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Monday 29 November 2010

Lundi 29 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 novembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today, in the east gallery from the great riding of Sarnia–Lambton, His Worship Mayor Mike Bradley, accompanied by Ms. Janis Moore and Ms. Kathy Meade, who are all visiting Queen's Park to speak about issues surrounding children's mental health and who also have an appointment with the Lieutenant Governor this afternoon.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the distinct honour to welcome His Holiness Sheikh Salman Al Hussaini Al Nadvi, a Muslim scholar and imam from India, accompanied by Mr. Uves Sareswala; Imam Dr. Saeed Faizi Nadvi of Richmond Hill; Imam Abdul Hai Patel, imam of the Canadian Council of Imams; Mr. Abdul Haq Ingar, president of Masjid Daruslam, Toronto; Imam Hafiz Faizanul Haq, imam of Alnadwah Centre in Mississauga; and Imam Yusuf Badat, imam of the Islamic Foundation of Toronto, to the House today. Please join me in welcoming the imams.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Pam Blackstock and Kemp McMeekin. They're here as part of the delegation of the Association of Ontario Health Centres. Pam is the chair of the board of directors of the Merrickville District Community Health and Services Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House today my friend and former employee Jason Corbett, who many will know from my constituency office, and a good friend of mine, Scott Clark, who are here today to enjoy question period.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to welcome Susan Wilson, Emily Wilson, Don Wilson and Ellen Dolan, who are here with our page from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to welcome my family, who are visiting here today: my mother, Nuzhat Sadique; my brother, Ali Naqvi, from Halton; my uncle Waseem Sadique, who is visiting from the United Kingdom; and my uncle Naseem Sadique and aunt Birges Sadique, who are visiting from Bahrain. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really pleased to introduce today in the west gallery Mrs. Lee McKenna duCharme, who is with the Association of Ontario Health Centres. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I know that all members will want to welcome the many representatives from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, OUSA, who are visiting us here at Queen's Park, and a number are in the gallery today. Welcome.

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

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Hamilton Mountain and page Alexandra Oleiche to welcome her mother, Fida Oleiche, to the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Even kids know you can't run a lemonade stand buying lemons for 80 cents and then selling the lemonade for five cents, yet that's exactly what you are doing with Ontario's hydro system. How can you justify making Ontario families pay a markup of up to 20 times the market rate for power for your expensive wind and solar energy experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to remind my honourable colleague that we wait with bated breath in Ontario for the member opposite's plan. Perhaps at some point in time they will deign to join the debate in a thoughtful and responsible way by putting forward a plan.

In the meantime, we are moving ahead with ours and I'm very pleased that just last week, the honourable member's colleague the MPP for Cambridge joined us at yet another announcement for 150 new jobs flowing directly from our green energy plan. It was great to have the MPP for Cambridge there at the ATS factory in Cambridge, which is going to produce solar panels for a variety of customers. We're pleased that one by one, members of the Conservative Party are joining our plan because we have a plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you know that Ontario families are roundly rejecting your plan that is putting hydro rates through the roof in the province of Ontario. The Ontario PCs stand proudly with Ontario families in

saying that the consumer, not special interests, should be the centre of every decision.

Premier, you are signing, in a very ideological approach to energy policy, some of the richest subsidies in all of North America. You've signed subsidies with giant multinational foreign corporations like Ikea and Samsung at up to 20 times the market rate. On top of that, you are hitting families with the HST and the smart meters that are nothing more than tax machines on top of a 75% increase already. Premier, why are you signing contracts at a 2,000% markup that are going on the backs of Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The other thing that I wanted to inform this House is that when my colleague's energy critic, the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, was asked if power prices would be lower under a Conservative government, his response was, "No, we've never said that."

I think at some point in time there's going to be a breakout of rash reasonability in the Conservative caucus in Ontario. They're going to come to the conclusion that it actually costs money to restore vitality and vigour to our electricity system. They're going to want to come to the table and support our plan for a clean, modern, reliable electricity system. It's happening bit by bit: Rash responsibility is breaking out inside the Conservative caucus.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the Premier is taking a very ideological approach when it comes to energy policy. Your policy, Premier, is basically the wind and solar projects—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. We have a number of guests here today, Minister of Community Safety, who want to hear question period.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your ideological approach when it comes to energy policy is driving up rates across this province. Your view to sign contracts at any price whatsoever, to give massive subsidies to foreign multinational corporations like Ikea and Samsung, is absolutely irresponsible. It's wrong-headed and it's chasing jobs out of the province of Ontario.

1040

Premier, we view this as very much about economic policy: attracting jobs to our province and making sure, at the end of the day, that families can pay their hydro bills. When will you abandon your misguided "buy high, sell low" hydro policy that's driving rates up for consumers in our province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, maybe I'm old-fashioned about this, but I think if you're going to criticize, you've got a responsibility to put forward your own plan. They have had a long time to prepare a plan and there's none forthcoming.

I know my colleague opposite likes to refer to foreign multinationals, but in fact there are 10,000 Ontario farmers who are producing clean electricity for Ontarians. They are people like Dwayne Feddes. He's a dairy farmer in Goderich who also raises chickens. There are Geoff and Sandra Farrell, who are dairy farmers in Kincardine who also grow corn, soy and wheat. Wayne Wilson is a crop farmer in Uxbridge. Mr. Pandya lives in Mississauga—this is an example of somebody doing this inside the city. He is generating some electricity with nine solar panels on his roof.

We're talking about clean air, thousands of jobs and reliable electricity. That's—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. Premier, you should know that Ontario families would rather make money selling food at a fair price than growing steel and glass across the province. You forced them into this corner because you won't support agriculture, and now you're driving up rates for consumers across the province, including Ontario farmers, who are paying far more.

Premier, your own advisers at the competitiveness, productivity and economic progress group are openly questioning your claim of 50,000 jobs. I think now you even admit that's not true. They're warning that the costs are going through the roof.

You cited Spain as a model for your energy experiments, but you know that the high-profile Calzada report found that for every so-called job they created in wind turbines or solar, it ended up costing 2.2 jobs in the economy as a whole. Premier, isn't it time to move away from your ideological approach to hydro, your "buy high, sell low"—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Only the modern Conservative Party in the province of Ontario would consider a plan that is devoted to producing clean energy and clean air, to putting an end to that pollution, to creating tens of thousands of jobs, to ensuring that we have in place a reliable, modern electricity system—only they would reference that as ideology.

I think Ontarians see it as reasonable. I think they understand it's responsible. We know there are costs associated with this. We've laid those out for the next 20 years. In addition to that, we've laid out a particular plan to support Ontario families: our clean energy benefit. We're going to reduce every single electricity bill, from January onward for five years, by 10%. That's part of our plan.

If they have a plan, if they have any idea at any point in time of putting forward something that's thoughtful and responsible, we would love to see it. In the meantime, it's about our plan and it's about our determination

to ensure we have clean air and a responsible, reliable supply of electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, the problem with the Premier's approach is, quite frankly, nobody believes him anymore. Premier, you said you'd close coal by 2007; you broke that promise over and over again. You said that your green energy experiments, your expensive experiments, would drive up rates by only 1%; they've gone through the roof instead.

Premier, I know that you want Ontario to be more like Europe. I know that's your view, as Premier of the province, and that's why you're bringing in these expensive experiments. But even you know, despite your love affair with policies in other countries, that Denmark, for example, after 15 years of heavy subsidies, said only one in 10 so-called new jobs actually came to light. We've found out now that, in other countries like Germany and Spain, they've realized their rates were too high and they've backed away. But you are headlong down an ideological course. How many jobs are you costing the province with your high rate policy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we put forward a 20-year plan. We're the first government to ever do that. We laid out in real detail how much it's going to cost, where we're going to get the electricity from, what the sources will be and how much effort we're putting into conservation. We think that's the responsible thing to do. We think that's exactly what Ontarians want to see from their political leaders. They want to know what we plan to do and how exactly we intend to get there.

None of that is forthcoming from this party.

On behalf of the people of Ontario who are very interested in this public policy debate, they are now insisting that the Conservative Party here in Ontario put forward their own specific proposal. There is nothing there. It is not forthcoming.

We're moving ahead with our plan. We're doing it because it's the right thing to do, it's the responsible thing to do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable members from Nepean and Renfrew that it is important—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's from a previous outburst.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your determination to make Ontario more like Europe, your policy errors, already have us matching Greece's debt and now Spain's job losses. Premier, your very ideological approach of buying these contracts at any price whatsoever, of rewarding multinational, multi-billion dollar corporations like IKEA and Samsung with sweetheart deals is driving rates up for consumers across the province and costing us jobs. We simply disagree.

Premier, you cited Germany as one of the ways that you wanted to approach your hydro policy, but even

Germany's institute reports that the subsidies for their expensive energy experiments was a whopping US\$240,000 per job. That is unaffordable, Premier. That means it's on the backs of families, on the backs of seniors, on the backs of small businesses. We will stand on their side, as opposed to your special interest approach.

Why won't you abandon these expensive energy—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Euro-bashing coming from my honourable colleague is positively bizarre. I don't really understand that. Again, I think it expresses an innate fear of all things foreign.

I think there are some good ideas out there. We will draw lessons from experiences in other parts of the world, and we will apply those in an Ontario way. That's why 10,000 Ontario farmers have signed on to our green energy plan.

Again, we've got a specific plan. It's 68 pages long. We would be very interested in hearing from Ontarians—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I was saying, we put forward a plan. It's called Ontario's long-term energy plan. It's 68 pages long.

It may be that my honourable colleague is somewhat shy and reticent to reveal his plan publicly, so if he'd like to, he can send it to ontario.ca/energyplan. We would be pleased to receive his plan. We'll take it into consideration as we lend further strength to our own—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Since the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just remind the honourable members that we have a rotation in questions. Now it's the opportunity for the third party to have their questions. The opposition just had a question. I would just say to the government side, as well, that these cross-floor debates while somebody is asking a question aren't helpful to anyone within the House. I would ask that they be respectful.

Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Since the Premier's corporate tax cuts and unfair HST kicked in on July 1, more than 30,000 people have lost their jobs and 30% more Ontarians are unemployed since

the start of the recession. Will the Premier venture to say whether his plan is working?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's always more work to be done. I know my honourable colleague understands that. We have made some real progress. I would hope that she would understand that, as well.

Since the depths of the recession, the US economy has restored some 10% of their lost jobs. We've restored 75% of our lost jobs. We think that's significant progress. Obviously, there is more work to be done, but with every passing week there is more progress made. Step by step, we keep creating more jobs in Ontario.

A couple of weeks ago, I was in Hamilton. We announced 300 new jobs at JNE Consulting associated with our green energy plan. The folks who are going to be hired there are going to be hired to produce components that go into renewable technology. That's just one small example of the progress that we are making by working together.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier had a plan that he claimed would create 600,000 jobs. His plan hit people with a new tax on everything from hydro to haircuts while giving away \$2 billion in corporate tax cuts. But since his plan kicked in, London has lost 12,000 jobs, Kitchener-Waterloo has lost more than 7,000, and Windsor has lost more than 3,000.

Would the Premier agree that his plan is an expensive failure?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, bit by bit, we keep making progress. More and more communities, particularly insofar as our green energy plan is concerned, are benefiting from the new policy. We're creating thousands and thousands of new jobs, including in Hamilton, generating those jobs one by one. They're going to be involved in creating solar panels and wind turbines.

Our determination, our drive, is to make sure that we create a manufacturing centre of excellence here. At some point in time, the Americans are going to say, "We want to get involved in this too. We want to ensure that we have access to cleaner sources of energy. We want to do that by harnessing the power of the wind and the sun." We're going to be in a position to ship to them. Just in the way that we ship our cars to them today, we're going to be shipping to them wind turbines and solar panels made here in Ontario by people who are working at great jobs.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The HST isn't the Premier's first failed plan. He had a plan to freeze hydro rates, but he has told families to brace themselves for a 50% increase. He had a plan to expand public transit, but he put the brakes on that plan with deep cuts. He had a plan to revolutionize long-term care, but stories regularly emerge of seniors being horribly mistreated.

Given his dismal seven-year record, why would Ontario families have any faith whatsoever that the Premier's latest plan will work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague that we await her energy plan as well. We've been debating this matter of public policy for a long, long time now. My honourable colleague has stood in her place in this Legislature many times over and offered criticism of our plan, but to this point in time, they have yet to put forward any positive, constructive proposal that might resemble a plan.

I'll tell you what we've done as well with respect to jobs: JNE Consulting in Hamilton, 300 jobs; Samco, 60 jobs here in Toronto; Canadian Solar, 500 jobs in Guelph; Sustainable Energy Technologies and Melitron, 300 jobs in Guelph; Fronius, 100 jobs in Mississauga to produce solar invertors; SMA Solar AG, 200 jobs; Canasia, 300 jobs in London to produce solar panels; Silfab, 200 jobs in Mississauga; Solar Source Corp., 200 jobs in Windsor; Solar Semiconductor, 200 jobs in Oakville. I could go on and on. The fact is, we're—

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

SMART METERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. If we were on Broadway, this seven-year run would be known as McGuinty's Follies, and the follies keep coming.

Take the government's plan for their so-called smart meters. It isn't working either. Windsor's hydro company, EnWin, announced it is delaying the switch to time-of-use rates. According to their director of regulatory affairs, they're waiting until "policy has worked itself out."

What exactly is Windsor's hydro company worried about?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's not it all. In fact, across this province local distribution companies have been—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's simply not the case. Local distribution companies right across this province have been doing a terrific job implementing smart meters: 4 million of 4.5 million smart meters have gone into homes across this province. It's gone smoothly, it's on time, and it's on budget, contrary to what the leader of the third party keeps trying to tell people. What you're saying is simply not true.

Now, we know that—

Interjections.

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

I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I should have said "inaccurate." Yes, I withdraw—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We need an unequivocal withdrawal, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I withdraw. I'm pleased to withdraw.

