. Most Ontarians, after having lost jobs and after having seen their savings destroyed in this Enron-Bernie Madoff world—you know what I'm talking about, don't you? People who have worked hard all their lives to save up a few bucks and were persuaded by their bank investment advisers to put it in mutual funds—thanks, pal—people in their 60s, 70s, 80s—they'd dearly love to refenestrate their house. They'd dearly love to install a high-efficiency furnace. They'd dearly love to increase the insulation in the attic. But they just got ripped off by a financial services sector that has run wild, cowboy style, and the younger ones have just lost their jobs and their sources of income.

What I find interesting—Surely one of the great legacies Howard Hampton's leaving here as leader of the NDP has been his compelling and persistent advocacy for energy conservation, pointing out, over and over and over again, that the two biggest electricity consumers in your house are the furnace motor and the refrigerator. There is new furnace motor technology that, in and of itself, makes that motor far more efficient, and as we know, newer refrigerators, in and of themselves, consume far less electricity.

Mind you, consumers are getting ripped off left and right. I just read Consumer Reports, where the refrigerators—they call them these French-door refrigerators; double doors on top and a freezer on the bottom, the least efficient of all refrigerators, yet somehow, somebody has decided that these are stylish. The most efficient refrigerator is still the freezer on top and the single door. Forget the ice cube dispenser.

It's not that any of us want to begrudge the people who can afford to buy these things the right to buy them, but these are the big electricity consumers: furnace motors and refrigerators. Consumer Reports just revealed that LG, which makes its own refrigerator and also makes the Kenmore Trio model, got its knuckles rapped for misleading consumers about the energy guide rating of those refrigerators.

The legislation talks about some monitoring of appliances. Where's the testing facility? The government should tell us now. If it's going to ban certain types of appliances in Ontario—heck, you think outlaw cigarettes out of the smoke shacks is a problem? Just wait until you

see the transport trucks importing hot refrigerators. How ironic.

I find it of some concern that, notwithstanding that Hampton has repeated over and over again that those are the two biggest single electricity users, the government doesn't, in a more focused way, specifically speak to those two electrical motors in almost every home in the province. There was a time in this province, in the last century—nobody here is old enough to recall it; I know it for a fact, though—when the province converted from 25-cycle to 60-cycle, when Ontario Hydro changed every electrical motor in the province as a service to the consumer—every power saw, every furnace motor. Every motor in the province was replaced with a 60-cycle motor.

My folks down where I come from dearly want to create a greener planet, I think, like people across this province, but they're being told or it has been suggested that they do things that don't address the issue, like paying more for electricity.

I'm a fan of wind-produced electricity. The first time I saw it—other than the Jack Layton windmill over here at the Exhibition grounds—I was driving from Las Vegas to Los Angeles a few years ago. I was driving across the desert and all of a sudden I saw this huge—it was like a science fiction movie, with acre after acre after acre of windmills. I thought it was quite fascinating and indeed attractive. There was an artistic quality to it.

Yet I've got to speak for my folks, who have serious concerns about wind farms, as they're called, adjacent to residential properties. I've got a good constituent, a good person, Tom Briggs down in Wainfleet, who is very, very concerned about the wind farm proposal for Wainfleet. He understands. He likes clean energy, as well. He's proposing that there should be no wind farm closer than 1.5 kilometres. He has collected a whole lot of research and done his Internet research. I'll be speaking to him when I go down to the ratepayers' association meeting in Wainfleet on March 28. I got that contact with him and heard what he had to say, and again, I wasn't sure until I read—did you read the op-ed piece that appeared in a number of papers, "An Open Letter to Mr. Dalton McGuinty," from Barbara Ashbee Lormand and Dennis Lormand from Shelburne, Ontario? They live next to windmills. Again, New Democrats support wind as a source of electrical energy, no two ways about it. The other day I heard the government talk about a 500-metre barrier between residences and windmills. Surely there are going to be people coming before this committee, and quite frankly, I hope that Barbara Lormand and Dennis Lormand do—because they talk about this persistent hum, buzz and vibration in their house. Just imagine that for a minute: persistent, always, 100%, until the wind stops blowing, even to the point where the dog is getting frantic. I have no reason to disbelieve these people.

We see nothing in this legislation that provides for environmental assessments—because there are other issues that have been raised about turbines—nothing that provides for, again, the need to protect residential

homeowners from the impact of this technology. Don't you find that a little bothersome?

I'm going to have to speed this up. I've got some time, after we come back, for the next day—50,000 jobs.

Toby Barrett's comments, as I say, were incredibly delightful. Changing our impact on the planet is all about changing lifestyles, changing culture.

I'm a big fan of the small house movement. I say that North Americans, Canadians, Ontarians, who have become accustomed to bigger and bigger houses should maybe reflect on becoming more and more thoughtful about how they build houses. If you build smaller houses, though, and I'm talking about 750- and 800-square-foot houses—we've got a whole whack of wartime houses down in Welland that are 650 square feet. Families of five, six and seven grew up in them. You go to some of the old, historic British row housing, and you see incredibly compact homes. When you build small houses, you need more public spaces. Do you understand what I'm saying? This government, with its willingness to let municipalities go bankrupt, is creating a fiscal scenario where municipalities are less and less capable of providing more public space. You need little community halls. You need parks. You need parkettes. You need playgrounds.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Pubs.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And, as Toby Barrett says, the occasional pub, notwithstanding that you can only smoke dope in them. That's what we heard recently. You can't smoke a cigarette, but you can smoke a joint.

So we have to change the culture. Again, there's nothing about this bill and this government's approach to this issue that changes the culture in a meaningful way. "Fifty thousand jobs. Fifty thousand jobs." Horse feathers. Horse spit. That number was plucked out of thin air. There's no accounting for it whatsoever. "Oh, maybe we'll have more loans officers in banks." Oh, please. Don't be stupid. What a silly thing to say. Fifty thousand auditors auditing homes? Again, don't be silly. What a stupid thing to say. Because there's no hard Ontario/Canadian content in the production of any of the new machinery that's going to be used as alternative sources of electricity generation.

I remember Paul Miller from Hamilton up here on a daily basis saying, "Where's the Ontario content?" He's got steelworkers down in Hamilton who have lost their jobs at National Steel Car that aren't being guaranteed. This government let Ferranti-Packard shut down in St. Catharines. Smooth move, huh? Real clever. Ferranti-Packard that made transformers: an ideal manufacturing operation to be involved in wind farm projects, amongst other things.

I'm going to continue this the next time this bill's called and I've got a few more minutes' time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you. It now being 6 o'clock, I deem the House adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Elizabeth Witmer
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Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
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Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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