We know what's happened in Windsor. EnWin is totally aware of what's gone on there. They went to implement and installed smart meters in some homes that they probably shouldn't have. They're completely aware of that. We've been in touch with them, and the Ministry of Transportation has. They'll ensure that that doesn't happen again.

With the millions of smart meters going in across the province, I want to once again assure this Legislature that they're going in on time and on—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On August 4, the Ontario Energy Board issued a decision requiring more than 40 local distribution companies, including EnWin, to switch to time-of-use pricing by June 2011. But EnWin is ignoring the decision, saying they won't make the switch until December 2012. Their spokesperson says, "You don't often get rewarded for being on the cutting edge of those things." Why would a local utility be so reluctant to be on the cutting edge?

Hon. Brad Duguid: EnWin, like most local distribution companies, is owned by the city of Windsor. I'm sure the city of Windsor will want to ensure that EnWin is doing everything possible to ensure that the people of Windsor, like people right across this province, will be able to participate in these very important conservation measures: have the opportunity to shift their use and have the opportunity to save the system considerable amounts of dollars going forward, something that the NDP used to support.

Those were the days, when the NDP used to support conservation. Now, with this new leader of the third party, they've moved away from supporting conservation, just like they've moved away from supporting the investments we need to make in renewables, to build a cleaner, more modern system of energy. Clearly that party's—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: EnWin is explicitly ignoring the Ontario Energy Board's decision to switch to time-of-use pricing by June 2011. Is the Premier concerned that a local utility, in the finance minister's own community, no less, is so concerned about the \$1.5-billion not-so-smart meter program that they're putting it off?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's very, very obvious that the formerly bright green party has gone absolutely dark.

The leader of the third party no longer stands for conservation, no longer stands for the need to encourage people to shift their use to off-peak times. She no longer supports renewable energy and the important investments that we have to make in that. She no longer supports our investments to modernize our energy system so we can ensure that Ontario families have a clean, modern energy system to drive us forward into a prosperous future. She doesn't support the thousands of jobs being created as a

result of these efforts: 300 in her own riding. She stands completely against those jobs. I think the Hamilton Spectator should be aware of that. I think her constituents should be aware of that.

Boy, that party has shifted a long way from those days when they believed in green energy, when they believed—

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

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion: How many hospitals have undermined your smoke-free Ontario policy by handing out contraband cigarettes to patients, like Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor has done?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was very shocked and I was very disappointed when I heard on Friday that the member opposite has chosen to continue the Conservative Party's drive-by smear campaign on front-line workers. But this time, they've gone the next step: Now they are attacking front-line mental health workers.

I think it is shameful. I think it is unacceptable. I actually would urge the member opposite to speak to his caucus colleagues who were part of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I would urge the member opposite to speak to the member from Whitby–Oshawa, to speak to the member from Dufferin–Caledon. These are members of the select committee on mental health. They came together in a non-partisan way. They listened to the challenges faced by people with mental illness. They listened to front-line workers; they listened to parents. They came up with—

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

1100

Mr. Peter Shurman: It is front-line health professionals who are blowing the whistle on the McGuinty Liberals turning garages into emergency rooms and allowing hospitals to hand out contraband cigarettes.

Luann Kapasi, communications coordinator for the hospital, admits the cigarettes came from a native reserve. And if you wonder what they look like, I'll send some over to you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that props are not to be used.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yes, it was a prop.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Community Safety.

Please continue.

Mr. Peter Shurman: First, the hospital said there was nothing wrong with handing out the cigarettes, but then stopped doing it.

This is a government whose priorities have been to ban cigarettes from cars and apartment buildings but which turns a blind eye to the sale of tax-free contraband cigarettes, Minister. Now you allow them to be distributed at hospitals.

Which is more harmful: contraband cigarettes that you hand out at Hôtel-Dieu Grace, or the carbon monoxide fumes in your ER garages?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am constantly astonished by how low they go over there.

Let's get back to the issue that was raised. Michael Perley, the director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, a leader in smoke-free Ontario, says this: "Most physicians would agree that tobacco is very commonly used by people with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, as a way to self-medicate.... 'Because it calms them down, reduces the anxiety.' He said to criticize hospitals for handing out cigarettes is far too simplistic."

On the issue of contraband, if in fact they are contraband, that is completely unacceptable. But I do remind the member opposite that the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, the member from Haldimand, the member from Oxford and the member from Renfrew all voted against the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. In its new report, the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction says the government "gave poverty reduction shorter shrift" this year, and went on to say that the government's "lack of decisive, timely initiatives ... suggests the government may have taken its eye off the prize."

The report shows that the government has only fulfilled seven of its 45 commitments required to reduce poverty; 25 in 5 criticizes the government for cutting the special diet allowance and for failing to invest in housing affordability, employment equity and income adequacy for social assistance recipients.

The question: Why is the McGuinty government giving this short shrift to poverty reduction?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank 25 in 5 for their report. We certainly look forward to reviewing it in more detail this afternoon. But I do want to put some quotes out, because the member opposite certainly hasn't been complete in what he says that 25 in 5 say, so let me tell you.

"Ontario was smart to stay the course on poverty reduction. Investments in the Ontario child benefit and minimum wage increases helped put dollars on Main Street, stimulating local economies at a time when they needed it most....

"Full-day kindergarten for children aged four and five is under way in many communities and a significant investment has been made in the next generation of Ontarians....

"Though more children and their families fell into poverty during the recession, government actions at the height of the economic downturn prevented many more from spiralling into deeper poverty than they would have without public assistance."

Speaker—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is also to the Premier: 25 in 5 is not the only coalition lamenting the lack of progress on poverty reduction. The Housing Network of Ontario is concerned that the government's new housing strategy will not set targets for the construction of new affordable housing units, will not put in place a housing benefit to make housing more affordable for low-income Ontarians, and will not allow municipalities to require that affordable units be part of new housing developments. Why should Ontarians believe the government's housing strategy will make a difference when its poverty strategy has failed to reduce poverty?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We work every day on this side of the House to undertake the steps we put forward in our poverty reduction plan, which is a five-year plan, and we are coming up on the end of two years into that plan. That really differs us from the other side of the House, because there's no plan on that side of the House. The party opposite continues to act in a blind, partisan way, attacking the poverty reduction strategy simply because it's not theirs.

I can tell you that we're very proud of the steps that we've taken on this side of the House, again in contrast to the other side. They voted against six increases to social assistance; they voted against the creation of 22,000 affordable child care spaces; they voted against stabilizing the rent bank and providing 30,000 rent supplements; they voted against raising minimum wage; they voted against taking 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls; and they voted against the 2009 stimulus package, which invested \$1.2 billion in the affordable housing—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week, the government presented its updated long-term energy plan. A key piece of that plan is the commitment to nuclear energy generating about 50% of our electricity. Central to that commitment is a need to procure new nuclear units in order to maintain that capacity and the reliability that Ontarians deserve and have come to count on.

I've had the pleasure of meeting with nuclear industry representatives at events like their supplier day, and more recently at AECL's awards dinner. Our nuclear industry is renowned the world over for their accomplishments in R&D and innovation. It's also a key economic driver.

Minister, Ontarians want vision and they want certainty when it comes to energy policy in the province.

Can the minister offer certainty with respect to nuclear power when it comes to sustaining its supply and reliability?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member from Mississauga South is absolutely correct. Modernizing our nuclear fleet is essential to ensuring that Ontario has the reliable base-load power that it needs going forward.

Our long-term energy plan affirms our commitment to purchase two new nuclear units at Darlington and support the refurbishment of 10 others to guarantee this supply. Unfortunately for all Ontarians, the federal government has made this process significantly more difficult than it needs to be with their decision to sell off AECL.

While the Leader of the Opposition's advice to us is that we should have purchased those units at a price way too high, I think the Leader of the Opposition and his party are the only impulse nuclear shoppers in this province today. We're determined to ensure that we do that at a fair price. The Premier, myself as Minister of Energy, and others in this government have gone to the federal government and said, "We need you to work with us to make this happen." The only people silent on this have been the Tories—

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: It's indeed unfortunate that the federal government is playing antics with such an important institution, one that employs over a thousand men and women in the city of Mississauga alone. The nuclear industry in Canada earned over \$1.2 billion in exports in 2008 and generates tremendous economic activity through trickle-down business.

Certainly the province's commitment to nuclear energy comes with a host of economic benefits, as well as offering reliability to our electricity system. Yet there are those in this House who do not support emissions-free nuclear energy, even though half our power comes from this reliable source. Those same critics, who have offered no plan or alternatives, also stand clearly opposed to the economic benefits of having a robust nuclear industry here in Ontario.

Minister, will you ensure that the economic benefit is fully taken into account with the overhaul of Ontario's energy supply system?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The economic benefits of modernizing and maintaining our nuclear capacity simply can't be ignored. In a report released this year, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters estimate that the employment and economic benefits of refurbishing and modernizing our Darlington and Bruce reactors will result in some 25,000 Ontario jobs and \$5 billion in annual economic activity. Twenty-five thousand jobs: That's like the population of Owen Sound. In fact, the Canadian nuclear industry supports about 70,000 jobs nationwide, about 80% based right here in the province of Ontario.

1110

All political parties in this House should be supporting those 70,000 Canadian workers in this industry. All political parties and leaders in the House should be

beseeking Ottawa that they, like us, should be standing behind this nuclear industry in Ontario, standing behind those 70,000 workers. From the Leader of the Opposition—

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

ILLEGAL DRUG OPERATIONS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier of Ontario. Under your watch, at any given time there are nearly 500 clandestine drug operations, either grow ops or drug labs, turning Ottawa homes into crime scenes—at any given time, Premier. This past fall, \$1.2 million worth of marijuana was seized at a grow op in London while another \$14 million was seized in Durham.

The time to crack down and protect Ontario families from the devastating effects of these illegal drug operations, whether it's health and safety or other criminal acts, is now. That's why I'm going to ask you: Will you support Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus plan to force these drug operations out of business and create a province-wide registry that will target them?

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think we would recognize that all members of the Legislature and all members of the public take very seriously the issue of grow ops, which in recent years have become an even greater concern. As well, all of us met—at least, as many as could—with representatives of the Ontario Real Estate Association, which has had many suggestions as to how these matters could be solved, and members of police services across the province.

Whenever a private member's bill is introduced in the House, of course, we ensure that there's a full debate. I know the member will be looking forward to all members of the Legislature contributing to that debate, analyzing the bill carefully and making an ultimate judgment on it. But I can assure you that our government has taken many steps forward in this direction to eliminate grow ops and to deal with the very issues that the member has brought to our attention.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the minister agrees that it is of greater concern today, that means you need to do more. If you want to reference the real estate association of Ontario, then you'll realize that this is the bill they have endorsed and they're behind.

Illegal drug operations also mean that hydro is being stolen from everyday, hard-working Ontario families who are playing by the rules. In British Columbia, it is estimated that over \$100 million a year in electricity is stolen to support illegal drug activity in that province. Without a proper registry tracking these crime scenes, the Premier and the minister don't know how many tens of millions of taxpayer dollars are being stolen from Ontario families to support these illegal drug operations.

Will you support the Ontario PC plan to target these drug operations and rid their illegal activity from every

community from Ottawa to Thunder Bay, and everywhere in between?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's very interesting—and I know your energy critic will find this interesting—that one of the greatest steps forward in terms of police being able to detect grow ops has been smart meters. Smart meters have alerted the police to potential grow operations in the province.

I can tell you as well that we have a provincial advisory group amalgamated with the Green Tide Action Group to fight grow-ops. We've hired 148 new police officers to fight grow ops and other organized crime. We're getting results. In 2009, 500 grow ops and meth labs were shut down, 490 guns were seized, almost \$10 million in cash and property were seized, and drugs worth \$227 million were seized. We passed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Stop the clock, please.

I'm troubled at reminding the same members on both sides of the House over and over again. Certainly, the pages note it. I read a very interesting article in the Woodstock Sentinel Review of former pages making note of that. I'd just ask honourable members—the occasional interjection is often very good for this place, but constant interjections are not helpful to good debate in this chamber.

New question.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

After weeks of the government responding to rather embarrassing questions over hospitals paying Liberal-friendly lobbyists exorbitant hospital consultant salaries—then we heard of exotic trips and fancy meals on the public dime—the government went into damage control and brought in a bill that would bring hospitals under freedom of information. But then the government time-allocated the bill to limit debate, rushed through the public consultation phase—we never did hear from the Ottawa specialists—and then on Friday, they brought in a last-minute amendment. This is my only chance to ask: What will the minister's amendment do?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is actually a very good question, and one that I'm happy to respond to.

I'm very proud that this government acted very quickly when the Auditor General came in with his report on practices that were happening in our hospitals; practices that simply were unacceptable. I'm very pleased that we were able to introduce that legislation. We actually went further than the Auditor General recommended, and we are including hospitals in freedom-of-information legislation.

We're working very hard in our health care sector. We're really starting with hospitals, to improve the quality of care in our hospitals. This is something that is not just better for patient care, it's also better for the

system as a whole. So we're trying to strike the right balance between transparency and giving the hospitals the tools they need to do this—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I guess the limited debate in the question didn't really answer my question. I want to know: What will the amendment do?

When I talk to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who is the Ontario expert on these matters, she makes it clear that quality-of-care information would continue to be protected in hospitals without any amendment to the bill.

There are dozens and dozens of agencies, there are universities, there are boards and there are commissions that are subject to freedom of information, so with the amendment and the minister's logic, does that mean that all of these agencies are not able to improve quality because they are subject to FOI?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first question, we introduced this legislation and we have spent a lot of time since then listening to people and organizations that would be directly impacted by that. I know the member opposite was in committee. She heard representation from various stakeholder groups who had concerns that their quality initiatives would be jeopardized if we did not actually—not exclude, but exempt certain information from being part of freedom of information.

This is very important legislation. This is a very important, big step forward. It's important we get it right; that we protect patient privacy. I'm very pleased that the Information and Privacy Commissioner is, in fact, supporting our amendment.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, the need to keep hazardous waste material out of the landfill is obvious: It takes up valuable space, it's a waste of our resources and it poses a potential threat to our drinking water if not handled properly. However, the costs associated with proper disposal should only be used to dispose of that product.

Some retailers are taking advantage of people wanting to do the right thing: They refused to refund the disposal charge when my 72-year-old constituent returned an alarm clock. My question is very simple: Why don't retailers have to refund the collected disposal fee when consumers return an electronic product?

Hon. John Wilkinson: If you want to know a member of this House who fights for his constituents, it's the member for York West. I want to thank him for fighting for his constituent until he got the refund that he was rightfully entitled to. Thank you for being on the side of the consumer and for bringing this to my attention so my ministry could deal with and help you resolve this issue.

This is really about the incorrect actions of a particular retailer, so let me be crystal clear: All retailers must

refund the full cost charged to consumers, period. I was appalled by the actions of the retailer in this case. There is absolutely no excuse for not returning the entire amount, absolutely none. A refund is a refund is a refund in the province of Ontario, and I am requesting that retailers correct any other incidents like this. Simply charge the correct fee, and when a product is returned, return the entire amount, period. I want to thank the member for York West.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Minister, I appreciate your clearing up the confusion and I also want to echo the minister's disappointment. It should not have taken Mr. La Valle contacting me and me contacting the minister before something was done. Thank you for reiterating that disposal charges are supposed to be collected specifically for the future disposal of that product, nothing more, and should be returned when the electronic is returned to any retailer.

But, Minister, this incident raises a larger question about what recourse and protection consumers have if they are being overcharged on fees or in any other way being taken advantage of by a retailer. Consumers need to know that the government is there to help them. Would the minister tell us just what the government is doing to assure consumers that they are being protected?

Hon. John Wilkinson: First, I personally wrote to Ontario Electronic Stewardship and requested they review the fees that they were charging on their products. As of December 1, the new fee will be 40 cents. I also told Waste Diversion Ontario to work with the industry-funded organizations to ensure all retailers have correct return policies.

Second, I implemented a number of consumer protection measures when I cancelled the July 1 program back in October. We have a consumer protection hotline so consumers can report any suspicious fees, and the special team I created investigates each and every one of these complaints. I requested that a consumer representative be added to the boards that run each and every one of these programs. Let me reiterate: There should be a consumer on every one of these boards that is run and funded by industry. If they did that and they listened to their customers, they would not have the problems they are having today.

We are committed to diverting hazardous waste from our landfills in a—

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

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, at a time when identity theft and fraud strike fear into Ontario families, your government has shown it can't be trusted with basic information such as a driver's licence. The Toronto Star has reported 93 cases of licence fraud in your Ministry of

Government Services; 93 Ontarians have had their personal information stolen right under the government's watch.

My question to you, Minister: Can you explain why so many of your problem systems are leaving Ontario citizens vulnerable to identity theft?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking the question. I cannot speak of any specific cases if the matter is under investigation, but I want to tell you we are very concerned about the security of any information from any of our citizens, and whenever it comes to our notice, we take immediate action.

There was an example of the address changes happening not in the right way. We immediately shut our systems down and put the systems in place so that we could correct the information and these things don't happen again. We are very concerned about it. We take immediate action and we have systems in place that actually protect the privacy and the information of citizens.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, you should be concerned. In one instance, an address was changed to an abandoned strip club. The victim had no idea and only learned of the fraud six months later.

Not only is the minister failing to protect the privacy of information of Ontarians; he's also hiding it from those affected. The privacy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the reference that he just made to the minister.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, he shouldn't be hiding it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw. He has not made the information available, and the privacy commissioner is clear that the system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need help. You're heckling so much that you can't even hear. I heard the honourable member withdraw. It wasn't loud, but I heard him. I don't need help from armchair ministers who would like to be Speakers. Do you know what? I very much would love to give you the opportunity to come and sit in this chair and experience how much fun it is.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies, Minister, or—

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Speaker.

Clearly, the privacy commissioner says the system is flawed and leaves Ontarians dangerously exposed. I'm going to ask you again, Minister, to explain to Ontarians why your ministry is leaving this information exposed to theft and fraud under your watch.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me tell you, I think as soon as it came to our attention, we shut down the system.

We worked very closely with the privacy commissioner to address this issue, and this is what she said: "I applaud ServiceOntario for taking this necessary step...."

“We commend MGS for its decision to shut down the address change function for driver’s licences available from both the ServiceOntario website as well as the ServiceOntario kiosks, and for its prompt response to this incident, including contacting affected individuals. We further note that MGS has co-operated fully with the IPC over the course of this investigation.”

Let me just say more. She said further, “MGS stated that both systems would remain shut down until the improvements had been” made.

That’s exactly what we did. We made sure that the information is protected, and we worked with the privacy commissioner to make sure that she was involved every step of the way.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Lifecare Centres is about to sell off seven long-term-care homes, two of which are located in the city of Hamilton. What will the McGuinty government do to ensure that Hamilton does not lose a single long-term-care bed as a result of this pending sale?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. When it comes to long-term care, we really are determined to make sure that people do, in fact, have access to long-term care as close to home as possible.

The licences that go with long-term care are—we take control of those licences. We do not allow the transfer of licences outside of the LHIN, unless there is a very compelling reason to do that. We monitor this extremely closely.

I can tell you that we’re determined to have the highest quality of care in long-term care and also to have accessibility as close to home as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The St. Joseph’s Villa family council in my community and the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly are very concerned about the sale of long-term-care beds. The lack of information around this sale and the impact it will have on Hamilton seniors as well is very, very frightening. “Our seniors deserve better than this,” the council said in a recent letter to the Minister of Health. The current proposal means moving 92 beds from St. Olga’s Lifecare Centre in Hamilton to Cama Woodlands Nursing Home in Burlington.

Why won’t the government make all of the conditions of this sale public to ensure Hamiltonians that no long-term-care beds will be lost in our community, particularly acknowledging that we also have an alternate-level-of-care-bed crisis in our city?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to this particular case, I will undertake to get more information and speak to the member opposite about this particular situation.

What I can tell you is that we and our LHINs are very, very focused on reducing ALC rates in our hospitals. This is a big challenge for our hospitals and for our

LHINs. The problem is in the hospital; the solution, however, is in the community. So we are building up supports in the community to support people. We are expanding capacity in long-term care. As I say, this particular case is one that I will look into more carefully.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. There are 20 First Nations in my riding, and it’s important that I have the opportunity to speak with them on important issues, which I do on almost a daily basis. But it was important to have them all in one place here in Toronto last week. Last week, I was able to participate in your First Nations cabinet day meetings and was able to meet with a number of chiefs at the same time—not just from my riding, but from across the province. It was a great opportunity for me to hear updates on important issues from the various communities in one afternoon.

I understand the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with First Nations as constituents and community partners. For example, I had the opportunity to meet with Minister Gravelle and yourself, Minister, with the First Nations from Michipicoten and from Pic Mobert.

I want to know, Minister, can you tell me how this day came—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Algoma–Manitoulin has been developing relationships with First Nations for years, over thousands of kilometres.

It’s really important that we have the opportunity for First Nations to meet, not just once a year but all year, with members of the government.

1130

One of the things that my predecessor, now the Minister of Energy, heard last year when we attended the Special Chiefs Assembly was that it would be helpful, from the perspective of First Nations, to be able to interact at that assembly with my cabinet colleagues. I’m pleased to say that from what I understand was their first time at the chiefs’ assembly, 17 of my cabinet colleagues were available for meetings, for the reception, and that almost 100 separate meetings with ministers took place. This is reflective of a very strengthened relationship.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Thank you, Minister. I was delighted to see so many of my colleagues—MPPs and ministers—attending the meetings and the reception afterwards. I’m sure we all had a productive day with the exchange of information.

But I’m very surprised that five years after agreeing to it, the federal government has not had a similar meeting with First Nations and Premiers across the country. Our Premier meets every year with aboriginal leadership and organizations to discuss important issues, and our

Premier has asked the federal government on several occasions to hold a federal meeting on aboriginal issues.

Will the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tell this House what else the government is doing to strengthen its relationship with First Nations?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The much-strengthened relationship is a result of Premier McGuinty's direction, his acceptance of the Ipperwash recommendations and his determination that all peoples residing in Ontario need to work together for a much-strengthened province.

We stood shoulder to shoulder with First Nations and said to the federal government that we want to continue the exemption under the HST, the point-of-sale exemption, that existed since 1980. It was that, working together with First Nations, that enabled us to turn the federal government's position around.

We stand together with First Nations in attempting to realize greater economic opportunities for our \$45-million training partnership fund that we got in the last budget, and we'll stand with First Nations on the education issue, but we need the federal government to be a real partner in this work. We need the federal government to do what it needs to do under the Constitution to strengthen—

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

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Energy. In rural Ontario, there is a lot of concern about the lack of community input surrounding where wind turbines are placed. We also understand that landowners can opt out of the setback rules.

Will you ensure that setbacks are consistent across Ontario, regardless of where you live?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We put in place one of the most stringent setback rules in all of North America when it comes to wind turbines, not only on setbacks but in terms of noise standards as well. It's a model for North America, it's among the strongest in this province and it's something that—and I encourage the member, because I know it's tough for her, not having a plan of her own, to be able to talk about things like wind and energy, to go to ontario.ca/energyplan to see what an energy plan is about.

In that plan, we talk about the important role that wind energy will play in creating thousands of jobs across this province and helping to build a cleaner province, a more prosperous province, for ourselves and for the next generation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, you know that your energy plan has been panned by experts across Ontario. The Green Energy Act left setbacks for turbines to be set by regulation. Can you share with the House what criteria cabinet used to determine 550-metre setbacks for homes and five-kilometre setbacks for offshore? It wouldn't have anything to do with the fact that the member from

Scarborough Centre sits in cabinet and your change has eliminated any possibility of a turbine being sited in his riding, would it?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's beyond ridiculous, but let me return to the long-term energy plan, because some of the comments that the member made are simply inaccurate.

I look at comments from Rodney Sheppard, president of the Society of Energy Professionals. This is what he said about our plan: "Clean nuclear power and hydro-electricity are the foundation of Ontario's electricity supply....This announcement signals a return to rational long-term planning in the province's electricity policy." This is going to create a lot of jobs—good jobs—for a lot of people, the kind of jobs we all want our kids to get.

I have lots of quotes here. Let me share with you what Adam White, president of the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, said: "Competitive electricity rates are an absolute priority for AMPCO members. The plan sets out a framework to create a reliable, economically viable electricity system for Ontario. This plan"—

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

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. A couple weeks ago, I brought to your attention the condition in Attawapiskat in regard to 90 families living in contractors' trailers. You since responded to that letter and said you will do everything to work with the federal government in order to respond to the problem.

You will know that there was a fire in Kashechewan, where two men died in a jail. There was a coroner's inquest that flowed from there. One of the recommendations under the coroner's inquest says that Canada and Ontario should work together to ensure that standards and service levels in First Nations communities are equivalent to those in non-First Nations communities in Ontario. Is it going to take another fire and another death before we decide that the standards in Attawapiskat should be the same as for every other citizen in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'll answer this as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I think my friend raises an interesting point, but his ire is directed to the wrong place. He knows well that most of the services and issues, including the housing issue raised in his letter, are directly the responsibility of the federal government. I understand that he wants to direct the questions to this side of the House because he can't get the feds to listen, but the fact of the matter is, we've got to get the federal government to listen. We've got to get the federal government to take these issues seriously. We've got to get the federal government to stand up, whether it's water standards or housing standards for First Nations. It is absolutely unacceptable that federal infrastructure

funding for housing needs, for example, has been flatlined instead of going up to meet the needs of the population. Call on the federal government, I say to my friend, to live up to their constitutional—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: If you're walking down the street and you see somebody about to be murdered, do you walk away and say it's somebody else's responsibility? The issue is that these are citizens of the province of Ontario. As citizens of the province of Ontario, they are entitled to the full protection of the law. The problem here is that you're right: You have a federal government that's uninterested and unwilling to do anything. But does that absolve the responsibility of the Legislature of Ontario and this government to ensure that those citizens are safe? There are fire standards everywhere in this province. I'm asking you, will you enforce those on reserve?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Once again, my friend uses the opportunity to direct his comments to where they cannot be most effectively met. It is tempting, yes, I know, for the government of Ontario, speaking on behalf of the people of Ontario, to try and jump in everywhere that the federal government refuses to live up to its constitutional responsibility. All that means is that we're filling in the potholes the federal government leaves behind and we're not making the progress that my friend and this government are determined to make. I call on the NDP to join with us and First Nations in getting the federal government to live up to its constitutional responsibility, to live up to its moral responsibility, to do something to assist First Nations on First Nations lands in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. Just before we deal with a deferred vote, I want to apologize to the House. I recognize that, as Speaker, it's important for me to bite my tongue at times and not go off the way that I did, and I apologize to all members for that.

DEFERRED VOTES

NARCOTICS SAFETY
AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
ET LA SENSIBILISATION
EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 101. All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol
Bailey, Robert	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Best, Margaret	Hardeman, Ernie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Jones, Sylvia	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	McGuinty, Dalton	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 69; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It gives me great pleasure to introduce in the member's gallery Darla Campbell, who's a former member of the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, and her daughter Natalie Campbell, who's in grade 5 at Munns Public School. If we give them a warm Queen's Park welcome, I'm sure they'd appreciate it.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I would just like to stand up and welcome several people from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing who are with us today in the public gallery. They have been instrumental in the work we are doing with regard to the long-term affordable housing strategy, and I just wanted to publicly acknowledge them and thank them for their great work.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce Lee McKenna duCharme from the Association of Ontario Health Centres.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): She also has her roots in the great riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SMART METERS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I stand in the House today to again address the very concerning issue of how smart meters penalize those who are at home during peak hours: folks such as seniors and stay-at-home parents with young children.

As of November 1, Ontarians are paying 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour for their electricity from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., it reduces slightly to 8.1 cents per kilowatt hour. From 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., when most Ontarians are sleeping, the cost drops to 5.1 cents per kilowatt hour.

The McGuinty Liberals say that they are “encouraging us all to think more about how and when we use electricity” and “how working together to reduce our use at peak times makes good sense.”

What doesn't make good sense to me is expecting working parents to pay 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour to bathe their children, cook dinner or do their laundry unless they wait until after 9 p.m.

I don't know what dictionary the Premier is using to define “working together,” but he's certainly not working together with our seniors and families, and he's forcing them to keep the heat off till 9 p.m.

It's shameful that this government continues to place the biggest burden on Ontarians who are unable to alter their lifestyle in order to accommodate this Premier's new rate system.

NORTH YORK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to speak today about the launch of a bold new technology program at North York General Hospital.

On November 17, I, along with Monte Kwinter, spoke at the launch of eCare at North York General. eCare is an innovation designed to improve patient safety, reduce medication errors and provide clinical staff with the latest evidence-based information to inform their decisions.

eCare will replace the traditional manual system and administration of medication. Using the most advanced and up-to-date medical literature, information and technology, North York General is raising the standard in patient care. The new technology captures orders electronically, records medications that have been administered, documents prescriptions and streamlines the work of doctors and nurses at the hospital.

eCare will transform the way hospitals treat and care for patients, ultimately helping people get better faster and saving lives. To quote Dr. Tim Rutledge, the interim president and CEO, “eCare is a significant step forward

in patient safety, quality of care and achieving a paperless medical record.”

I commend North York General Hospital's initiative and all of the medical professionals, physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other support personnel involved in bringing eCare to fruition. The leadership and efforts of North York General Hospital are a true reflection of the unwavering commitment to patient care from a first-class institution.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Randy Hillier: Joel Shaw is an intelligent young man in my riding who has been home-schooled. He wants to take part in an apprenticeship program and has an employer, MacPherson's Auto in Carleton Place, that is willing and eager to hire him because of his excellent work ethic, high aptitude and skill level. However, this government stands directly in the way of his employment. This Liberal government will not let Joel work at MacPherson's Auto.

Since April of this year, Joel and his father, Kevin, have endeavoured to satisfy the requirements of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, but they can't because the MTCU doesn't know what they require. In seven years, the MTCU still has not developed a protocol or a process to recognize homeschoolers to become apprentices.

Government must be a facilitator of the economy, not an obstacle that comes between a willing worker and a willing employer. When will this government get out of the way of people seeking opportunities? When will the government return to its role of preventing injustice instead of, like in this case of Joel Shaw, creating injustice?

PEEL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise to recognize the efforts of the Peel Children's Centre, which is an accredited children's mental health centre serving the region of Peel. This organization has done a lot of great work in my riding and all around Peel.

On November 9, Peel Children's Centre celebrated the beginning of construction of a residential treatment facility for elementary-aged schoolchildren with serious mental health challenges. Many children who have mental health challenges will have a new safe place with professional mental health specialists to assist in their recovery. This facility will have an area where families can have group counselling in order to try to get families back together. In situations where this is not possible, the mental health professionals will help children learn to deal with their issues in order for them to be integrated into a foster home.

This project could not have happened without the financial support of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I wish to thank the minister for her support of this project, and members of my community. Without their support, this project would not have come to fruition.

Once again, congratulations to the Peel Children's Centre. Thank you for your commitment to help children who have mental health issues.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: Last Friday, I had the pleasure of participating in Local Democracy Week here at Queen's Park. Local Democracy Week is all about educating our youth on how democracy can be a force for positive change in their lives and in the life of our community.

On Friday, students had the opportunity to tour the Legislative Assembly, meet with the Clerk and officers of the assembly, learn about the election process from the Chief Electoral Officer and hear a keynote address from Free the Children's Marc Kielburger.

I was joined by grade 10 students from Bowmanville High School in Durham last week, and I'd like to thank their teacher, David Rempel, for the many years he has made learning an experience for his children and how they've gained an understanding of democracy and how it works. I commend Mr. Rempel for his professional instruction to our students, including my children in the past. One of the students, Shannon Thompson, a former Leading Girls, Building Communities Award recipient, was among the students from Bowmanville High School attending Local Democracy Week.

I'd also like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and your staff, including Maggie Head, for all the hard work in ensuring that Local Democracy Week was a success. I want to encourage, and encourage strongly, all students who participated and visited Queen's Park to be active participants in our democratic process. Whether it's being active in your community, running for office or helping someone run for office, or making an informed vote at election time, I would ask that all people in Ontario stay involved and stay connected.

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO HEALTH CENTRES

M^{me} France G elinas: I would like to welcome the Association of Ontario Health Centres to Queen's Park and congratulate them on the great work that they do. AOHC represents non-profit, community-governed, multidisciplinary primary health care organizations, including Ontario's community health centres, aboriginal health access centres, community family health teams, as well as the Sudbury District Nurse Practitioner Clinics.

They believe that effective primary health care addresses the social determinants of health, including social inclusion, access to shelter, education, income and employment security, food, and a stable ecosystem. The model encompasses primary care, illness prevention and health promotion, and uses a community development approach to building healthy public policy in supportive environments. Their vision is rooted in a care model that provides comprehensive primary care services delivered by interdisciplinary teams of professionals practising within the health promotion framework.

1310

The goal of AOHC is simple: to ensure that more Ontarians have access to primary health care through community-governed health centres that are non-profit and publicly accountable.

Unlike the traditional fee-for-service models, community-governed models of primary care pay salaries and benefits to physicians and other staff.

It is about the right service at the right time by the right provider. Congratulations to AOHC for the great work they do.

MOHAMAD FAKIH

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for allowing me to share a story of a Ontarian and a successful businessman. His name is Mohamad Fakih. Mr. Fakih is the founder of the famous Mediterranean restaurant chain in the GTA called Paramount Fine Foods.

On a yearly basis, he serves millions of Ontarians. Also, despite the downturn of the economy, he was able to hire more than 100 people to work in his restaurants; amongst those people the best chefs in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Fakih believes strongly in this province as the best place to live, to do business and to maintain a vibrant and successful economy. He has a philosophy: to help others. He has generously helped many organizations, whether religious institutions, sports groups or places for communities.

I want to congratulate Mr. Fakih for his success in the province of Ontario. I wish him all luck. Hopefully, many others will follow his steps.

CANADIAN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today the Canadian Educational Resources Council, or CERC, for their very first Queen's Park Day.

CERC is known as the voice of Canada's learning resource industry, representing the major educational publishers in Canada. Its members produce roughly 80% of the student learning resources that are currently used in Canadian schools.

I would like to thank CERC's executive director, Dr. Gerry McIntyre, for the excellent exhibit of educational resources he has arranged for everybody today here at Queen's Park and for the work he does on behalf of CERC members.

CERC's members play an important role in applying innovation and technology and lessons learned from front-line teachers to classroom resources. CERC has provided us with opportunities to see first-hand some of the resources that are transforming education today. I have CERC involved with some of the new technology at Joyce Public School in my riding, one of the best public schools in the whole universe.

I encourage all members to visit CERC's learning resources exhibit in committee room 2 between 2 and 4 p.m.

There you will have an opportunity to try out the smart boards—that might be a good idea for some of the members here—laptops and other innovative resources that are transforming modern education.

Be sure to attend CERC's reception today from 5 to 7 p.m. in committee room 2. All are welcome. I look forward to seeing you all there. Let's check out those smart boards.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to correct the record.

I have had the absolute pleasure of representing the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the various communities within my riding since 2003. I'm very proud of the numerous parks, recreation centres, good schools and hospitals, businesses and several tourist attractions that make it a great place to live and a great place to visit.

This is why I was very disappointed when the member from Beaches–East York stood up in the Legislature on Wednesday of last week and made accusations about a hotel and restaurant in my riding—

Mr. Michael Prue: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If the member is correcting the record, he has to correct his own record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is correct, but this is a member's statement.

Mr. Jim Brownell: This member accused the Best Western in Cornwall of stealing the wages of their servers when he reported “that the hotel takes 2.5% of the gross bill and it steals the wages of the servers, whether or not an actual tip is given.”

The member must not be aware that when he makes these types of accusations, especially with a business with high standards and service beyond reproach, he is potentially tarnishing the reputation of hundreds of businesses across this province.

Employers and their staff are always working very hard to create a friendly and respectful atmosphere which everyone can enjoy, and I know that the folks at the Best Western Parkway in Cornwall go above and beyond their service to patrons in the community.

I think the member owes an apology to Mr. Paul Lefebvre and his entire staff at the Best Western Parkway in Cornwall. His comments were completely disrespectful and only used for his own political agenda.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

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 minister for a short statement?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: During ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I rise to introduce legislation that would, if passed, build a strong foundation for an improved housing system that better serves Ontarians. Safe and affordable housing can help people break the cycle of poverty. It provides the foundation families need to raise their children and pursue education, jobs and more opportunity.

The proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act would establish a new framework that strengthens our role as stewards of Ontario's housing system, while giving our municipal partners the flexibility to meet the unique needs of their communities.

The strategy and the bill I introduce today are a result of our province-wide consultations. This bill is a key element to our long-term affordable housing strategy, which I announced today at the Wesley Centre, a drop-in centre serving homeless and other at-risk men and women. I applaud Wesley Centre staff for the tremendous work they do.

Poverty is a complex problem that needs to be tackled from a number of different angles. The McGuinty government continues to work hard to break that cycle of poverty. Cuts to the personal income tax, investing in job creation and retraining, the introduction of the Ontario child benefit, the Ontario sales tax credit and Ontario's poverty reduction strategy—these are all initiatives that are making a difference for low-income families. We are the first to acknowledge that there is more to do, but with this commitment, our government is making another important contribution to this cause.

The proposed legislation would repeal the outdated Social Housing Reform Act, which creates barriers to people in need. The current legislation gets in the way of providing effective services and doesn't address the full housing continuum. The new legislation would simplify administration and allow our municipal partners to more effectively manage their services to meet the true needs of their communities. Safe, affordable housing provides

dignity to people and can give them a foundation from which they can get jobs, raise families and build strong communities.

During our consultations, we heard that much work is needed to make the system effective and workable. For example, today there are over 20 provincial housing and homeless programs operating independently, each with their own set of rules and restrictions. Our strategy will consolidate this patchwork of programs, making them easier for people to understand and access. To do that, we need to rebuild the system from the ground up and ensure the new foundation accommodates opportunities for future growth.

1320

The long-term affordable housing strategy has four pillars. The first pillar will be to put people first. It would reform the rules of rent-geared-to-income assistance and reduce barriers that prevent people from working towards a better future. Secondly, the strategy will also build stronger partnerships with municipalities by improving client services and simplifying a very complex system. Third, it will support affordable housing options. For example, our legislation proposes to amend the Planning Act to require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. Finally, the strategy will establish greater accountability by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the province and its municipal partners.

This bill is the latest step in the McGuinty government's ongoing commitment to affordable housing. In 2005, we began the largest affordable housing program in Canadian history, a \$734-million partnership with municipalities and the federal government. Last year, we extended that initiative by signing a new agreement with the federal government to deliver a range of new housing to Ontarians. This latest agreement has a combined investment of \$1.2 billion in new funding for affordable housing.

The long-term affordable housing strategy and the proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act would work hand in hand to build on those investments. The legislation would help us build some much-needed flexibility and efficiency into the housing system and help our municipal partners put these resources to work where they are most needed in their communities.

This was the product of a year-long consultation. I would like to thank my parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield, for the incredible work she did on that. I urge all members to support this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus today on the introduction of the Housing Services Act, 2010, which resulted from the long-term affordable housing strategy.

I would begin by saying that the introduction of this bill has been a long time coming. Ontarians, especially those in affordable housing or those on the lengthy

affordable housing waiting list and industry professionals, have been waiting for the long-term affordable housing strategy since the commitment was made in 2007.

The reality is that after months of consultations, more than 1,000 detailed submissions and three years' time to release this report, there is as much in this report as is still missing. The government certainly hasn't provided a long-term plan for affordable housing; they have put up a few walls, but this is far from being complete. There is very little in the new strategy. The majority of it talks about new efforts to coordinate different programs while simplifying others. There appear to be few positives in this piece of legislation.

The legislation sets out to give service managers more flexibility, and I must say that is encouraging; it looks like this government has actually taken a small step back and recognized that one size doesn't fit all. This legislation indicates that they will be giving service managers the ability to make some decisions that locally affect them. The government is going to simplify the rent-geared-to-income calculations, which I think all can agree is an important benefit for tenants. The current system does create barriers and disincentives to work because tenants must declare every time their income changes, and if it has increased, this often results in rent increases, so the additional income actually acts as a deterrent.

Having said that, this piece of legislation and the coinciding report will not reduce the enormity of the current affordable housing waiting list, which is currently well over 141,000 people. That's a 9.6% increase just from last year alone. So this continues to be a real concern without any solution.

Additionally, simplifying the rent-geared-to-income calculation process is one thing, but that still leaves many Ontarians with no hope of assistance. Many stakeholders support the idea of an Ontario housing benefit. Today's long-term affordable housing plan states, "Current financial challenges do not allow us to proceed to implement such a program at this time." Well, three years ago this government introduced a housing-related income program. It was their rental opportunities for Ontario families program, otherwise known as the ROOF program. They allocated \$185 million toward this program. It is widely known that this program was a failure, and in September of this year we learned that they were quietly making changes to the program because not enough people signed up due to the cumbersome eligibility criteria. Perhaps had they not misused a portion of that \$185 million, we would have seen a housing benefit in this piece of legislation and correspondingly in their long-term affordable housing plan.

I will just wrap up by saying that creating stronger partnerships and greater accountability between municipalities and the province, as this legislation sets out to do, is one thing, but providing Ontarians with a foolproof plan as to what affordable housing in Ontario will look like over the next 10 years is quite another. Sadly, this

piece of legislation is an opportunity missed to achieve that goal. Certainly, after waiting this long and after the extensive consultation process, our anticipation was that this report would have been far more complete.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, four housing ministers and three years later, this is what we get. It's an incredibly sad, shameful day for those 141,000 families waiting on affordable housing lists an average of 10 to 12 years, 70,000 in the GTA alone. It's a really sad and shameful day for the young mother who's paying \$1,100 in rent and getting \$1,000 on social assistance. It's a very shameful day for this government because they didn't listen during those housing consultations.

Four hundred and eighty-five local organizations and individuals making up the Housing Network of Ontario spent their valuable time telling the McGuinty government what they needed, and here's what they didn't get. No new provincial housing funding. I'll say it again: No more money. If you don't have money in a provincial housing program, you don't have provincial housing. No targets. No timelines. No accountability. No Ontario housing benefit, which you heard has been requested by food banks, by stakeholders, by housing providers; only a vague promise to explore options. No inclusionary zoning. This would have cost not one penny. No amendment to the Planning Act. This turns your back, McGuinty Liberals, on all of those municipalities that submitted requests to be able to have inclusionary zoning acts put in place in their municipalities. This turns your back on all of those municipalities: a sad, sad day for municipal government, as well as for those waiting for affordable housing.

What did they ask for? They asked for bold targets and sustained funding. They got, as I said, no new funding, no multi-year commitment, no innovative financing, no strengthening of the development of the technical capacity of the sector.

They asked for a solid measuring stick. What did they get? They got Ontario housing measures only covering families with children, with the rest of Ontarians completely left out.

What did they ask for? They asked for housing that's truly affordable and accessible. What did they get? No commitment to the Ontario housing benefit, no commitment to new funding, no affordable home ownership options.

And this is from the very stakeholders you spoke to. This is not our work.

Reform housing legislation to build stronger communities—and again, no inclusionary zoning, the very least that they could have done.

1330

In contrast, what does the Ontario New Democratic Party offer? These are all tabled bills: a tenants' bill of rights, rent supplements, inclusionary zoning. We even demanded of the McGuinty Liberals that they do what they promised, which was to build 20,000 new units—it requires money; no money in housing, no new units—

and, of course, all under the umbrella of housing as a human right, which this government refused to pass. Imagine that. That's shameful. That's not even in line with the United Nations on housing. The United Nations has deemed that housing is a human right; not to McGuinty Liberals. No, they wouldn't even pass that, because they know that if they did, it would have ramifications.

All of the stakeholders asked for 10,000 new units per year—all of them. Did they get one? Not one. It's a very, very sad and shameful day for those who are waiting for affordable housing. It's a very sad and shameful day for all of those who come into our MPP offices and ask where they are on the list, and we tell them, "It's only an eight- or nine-year wait now." It's a very, very sad and shameful day for families across this province who are struggling—the 250,000 families who pay more than 50% of their income on rent or housing. It's a very shameful day for all of those anti-poverty activists across this province who know that housing is the key to be able to get out of poverty.

All of this, the McGuinty Liberals turn their backs on, even those moves that would have cost nothing. They turned their backs on those as well. It's a very sad day. But they shouldn't have to wait much longer, because we look forward to October 2011, when hopefully we'll get a government in place that will actually provide housing for the people of Ontario.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm looking for my petitions here, which are always at hand. This one reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100"—I'm surprised that he's not here—"provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

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

I'm pleased to sign and support that bill, as well as to present this to page Connor on his second-last week here.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O’Toole: It seems that I’m getting an extraordinary amount of exposure here this afternoon. This petition here says:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister”—now Municipal Affairs Minister—“Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement

powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this, even though this resolution has failed, and pass it to Justin.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

“Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

“Whereas not all people with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

“Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions.”

PARKINSON’S DISEASE

Mr. John O’Toole: Petitions keep coming. This one reads as follows:

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

“Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson’s retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson’s are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

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

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-list, yet

people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

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

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and send it to Jennifer, one of the pages on her second-last week.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

1340

CEMETERIES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I sign my name and give it to page Sarah.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

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

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with page Jake.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L’AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d’autres questions.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I was waiting to see whether the person who had the floor before was here, but he is not.

I’m here to speak to this bill, and I think the financial matters contained within the bill are several and wide-ranging, but the key one has to be the 10% reduction in costs. I know that this is causing a great deal of confusion and concern in my riding—and I’m going to get to that in a moment—but it’s also causing a great deal of consternation out there in the political world and in the media.

I was looking through some media stories the other day and I came across one in the Windsor Star. I think he has said it in a nutshell far better than I could in a few minutes, so I’d just like to read what Windsor Star columnist Mr. Vander Doelen had to write, and this was on November—

Mr. John O’Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I hate to interrupt the member from Beaches–East York, but I would question if there is a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Quorum count, please.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum is not present. There will be a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum now being present, the member from Beaches–East York can continue.

Mr. Michael Prue: As I was stating, I had an opportunity to read the Windsor Star and came across an excellent column by Mr. Vander Doelen. It’s dated November 20 of this year and it’s entitled “Liberals in Panic Mode.”

Of course I had to read this, and it ended up being all about this particular bill and the government plans to spend in excess of \$1 billion of borrowed money to give it back to ratepayers who are feeling gouged.

I’d just like to read from part of his column, the first couple of paragraphs, and then the last paragraph. He writes, I think quite correctly:

“If skyrocketing hydro bills have had you worrying about the cost of hanging all those Christmas lights this season, relax.

“Help is on the way from your children. Years from now, whether they like it or not, your kids could be paying off \$5.5 billion worth of today’s electric bills that Ontario’s Liberal government has decided to shift onto the provincial debt.

“In the fall fiscal update he delivered this week, Windsor’s own Finance Minister Dwight Duncan told us all to quit worrying about those monster hydro bills because he’s decided to shift \$1.1 billion of those costs annually onto the provincial charge card for the next five years.

“Some of us had assumed that deficit financing had started to fall out of fashion in North America, given what happened to so many big-spending politicians in recent elections.

“Not at Queen’s Park, where our collective debt is now at \$212 billion and still rising fast.

“The bill-shifting scheme, which is cynically being referred to as a ‘relief package’ for consumers, is actually just another disguised generational wealth transfer.

“It’s also an economic time bomb rigged to go off in the faces of the next generation—just like the tens of billions worth of deferred costs from the Liberals’ botched nuclear program in the 1980s, which shows up on your monthly hydro bill today as ‘debt retirement charges.’

“The latest hydro scheme will last past its first year only if the Liberals are re-elected next fall—which they are increasingly worried about, judging by their panicky decision-making recently.”

He closes off the article—because I don’t want to read the whole thing—with the final lines, “You never know: Stunts like this have worked for the Liberals in the past. But if voters decide they don’t like it, the retribution they visit upon the party next fall could be worse than anyone imagines.”

People out there are very unhappy about this bill, they’re very unhappy with this government and they’re very unhappy with hydro and the botched hydro provisions that this government has allowed to happen.

Last Thursday, in my riding of Beaches–East York, we held a hydro meeting. We advertised it widely. There was an article in the local newspaper on the day the meeting was held. People came out in goodly numbers to talk about their hydro bills, this government’s hydro policies and the 10% reduction that they are all hoping to see, or dreading to see, I think was more accurate, next May.

1350

They came up with wonderful ideas. It’s amazing how when you get a group of concerned individuals who are

chosen or who choose themselves at random to show up to a publicly advertised meeting, you're going to get the whole gamut of what the community thinks.

I promised them at the conclusion of that meeting that I would read every single idea that they brought up about how to improve our hydro policy and every single idea that they wanted to convey to this government through me, their elected representative here in the House. I'm just going to list them in the order in which they came out during that night and what people had to say.

People had to say, first, that they thought we weren't exploring all the options for energy clearly enough. They felt that, by relying on nuclear and hydroelectric for the two major sources, we weren't looking at other potential forms of energy.

One they came up with is probably not too popular, although it is being experimented with today in Ottawa. One of the people who were present wanted us to get rid of our trash by turning it into plasma energy, as is now being done in and around the city of Ottawa. That was one idea that was expressed, that if we were looking for alternate forms of energy that weren't going to cost us as much money, the plasma exercise might be a good one because the people who are getting the tip-out fees for the garbage are absorbing the remaining part of the costs and are free to sell their energy on the grid. The person who spoke about this felt that this should have been explored more fully by the Liberal government.

Another person stood up and talked about biomass and how she was a little upset that the whole biomass alternative is not anywhere on the radar, at less than 1%, and that surely when there are waste forest products and waste agricultural products and the government is shutting down the coal-fired generation plants in Lambton, in Mississauga and in Atikokan, we should be looking more to biomass as a way of producing electricity. It was pointed out that biomass is carbon neutral, and that it was a good thing to do—

Mr. Bill Mauro: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'd like to correct the record for the member, that in fact the Atikokan plant isn't being closed, but is in fact being converted to biomass.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That is not a point of order. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Prue: If you had been patient, you would have heard me say that in my explanation. I am not saying what I think; I am saying what the members of my riding came forward to say. I did inform that member, and I'm going to do it now on the record, that the Atikokan plant is indeed changing to biomass, but there were some suggestions that in agricultural areas we could switch to switchgrass and waste agricultural, and that is not being done at the moment.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It is so.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is so? Well, when it's your turn, go ahead.

The next person who stood up was complaining quite bitterly about the loss of industry in Ontario. He felt that the loss of industry was directly related to the cost of

industrial hydro going up and that we were no longer competitive in the province of Ontario with our hydro rates. He pointed out, quite correctly, I think, that both Manitoba and Quebec have lower hydro rates and that their decline in industrial usage is far, far less severe than our own. That person wanted to make sure there was an industrial hydro rate.

The next person who stood up talked about the cost of solar energy and was bemoaning the fact that, in Ontario, we are paying up to 80 cents a kilowatt hour for solar energy. Although I think everyone in the room agreed that it was a clean form of energy, the majority of them wondered how we could continue to afford to pay 80 cents for solar energy when it costs only a very small fraction to produce energy through other, more traditional means.

There were a number of people who were upset about nuclear energy, the cost and the waste. They felt that nuclear energy was not the answer. They pointed out the fiasco of the 1980s, when all of these plants were built, and the fact that today it is the children of those people who are now having to pay for nuclear energy down the road.

They talked about the waste from nuclear energy as well. A number of deputants talked about the waste and how there is no long-term plan in this country, in this province or indeed anywhere in the world on how to deal with nuclear waste. It is again a problem that we are going to create and visit upon our children and our children's children for generations to come so that we can have some form that is perhaps cheaper, but going to leave them with the long-term consequences.

People, to a person, talked about the cost of electricity in Ontario; that they are struggling, they are trying to make ends meet, they are every day wondering whether the hydro bill is going to tip them over the edge where they're going to either lose their accommodation or they're not going to be able to do things that their family relies upon; whether there's going to be enough food, and that the hydro bills are becoming excessive. Person after person talked about that. One woman even suggested that she may move back to Manitoba. She came to Ontario a few years ago, to Toronto particularly and specifically, but she may move back to Manitoba because it was her view that the electricity rates there were affordable and here they are not.

There were people who stood up and talked about solar panels, and people generally thought that solar panels were a good idea but they felt that getting the electricity from those panels into a large grid system was counterproductive in terms of cost. One gentleman in particular felt that solar panels should not be put into the grid system but should be used in the individual house on which they are built as a form of direct electricity so that there is no cost or loss of electricity by sending it over the wires, which one of the panellists who works for the society of electrical engineers said could be as high as 9% or 10%. Although there was support for solar panels, there was only support if it remained localized.

There were many discussions about why we are in such a panic to build additional nuclear facilities or other facilities when the actual demand for electricity in Ontario has declined and continues to decline year after year after year. It is highly unlikely, given until 2015, that we will be using as much electricity as we used in the early years of this millennium. People wondered, given that many appliances and many lights are burning far less electricity, that —

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would you stop for a minute? I would just ask that people, if they want to have conversations—the general level of volume here is getting to the point that it's difficult to hear the member speaking—take them out to the lounges. Thank you.

Member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your intervention there. I was having a hard time hearing myself speak, as well.

They talked about the demand declining and wondered why there was a rush at this particular point, that surely there should be more sane and sensible thought put into an \$85-billion energy plan that is not going to have costs that are going to be borne in decades to come and that people not yet born will have to pay for.

There was quite a discussion around Bruce nuclear. Some people thought the deal that the government had made was a good deal because the refurbishment is not going to cost the taxpayers any money, but they were quickly reminded by other people in the audience that it wasn't so good a deal when the Ontario government is subsidizing the Bruce plant and Bruce nuclear to the tune of some \$60 million a year for not producing electricity at all. When that fact came out on the floor, there was some general gasping.

People talked about other places having better policies in terms of heating. One of the discussions was around Europe and geothermal units and that in Ontario we are lagging far behind other jurisdictions in terms of geothermal heating of homes, offices, schools and institutions.

There was universal panning of the HST. Whenever the topic of the HST came up, people were upset about it. They were upset about the HST in general but particularly as it affected them in their usage of power, whether that power be in their automobile in the form of gasoline or home heating oil or electricity. In fact, one of the sharpest criticisms of the HST of all came in the terms of hydro bills and hydroelectricity itself.

1400

Everyone wondered, and I have wondered, and I have written to ministers and I have asked this question repeatedly, and perhaps someone can inform this House: Why does the government think it is fair to charge HST on the debt retirement? This was an absolutely—one person stood up and asked this question: Why should they pay HST, 13%, on the debt retirement charges that the government has meted out to them? They agree that somebody has to pay the debt, that it was the foolishness of

past governments, particularly the Liberal governments in the 1980s, spending all of that money on nuclear development and racking up huge costs, but where does the government get off charging HST on the debt? One person even wondered whether or not it was legal. I have to agree. I don't know whether you can charge HST on a debt and think that it's legal. Perhaps some government member, in the two-minute comment or later today, can advise where the government thinks that this is a just and perhaps legal thing to do, to put HST on a debt retirement.

People stood up and talked about privatization of hydro and how it has not worked. They blame the past Conservative government for attempting to do this, but they also said that it has, in turn, led to petty corruption within the hydro departments. They talked at some great length about that.

People, as I said, were opposed to the HST. One woman who stood up was quite a conservationist and felt that the government ought not to tinker with the peak periods. We heard the government last week announce that they're taking two hours off the peak period starting this summertime. She felt that that would be allowing people to waste more electricity in times that we could not afford it.

A gentleman stood up and talked about his wife in terms of the concern that he has at the cost of electricity going up and the fact that he cannot shave his electricity at any given time of the day because of the medical needs of his wife. She is on a respirator at home. The electricity constantly has to be on in order to allow her to breathe. He felt that this was an unfair policy. He couldn't simply turn it on and off when the electricity was cheap. It had to be on 24 hours a day or he might find that his wife would die. He didn't know what to do. He absolutely did not know what to do.

At the end of the day, everybody agreed that the energy policy is in a mess. Everybody in the room agreed that the 10% reduction that has been announced by this government is not going to work. Everybody in the room understood that the government, after one year—just as Mr. Vander Doelen has said, if they don't win the next election, this can be easily cancelled.

The consensus was that a couple of things have to happen. The first one was that the HST should be removed from hydro because it will be far more difficult for subsequent governments to reinstate or reinstate that. The second thing was that the government should step back and take a long and far more sober look at wanting to build new nuclear and other facilities to produce electricity. Because the consensus in the room was that we have sufficient electricity now and we are more than likely going to have sufficient electricity for most of the next decade, and that in the interim, there is a possibility, and some thought even a probability, that science would develop new and better ways of producing electricity that would not be so expensive. People talked about liking windmills, although they found the 14 and 19 cents per kilowatt hour a little bit high. They were

confident that over time these costs may come down. They thought that the government ought not to be in a wholesale rush to do that. They also suggested that I bring up the Samsung deal, which most did not think would create any jobs in Ontario.

All in all, it was a very entertaining night for a politician, to go out there and have a town hall meeting and listen to ordinary people who had many wonderful ideas on electricity, on electricity usage, and to bring back to this government the final analysis of the people of Beaches–East York who attended that meeting—and the room was pretty full—that there is no consensus in support of this bill or the government reducing electricity by 10—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Beaches–East York, who has brought forward his comments as being those that are reflective of his constituents, so in some ways, I suppose I'm responding not directly to his comments, but to those of his constituents.

The one I would make a point of spending a little bit of time on is the comment that—I will say not so much this particular member, but other members, especially the member from Kenora–Rainy River in the NDP, often raise the issue of the Quebec–Manitoba industrial hydro rates, or just rates in general relative to those of Ontario. Usually, when they're discussed by the member from Kenora–Rainy River, they are discussed in the context of the forest industry, somehow trying to link the problems with the forest industry to this particular piece. I would say it's a bit of a disingenuous argument to make. It's very much an apples-and-oranges comparison when you compare what goes on in those provinces to Ontario. Yes, Quebec and Manitoba's rates are lower. They always have been. Quebec and Manitoba are very fortunate. The economies are different, they're topographically blessed, where very much if not most of their power is hydraulic and long since paid for.

What I would remind the members' constituents, though, when you link it back to the economy, is that in Ontario, through policies and programs brought in by our government, large industrials now in the province of Ontario find themselves in a very competitive position when it comes to hydro rates. It is not difficult at all for any of us on this side of the House to bring forward testimonials from many large industrials in fact supporting very much the hydro programs that are in place, and there will be many of those stories coming forward.

At some point, I would say to the members' constituents, there comes a time when you have to choose. I think the NDP as a party generally is not supportive of nuclear. Some 50% of our current supply comes from nuclear, and if you're not supportive of that, then I think you're going to have to explain to the people in the province of Ontario how you are going to replace 50% of the energy requirements that you have. If it's the same with wind and solar—which seems to be supported, but people are a

bit reluctant on the costs—biomass costs as well; I think they said they were supportive of biomass but afraid of the costs.

Ultimately, you have to choose. They're not easy choices. We're moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Beaches–East York has offered a thoughtful critique of the government's energy policy and Bill 135 in particular. I think that the government members perhaps need to be reminded that they are, in fact, in government, and the opposition parties have an obligation, a role and a responsibility—in fact, a constitutional responsibility—to point out the flaws and the drawbacks of the government's policy. During the course of the debate, the people of the province and those who are listening have an opportunity to assess the relative merits of the arguments that are being put forward by the government, as well as the opposition parties. I think that has to be pointed out.

Certainly, I'm looking forward to the continuing debate on Bill 135, and I know that our member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is teed up to offer our party's perspective on this. Of course, as our energy critic, he has a lot to say on this, and has in the past. But we know that the hydro issue continues to be a significant one in our communities across the province. Certainly, in my riding, I continue to hear from constituents who are afraid to open their hydro bill. In many cases, they are changing their patterns of consumption because they're fearful of the changes that will be forthcoming. I just received, as a customer of Hydro One, my notice in the mail that time-of-use pricing will affect my neighbours and me starting December 28.

I think the government has a great obligation to continue to try to explain its hydro policies, but the fact is, people are not buying it. I think that in all likelihood, over the next number of months, we're going to see a continued diminishment or drop in the popular support for the government over the hydro issue. I think that their policies are by and large not meeting the needs of the people of Ontario, and the price of hydro for industry in particular has been one of the key reasons why we've lost many hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs over the course of the past couple of years. I think that all of these factors need to be taken into consideration.

Again, I want to thank the member for Beaches–East York for his presentation this afternoon.

1410

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Beaches–East York. I listened carefully, and I appreciated his comments from his constituents. We are the voice of our constituents, and it's important to bring that forward.

He spoke a lot about energy policy, and I did want to bring some other voices forward. In any debate or discussion, it's healthy to hear both sides. That's what we

teach our students in school: to have an open mind and listen to both sides. I thought I would just share a couple of other comments on the McGuinty government and Bill 135 and the long-term energy plan.

The Society of Energy Professionals say, “We’re ecstatic. [Ontario’s long-term energy plan] is going to bring an awful lot of new jobs to the province.”

The chair of the Green Energy Act Alliance says, “I think the plan is fantastic. This government has decided to phase out coal and replace it with renewable energy—and we are a world leader because of that.”

SkyPower Ltd. had this to say: “This is a great day for the people of Ontario on the announcement of the long-term energy plan, a clear and concrete plan that reinforces the McGuinty government’s commitment to clean energy ... Today I am truly proud to be an Ontarian.”

So I think it’s important to look at all sides and also remember that Bill 135 talks a lot about the Ontario clean energy benefit and the Securities Act, which we’re going to hear more about from my colleague from Mississauga South. It goes on to talk about the Teranet agreement. It’s called managing responsibly, and we need to hear more about that too.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters.

I listened to the member for Beaches–East York and his wise counsel to the government. Unfortunately, I really don’t think they have it in mind to listen to him or anyone else on the opposition benches in regard to this matter.

Expert economists have judged Dalton McGuinty to be the worst fiscal manager among all of the other Premiers in this country, and possibly we might even extend that to North America and deal with some of the state governors, because this province has failed so badly over the tenure of this government. We are now, in North America, among states and provinces, about 10th, well below the median GDP of the provinces and states. We are behind such states as Virginia, which traditionally was one of the poorer states in the union. We’re behind Illinois, which we read about daily. Part of the rustbucket area is Michigan, and yet we are well behind Michigan in GDP, as a province.

Unfortunately, we’re on the wrong road, and this bill is just another step to the ruin of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I’d like to thank the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Wellington–Halton Hills, Kitchener–Conestoga and Cambridge for their thoughtful comments.

Just to reply to some of those, I agree with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan that there are difficult choices to be made. The members of my constituency

who came out, packed the little church hall and had their say understood that there are difficult choices, but then they reiterated again and again: They don’t like the HST. They resent paying HST on their hydro. They feel that if we do have to make those difficult choices, we should do it sanely and soberly and take our time; that there is not the rush that appears in this bill or in this government to be making those choices down the road when it is not likely that we are going to find ourselves in a deficit position in terms of hydroelectricity for a number of years. It was pointed out that the number of megawatt hours that are being produced far exceeds the number actually being used at this time.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has reiterated one of the very real concerns, and although Toronto has not been affected in the same ways as other parts of the province, the job loss has been horrendous. People who lose their jobs in smaller town Ontario usually lose them in a place where there are no jobs to replace them.

For the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, my entire speech today was to reflect what my constituents had told me. I agree with some of the points they made and disagree with some others, but that’s my own personal view. I did promise them that their views would get a full airing here today, and I hope to get a copy of the transcript and send it out to each and every member of Beaches–East York who attended, so they know that they are being listened to, at least by this MPP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: It’s a pleasure to rise to debate Bill 135. The bill builds upon our Open Ontario plan to create jobs and foster economic growth. The focus of our Open Ontario plan is about strengthening Ontario’s economy and helping Ontarians make it through tough times. Our plan includes tax reforms to lay the foundation for investment and economic growth, investments to stimulate the economy and create jobs; and it includes plans to develop the North. There’s more training for those who have lost a job. It provides working families with pocket-book relief and help with the household budget. It’s about rebuilding and strengthening our hospitals, schools, universities and colleges; it’s about implementing full-day kindergarten so that all our children get a good foundation early and helping working families with child care costs.

Some people may forget just how far Ontario has come in the last seven years. When we came to government in 2003, we inherited not only a fiscal deficit, but health, education and infrastructure deficits. The Tories waged a long battle against our teachers and our schools at great costs to Ontario families. Our children lost over 26 million learning days to strikes. Only 68% of our high school students were graduating, compared to 79% today. Just over half of our elementary students were meeting provincial standards, compared with almost 70% today.

By 2003, after eight years of cuts, the health system was at a breaking point. The Tories closed 28 hospitals,

cut 7,000 hospital beds and fired over 6,200 nurses. The cost for Ontario families was huge. Patients were waiting for years for certain surgeries, a rapidly increasing population of orphaned patients were unable to find a family doctor, and those that were fragile went to overcrowded emergency rooms that closed their doors to ambulances when volumes spiked. They recklessly cut funding to municipalities and fired meat inspectors and water inspectors.

The impact of these decisions on communities across the province was profound. The Tories fought with workers. Public services got worse. In 2003, new parents waited an average of 20 weeks to get birth certificates for their baby, a process that today takes less than 15 days. Their outdated, broken tax system resulted in unnecessary red tape and duplication for businesses. Contrary to the image they portray, the Tories had among the highest tax rates on new business investment in North America, making it difficult to attract investment and position Ontario's economy competitively to weather the challenges we're facing today, but also to perform well in an increasingly competitive global economy.

In 2003, our government inherited an electricity system that was neglected and mismanaged. This left Ontario vulnerable to brownouts and, eventually, the largest electricity blackout in Ontario's history. They even increased the output from dirty, coal-fired power plants. This meant that more and more children grew up with chronic asthma and health issues.

In the wake of their fighting and their gutting of public services, when they were done, they left Ontarians saddled with a hidden \$5.6-billion deficit.

None of this was our legacy, but these problems became our responsibility, so we spent our first mandate rebuilding public services with landmark investments in schools, universities, hospitals and infrastructure. We're reforming our tax system to create a more competitive economic climate. We're phasing coal out of our energy supply mix and building a long-term, clean, safe and reliable energy supply.

1420

We transformed our welfare programs to help people get back into the workplace. We set targets to reduce child poverty. We made substantial progress on our core public targets in health, in education and in reducing pollution.

Our high school graduations are going up; our hospital wait times are going down. A record number of students are attending college and university, placing our post-secondary education level among the highest in the western world. Our infrastructure and transit investments are the largest in the history of this province.

Now, despite being left with a substantial deficit by the last government, our government did balance the budget in consecutive years. Then we started our second mandate confronting the biggest recession since the Great Depression and, yes, we made a decision to build on our progress. So we've continued to focus on the public services that matter most to Ontarians: our schools and

our hospitals. We're continuing to take steps to position Ontario better to meet our economic challenges and strengthen our economy so we can position ourselves competitively in the 21st century.

This is the context that shapes our economic planning going forward.

Although Ontario's economy is emerging from the global recession, Ontario families are still feeling pinched financially. Many are anxious and uncertain about their ability to make ends meet. While our government's measures have led to improvements in the economy and have helped to secure Ontario's future over the longer term, families and businesses are struggling right now with higher costs. They need some help today. Again, the government is taking action to help Ontario families and businesses who are feeling the pinch, especially with increasing electricity prices.

As members know, Ontario is emerging from the global recession. It's the worst in a generation. It hit Ontario particularly hard because our export economy is dependent upon the US, and the US is suffering a dramatic decline. This is exemplified by the automotive sector. It's a key sector, and most of those car exports are to the United States. It was felt immediately during the downturn. Now, given our initiatives, key indicators have improved from the lows during the recession. But Ontario families and businesses are still feeling its effects.

Seventy-five per cent of jobs lost during the recession have been recovered, compared to 10% in the US. Since May 2009, the Ontario economy has created 186,100 net new jobs. Creating jobs is a key priority of our Open Ontario plan. Independent reports estimate that Ontario's bold economic reforms will create nearly 600,000 new jobs within 10 years. We're also reducing the deficit and the debt. We have a \$2-billion decline in Ontario's total funding requirement for 2010-11. This is due to a \$1-billion decline in the projected deficit and a \$1-billion payment to the province from the proposed Teranet agreement. The projected deficit for 2010-11 is now \$18.7 billion, 25% lower than the deficit projected just a year ago.

Nevertheless, members of the opposition would have you believe that Ontario's economy is not growing or creating jobs. As I've mentioned, this is not the case. We've invested \$28 billion in short-term infrastructure stimulus. Our support for the auto sector, directly and indirectly, supported about 400,000 jobs across the province and helped save Ontario's auto industry. We also enacted the Green Energy and Green Economy Act in 2009, which will help to create 50,000 jobs.

The key economic indicators have indeed improved since the recession. We take our responsibility to manage the province's finances seriously. For example, compensation restraint in the Ontario public service and broader public sector would help redirect about \$2 billion towards sustaining public services over two years. And remember, we have reduced the price of most generic drugs listed under the Ontario public drug program by 50%. Conservatives did not support it. Instead, they

chose to side with Big Pharma against taxpayers and patients. The ongoing comprehensive review announced in the 2010 budget has so far identified over \$260 million in potential savings.

And so it is that our government eliminated the \$5.5-billion deficit inherited from the Tories ahead of schedule and posted three consecutive balanced budgets. By continuing our prudent approach to fiscal management, we are on track for a deficit of \$18.7 billion in 2010-11, which is almost 25% lower, as I mentioned, than the projected \$24.7 billion. We're also borrowing \$2 billion less than forecast in the 2010 budget and we're reducing those borrowing needs, which will lower interest costs and which creates even more fiscal flexibility. And we have reduced government administrative costs from 15% to 12% of overall spending. That's the second-best efficiency rate in Canada.

Since 2007, we have achieved more than \$800 million in savings per year through streamlined processes, through lowering of administrative costs, through better use of technology and other cost-avoidance and cost-reduction measures.

We're on track to reduce the size of the Ontario public service by 5%, including savings of \$440 million over the next five years by harmonizing the collection of sales tax and corporate tax with the federal government. The measures we've introduced to restrain compensation in the OPS and the broader public sector would help redirect the \$2 billion toward sustaining public services over two years.

Our record of sound fiscal management stands in stark contrast to that of the previous government. They added billions of dollars to Ontario's debt, they hid the deficit from Ontarians in the 2003 budget, and under the PCs Ontario had the highest-ever accumulated-deficit-to-GDP ratio. They followed and still continue to promote a slash-and-burn approach to Ontario schools and hospitals. Let's recall that the Tories spent \$662 million on consultants in their last full year of office.

We, on the other hand, have a realistic and responsible plan to cut the deficit in half within five years of its highest peak and eliminate it in eight years. A comprehensive review of all our government programs and services has identified, so far, more than \$260 million in potential savings and reduced consulting expenditures by over 50% since 2003.

Let's address Teranet. Our government is committed to maximizing the value of government-owned assets while protecting consumers. Our proposed agreement with Teranet Inc. would retain provincial oversight of the electronic land registration system, including its fees. Under the agreement, Borealis would provide the province with an upfront payment of \$1 billion, which would be used to reduce the provincial debt. This helps reduce borrowing needs, again lowers interest costs and helps create more fiscal room. Beginning in 2017, the province would also receive an annual royalty payment from Teranet, which is expected to be approximately \$50 million in 2017-18 and to grow further in future years.

Unlike the Tories' Highway 407 sale, our proposed agreement with Teranet contains significant consumer protection, including provincial control over any increases to the fees charged by Teranet for statutory services. It also would ensure the province has ongoing participation in Teranet through, as I just mentioned, royalties and the potential to share in any extraordinary profits realized by Teranet through a sale or in the pickup of its performance. All in all, the province will continue its oversight of the electronic land registration system.

The proposed agreement negotiated by our government freezes fees for five years, and that's good news for Ontario consumers. This highlights a difference between how we in the government manage public assets and how the Conservatives did when they were in power. The PC government's fire sale of Highway 407 left the province with no approval rights with respect to fee increases. Ontario receives no ongoing revenues from Highway 407. The PC government failed to negotiate any participation rights in this agreement. This again follows their slash-and-burn approach. In contrast to their hollow talk and rhetoric, they offer no plan.

We're also taking leadership when it comes to securities regulation. Our government is proposing amendments to the Ontario Securities Act that would allow the Ontario Securities Commission to develop and implement a robust regulatory framework for the over-the-counter derivatives. These amendments would allow for new rules specifically designed for OTC derivatives. The OSC will undertake significant consultations in developing the proposed new OTC derivatives rules.

1430

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

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

While I've spoken a lot about the opposition's record and lack of ideas, I'm equally concerned about the third party's approach. I know my colleagues in the NDP are suspicious of our financial system. They never miss an opportunity to besmirch the financial sector and the people it employs. I would remind them that our financial sector employs over 200,000 people and is the second-highest contributor to Ontario's GDP.

Toronto is an important global financial centre, and yet there are members there who accuse them of being loan sharks. Even worse, they attack the financial sector's workers simply for having those jobs and providing for their families. I wonder how many of their constituents actually work in the sector, how many of their constituents work day in and day out helping seniors to plan for retirement or workers to manage their pensions. Those workers and seniors depend on our financial system and, as such, also depend on our government to regulate it appropriately and effectively. I hope we can count on the support of the NDP as we move forward on these reforms.

We all know that many Ontarians are still struggling as we emerge from this recession, and the price of energy is a top concern; it's at the forefront. That's why I'm proud that our government continues to take steps to help Ontarians manage their energy bills. The government has a responsibility to make sure that electricity is there when we need it. We need a stable grid so that when we flick on the switch, the lights come on. Stable grids don't happen on their own; they require planning and investment. For decades, government after government in this province ignored this responsibility. No new generation was added, transmission infrastructure was left to crumble, and the use of dirty coal increased.

That's why we are investing in Ontario's electricity system now. We're eliminating dirty coal—that's like taking seven million cars off the road—we're upgrading 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines, and we've brought 8,000 megawatts of new energy supply online. We're moving to time-of-use pricing that more accurately reflects the real costs of energy.

It's true that these initiatives, while creating an estimated 50,000 new jobs, have a cost. As such, the government has also taken steps to help Ontarians, especially seniors, to manage those costs. We've cut income taxes on the lowest income tax bracket; we doubled the seniors' home property tax credit; we've expanded the Ontario energy and property tax credit for seniors; and we introduced a new sales tax credit.

Now, through this bill, we've also proposed the Ontario clean energy benefit, which, if passed, will cut hydro bills by 10%. The estimated full-year cost of the proposed OCEB is \$1.1 billion next year, and it's made possible by our fiscal management, which, as you will recall, has meant that our deficit is a billion dollars lower than was initially predicted.

We have to invest in our electricity system. It's been put off too long and it can't wait. We will continue to take this responsibility seriously, while also providing for support to Ontario families and seniors.

Members opposite repeatedly rise in their place to comment on our energy plan. They want us to stop investing in green energy, which supports green jobs, supports small business, supports municipalities and supports Ontario farmers. They want us to freeze rates, which under previous governments led to a massive unfunded debt that Ontario ratepayers are still paying for,

and this with artificial pricing. And they want us to stop investing in modern infrastructure.

This is after the previous government's neglect of our energy grid. It led to blackouts, brownouts, increased reliance on coal and made Ontario a net importer of energy dependent on our neighbours. All the while, they have no plan of their own to offer Ontarians. Their poor record and their lack of plan speak for themselves. We will continue to make Ontario's electricity system green, modern and self-reliant while taking steps to protect consumers.

Our government is committed to creating jobs, boosting long-term economic growth and protecting the progress Ontarians have made in their schools and hospitals. We have a prudent and responsible plan to reduce borrowing, cut spending and eliminate the deficit that is caused by the global recession. This bill is about creating jobs, supporting those in need, protecting our environment and stimulating economic growth. It's about making responsible decisions for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Just before questions and comments, I want to acknowledge that we have Larry O'Connor, who is the mayor of the township of Brock and former MPP for the riding of Durham–York, here. Welcome.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened intently to the member from Mississauga South. I like the member for Mississauga South. He's a gentleman, for sure. Unfortunately, I have a great fear that he has been subject to the Liberal caucus brainwashing program that has been in effect ever since 2003. He would have only been subject to the treatments since 2007. Boy, it's really rich; when he talks about hollow talk of others, my goodness, the hollow talk and rhetoric that was in that speech and that we're getting from this Liberal government all the time. Who else but a Liberal would be standing up and rejoicing that the deficit is \$18.7 billion? That's the new projected deficit, and they're taking all kinds of credit that the number is lower than originally estimated.

The change in the deficit—almost all of it—is due to the fact that General Motors was able to repay their debts to the government. It has nothing to do with good management. These guys talk about good management. They talk about reducing an \$18.7-billion deficit and they're talking about the work they've done to reduce costs and cut costs in the operation of government. The cost of government has gone up so dramatically. We're looking at \$126 billion in expenditures in this government. When they came to office, it was \$68 billion. In seven short years, this is where they've taken us. You know, when money was coming in it was okay, when the economy was in good shape it was okay, but when recessions start to hit, governments have to understand they're not doing the job—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I really feel sorry for the member from Mississauga when he has to stand up in the House

and be charged with the indefensible Liberal platform, because I don't really think that in his heart he believes what he's saying. If he wanted to do something—they stand up here day after day and say, “Well, what's your platform? What did you want to do?”

I'd like to remind the government of some of the things that the NDP wanted to do in the last three years which they shot down. How about the 10% manufacturing tax credit to attract business to Ontario? Shot down. How about the 50% Canadian content in all manufacturing to create jobs and security? Shot down. How about the Buy Ontario bill? Shot down. After promising no tax increases—Mr. McGuinty himself stood in this House and said “no tax increases”—we got a nice big health tax increase; we got an eco tax which they screwed up and had to withdraw; we got the HST. It goes on and on and on.

One particular bill that really interests me—they tout how they care about the people who don't have anything to eat. I think it was the official opposition that brought a bill forward that said something about “We'll give the farmers a tax credit for any excess produce or material that they could donate to the food banks.” Whoops, shot down by the Liberals. My goodness, you really care about the poor.

1440

I'm telling you, I sit in here day after day and listen to this scrambling, trying to save their hides, because an election is coming.

The 10% on that hydro bill: People aren't falling for that one, because you're going to raise it 46% in the next five years; so, gee, they're only down another 36%. That's a good incentive.

I'm telling you, it gets worse and worse, and I don't believe the people of Ontario are going to buy it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Mississauga South is a highly respected and regarded person and perhaps would have been best to stick with banking. Our member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke politely reprimanded him for reading the trashy Liberal notes that he was supplied—and I mean that quite respectfully. I thought most of the stuff he said was inaccurate, and he should probably withdraw it all. I mean that.

Really, if you look at what they've done in the last seven years, a good predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. The past behaviour is that they promised not to increase taxes. They promised to close the coal plants. They promised to improve all these things. Let's look at the results, and that's all you have to do. First of all, they have not closed one coal plant. They promised it three times. They still haven't closed one, and they're still not going to close them all. The next thing is, they actually promised not to raise taxes. They raised them twice, the largest tax increases in the history of Ontario: the health tax and the HST. Let's look at the finances. Right now, we're in an economic collapse by any measure.

In fact, I just finished a meeting today—from a group that they assembled, a group of experts, a task force on

competitiveness, productivity and economic progress. It places Ontario dead last. This isn't our leader, Tim Hudak, saying it; these are the experts. I've got the report. By any measure, they have failed.

Not to blame the member from Mississauga South—and he can talk about hospitals closed and all the various things, but they haven't really told the complete story. Many of those hospitals were re-amalgamated.

What's the biggest issue in Ontario today? Health care is in the hole; long-term care is in the hole.

This government has failed on every single measure, and I ask—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in this debate and to comment on the eloquent comments made by my colleague from Mississauga South. I thought that he covered a lot of material in the time that he spoke. It's certainly worth complimenting him on some of the highlights of the more important things he said that I think really are worth reiterating.

Interjections.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Clearly, the member from the Progressive Conservative Party doesn't want to hear it, but I am more than happy to reiterate some of the great comments made by the member from Mississauga South.

Bill 135 is called the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. There's so much stuff in this act that I highly encourage the members to go through it if they haven't already.

One of the highlights that we heard from the member from Mississauga South was the Ontario clean energy benefit. Just to reiterate, we're talking about \$150 a year per household, about \$1,700 per year for businesses, and up to \$2,000 a year for farmers. These are significant savings for the people of Ontario.

We heard about the Securities Act and the Ontario Securities Commission. We're looking at a regulatory framework and oversight of credit rating agencies—again, more oversight, more accountability and, as the act says, managing responsibly.

We heard the member talk about a projected deficit in 2010 that has been cut by almost 25%. These are significant numbers and comments that he has made. He talked about reducing the borrowing needs. He gave us a beautiful, eloquent overview of Teranet and retaining provincial oversight of this electronic land registration, and the accountability that we haven't seen in previous governments.

It's time for this act and this government, as we take responsibility.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Mississauga South has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member for Durham and the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

To the members' points: Decorum in this House and healthy debate are important. I respect all members' views regardless of political stripe. Never I do believe any of us mean any ill intent or insult. It's important that we have this healthy debate, but it's also important for them to respect my point of view. At times, we in this House believe that some tough decisions, especially in these tough economic times, have to be made now.

I remind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that the deficit that he spoke of occurred during the best times of growth in our province. It was in good times that they did what they did. We're making those tough decisions in rough, recessionary times. It is now that we need leadership and transparency in ensuring that Ontarians are protected going forward.

The member from Durham rightly puts it: Measure the government based on their past behaviour. It's an indication of their future behaviour. That was the purpose of my preface: recognizing and remembering how it was before we got ourselves into trouble and the leadership we've taken in this government to ensure that we're protected going forward.

So I say to all members here to continue with the debate and support this bill.

To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: We look to you to support us yet again. We don't want to support a tax-and-spend policy, nor do we want a slash-and-burn. We need to take a balanced approach and we look forward to your support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 135 today. I heard the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. It is rich in itself that the Liberal government is calling this bill the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, that's right. That is funny, isn't it?

On the bill it says, "An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters," but the Liberals have dubbed it the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. It is just a manifestation of where this government has gotten. It's all about messaging and spin, and when the messaging and the spin aren't working, they change to other messaging and other spin, but it is still the mantra of this government; everything is about the message and the spin.

It is never about what Ontario families need. It is never about the facts. It is never about the real situation and the real trials and tribulations of real Ontario families. It is about message and spin. And this new act is just another example of exactly that. It is a response to the fact that they have messed up the Ontario electricity system so badly. But the act itself—and this is the challenge that members in the opposition have sometimes.

The fall economic statement was laughable in itself. Minister Duncan rose in this House and the key point, the cornerstone of the fall economic statement, of which I

have a copy of here—unfortunately in French, which is not going to do me a whole lot of good as far as reading anything from it. But you know what, it wouldn't matter—my interpreter here, Monsieur Bisson from Timmins–James Bay—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Need help?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I'm okay. It doesn't matter, Gilles. I appreciate the offer of help, but it wouldn't matter. Whether it was English or French or written in one of probably about 200 or more languages that are used in this world, fiction is fiction, baloney is baloney, no matter how you slice it. You can slice it, dice it, throw it in the clothes dryer, it's still going to come out baloney, and that's what we've got there.

The cornerstone piece of legislation or the message coming out of the fall economic statement was this idea that they were going to give Ontario consumers a 10% rebate, starting January 1 next year, on their hydro bills.

This coming from a government that, when Dwight Duncan was the energy minister, said, "It is absolutely wrong to subsidize the cost of electricity. Consumers must pay the real and actual cost of electricity. There can never be a situation where you take the cost of electricity away from the ratepayer and put it on the back of the taxpayer. You can't do that." That was his position, that was the government's position, when they brought out Bill 100 and created the OPA. Do you remember that virtual agency that was going to be just a teeny-weeny little thing? Well, now it's bigger than the Taj Mahal.

1450

Anyway, that was Dwight Duncan then, and Dwight Duncan now as the finance minister is going to give you back 10% on your hydro. People aren't fooled by that, and they're not buying it, because he didn't give you 10% on your hydro last year. He's giving you 10% on your hydro now because—oh, oh, it's not possible that he's doing that because there's an election next year.

Interjections: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. Even this government—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm concerned my good friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is becoming cynical.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): You know that's not a point of order.

Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I apologize. If it looks like I'm becoming cynical, please forgive me, because each and every day—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Fight against it, John. Fight against it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am. As much as I am a habitual optimist, who always wants to think the best and expect the best, and certainly think the very best of my political opponents, it's becoming increasingly difficult, because everything that they seem to do is motivated by a political end.

Every time any member, any minister, in that House speaks now, every time they get up to introduce a bill,

every time they go to a press conference, every time they put out a press release, there is just this—you might as well have this little circle, this cloud, just hovering over them with the date October 6, 2011: “Make sure that everything you say and everything you do is designed to fool, confuse and cajole the public into supporting us”—“us” meaning the Liberals—“in the next election.”

This little attempt to send another cheque—interestingly enough, those rebates are going to be coming on their hydro bills starting in May of next year. It’s going to take a little while to filter through, getting very close to the election, coupled with another HST payment cheque. Some people call them something—and I’m lost for a moment about what the word is, when you kind of give somebody something, hoping to get something back, and maybe it really is not the best thing to do.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a quid pro quo.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah. There’s a word, and I’m missing it.

So at about the same time that that little cheque is coming—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It’s called a transitional rebate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, a transitional rebate—you’re going to be getting another little something on your hydro bill.

But the fact remains that this 10% that they’re getting on the hydro bill doesn’t even make up for the fact that their hydro bills have gone up about 30% just in the last year, and 75% since this government took office.

When you put that all together, it’s like—do you know what it’s like? It’s like the mugger gets you on the corner of the street and he takes your wallet. After going through it and taking all the money, he goes back, gives you a \$5 bill and expects that you’re going to thank him, and he wonders why you’re not so grateful. Well, the people in the province of Ontario are not going to be grateful when you’ve literally emptied their pockets to the point that there’s nothing left but lint, and now you’re going to give them a little wee bit back, just a little bit of a crumb to ho—hopefully satisfy them for the time being.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Ho ho hopefully? Is that your Santa alliteration?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Ho ho hopefully?

That’s only part of the problem with this bill. Do you know that they wanted to just shove this bill through here with no debate? Can you imagine that? They wanted to introduce it one day and have it in front of the House the next. It amends 21 acts. It amends 21 acts, and we get six and a half hours to debate it. How much do you think—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do you think there’s anybody on the other side of the House who wants to bet with me—can we bet in the House? I guess not, eh? Probably not, eh?

Interjection: Sure you can.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, just even a loonie; bet with me a loonie that they’ll be time-allocating this bill very soon, time-allocating it to end the debate.

Let’s talk about the energy policy of this government. They’re out doing their little message tract now.

It’s interesting, last Thursday morning, Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, had a press conference. He was going to be the spokesperson on the new long-term energy plan that just two days before the Minister of Energy had introduced over at the Macdonald Block, but now the Minister of Finance was going to be the salesperson on it. Of course, he implies that we’re having this discussion and different ministers are going to different places. I happened to be over at Global studios on Wednesday night taping Focus Ontario, and the Minister of Energy didn’t even know that the Minister of Finance had booked the media studio and was doing a press conference the next morning.

Talk about the Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy syndrome that’s going on over on the other side of the House. We never know if it is Brad Duguid’s voice or Dwight Duncan’s, or maybe Dwight Duncan is just a very good ventriloquist.

Anyway, let’s talk about—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Let’s talk about this great \$87-billion bit of fiction that they’re talking about in their long-term energy plans. They’re introducing this with the goal of—remember what I said—October 11, 2011. This is not a long-term energy plan. This is something they want to take to the people now, hoping that they are going to believe this bit of fiction versus the last bit of fiction.

Do you remember George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy? He said the Green Energy Act—do you remember that, to the member for Ottawa West–Nepean and the Minister of Infrastructure? Do you remember George Smitherman telling people that the Green Energy Act—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I remember Ernie Eves.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order, government side.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —cost on the hydro bills 1%—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I would ask that the members give the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke a chance to finish his comments before making theirs. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the minister, I’d be glad to have a debate after my time is up. We can have it in the lobby, if he’d like. But right now it is my time.

So Minister Smitherman, at the time, said 1% per year. What has happened to hydro bills since the passing of the Green Energy Act? They have exploded. Why? Well, let’s just look at some of these—and the Premier is bragging about signing 16,000 contracts under this bill. Why have they signed so many contracts? Well, you’d have to be a fool not to be wanting to get in on it. It’s a bonanza. If somebody is willing to pay you an exorbitant rate for something that costs one tenth of the price they’re willing to pay for it—are you well? Of course

you're going to be looking to sign a contract, and that's what is happening under their so-called Green Energy Act.

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What it really is is a social plan. It's a wealth redistribution program. You're putting the cost—for every contract that one person, one group or one gigantic multinational corporation like Samsung or IKEA is going to benefit massively financially from, everybody else out there, all those seniors on fixed incomes, all of those families who are struggling to raise the children or maybe plan to help them with a university education some day—all of those people are being skewered by the Dalton McGuinty wealth redistribution program. For every one of those people who are profiting massively, you are getting the bill.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's no other way for it to happen, I say to the member from Peterborough, who says, "That's not true." Only one group can get the bill, and that's the energy ratepayer, except in the case of the rebate, where they're sliding a little bit over to the general taxpayer as well.

Listen, they will slide and hide and do whatever they can to—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Keep in mind October 6, 2011.

This plan that is paying all of these massive subsidies—and then they're talking about the jobs that are going to be created. The jobs that are being created: Why wouldn't those people—you see, they've left Spain because the industry has collapsed over there, and they're saying, "Okay, where is the next mark? Where is the next government that is willing to pay us way beyond what the cost of our service is? Oh, Ontario. Dalton McGuinty and George Smitherman are just holding out their hands, saying, 'Come on over, folks. We'll subsidize you to whatever degree you want.'"

How do you ever drive down the costs of the production, for example, if we're paying up to 80.2 cents for solar? There's no incentive for those people who manufacture solar components to lower their price when they know that the people they're selling them to who are going to generate the power are getting paid a massive subsidy. It's simple economics. If you want to drive down the price, there has to be some pressure from the other side. Somebody is getting 80.2 cents. They're not going to pressure the guys supplying the components, because at 80.2, there's lots of it for all of us—no shortage of it. But who's it coming from? It's coming from that struggling family, that struggling senior who is wondering if they're going to be able to have enough money to have a life of dignity down the road. They never budgeted for hydro bills—what's happening under this government and under this Premier.

It's word games. The Minister of Energy says, "We did a survey. We had consultations with people across Ontario, and they told us, 'We want clean energy.'" I know you can't use the word "asinine," so I won't, but—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I caution the member.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I heard that once before, that you can't.

Do you really expect—you get somebody on the phone and say, "Would you like clean energy?" What would be the chance that someone would say "No, I'd like dirty energy"? It's so preposterous that it's laughable. They use this as some kind of a justification for an expensive energy experiment. Of course everybody in this province, given the choice, would want clean energy versus energy that is dirty or even unclear. It's not complicated. But what else every one of those people would tell this government, if the government was interested in listening—and I know that the member for Kitchener–Conestoga says it's important that we get opinions from all sides, but if they would be interested in listening to the people of Ontario, they would hear that they cannot afford on their paycheque to pay somebody like IKEA. Just think about it.

There's no logical way that you can ever square that. You can't. You're all familiar with IKEA. The irony of it is that IKEA is viewed as a furniture retailer that is kind of in a market that would be of use and assistance to lower-income people, because their products are supposed to be a little more economically priced than they might be at—I'm trying to think of some expensive furniture store, but I don't go into them so I can't think of them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Harry Rosen.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, no, I don't think—

Interjections.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ridpath's.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Ridpath's. I walk by it every day. Yeah, Ridpath's. I didn't know how expensive they were; I've never been in it. Nothing against Ridpath's. If somebody can afford them—some people can.

But here it is, IKEA, \$2.5 billion. You know how Carl Sagan used to say, "Billions and billions of stars"? Well, they make billions and billions of dollars' profit. So what does this government do? "We're going to give you a little bit more. You've put these solar panels up on your roof on your warehouse, and we're going to pay you 71.6 cents for every kilowatt hour that you produce"—71.6 cents. And you see, the little guy, the poor company, probably can't afford the capital outlay, but IKEA can, because they made 2.5 billion euros—not dollars; euros—last year. It's a poster boy for everything that is wrong with this government's energy policy. It's only the start. If I had more time, I'd get into it a little more. If they want to give me more time, Madam Speaker, I'll take it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Just before we go to questions and comments, I wanted to let the House know that we have representatives from the Black Creek Community Health Centre here: Cheryl Prescod, Joesi-Ann Nelson and Sabrina Gopaul.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his insight.

I would like to talk about Hamilton. The government has started up in the last few days and bragged about all the jobs they've created in Hamilton. In Hamilton, we've lost 20,000 jobs in manufacturing since 2004 under this government's watch.

They just announced 300 jobs at JNE in Hamilton. Well, JNE won't be on line for two years. They didn't talk about the hourly wages that the people will get. They didn't talk about the location or where the plant would be. They didn't talk about whether the company would be managed by the Chinese or managed by Ontario people. So there are a lot of grey areas in those 300 jobs.

Then they talked about Max Aicher, who now is going to create 300 jobs at the former Stelco. But that deal was cut three years ago, through Stelco of the time, and they had already arranged for the number one bloom mill and the bar mill to be sold to this company. The only reason it didn't get on line three years ago is because of some lack of funding organization by the company in Germany, but now they've got on line, and I don't think the money the government gave them is going to increase the number of jobs they are going to create in Hamilton. That's an old deal.

So everything they've been bragging about for the last two weeks is stuff that was already in place. They didn't create it; they didn't bring it to Canada. It was already done by other groups, other facilities that had been involved with them. So they're once again jumping on the bandwagon when they didn't do it. I hear a lot of that around here, where they take credit for things they don't do, and that's another example, right in my own area, my own riding, when I know that factually it's incorrect what they've been touting. They were in there to make a big announcement. In fact, the Premier snuck in the back door and left by the back door and wouldn't even talk to my steelworker brothers and sisters who were standing out there and wanted to talk to him.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to enter the debate today in support of Bill 135. This bill reflects our government's commitment to helping Ontario families and businesses through fiscally responsible management.

Thanks to our government's prudent approach, Ontario's economy is emerging from the global recession.

Our government is responding responsibly with our Open Ontario plan. With the changes we have made, nine out of 10 taxpayers are paying less income tax than they did a year ago.

With the changes we have made, over 180,000 jobs have been created since the end of this recession. Our real GDP has increased for four quarters. This means our economy is growing, and it's really good news. Ontario has recovered 70% of the jobs lost in the economic downturn, whereas the US has recovered only 10% of the jobs lost.

1510

This bill is all about helping Ontario families with their jobs and their pocketbooks and helping them to

protect their schools, to protect their health care and to breathe clean air. Ontarians deserve nothing less than that. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I think my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke put it well when he said that as a result of Bill 135, the energy ratepayers of Ontario are going to pay and pay and pay with respect to the situations that have been created by this bill. When we look back and wonder why Ontarians are going to be facing enormous increases in their energy bills in the next five years, I think it goes back to the fact that this government, notwithstanding their announcement last week, has no plan for energy for Ontario for the foreseeable future. What we have are a series of announcements, a series of feel-good, green announcements that have nothing to do with sound public policy but have everything to do with optics, with political posturing, with the fact that October 6, 2011, is on the horizon and they're going to say everything they have to say to push the right buttons and get the people of Ontario to vote for them.

When you look at what we've actually seen, what the announcements here have been—and we tried to discuss it during the discussion on the Green Energy Act, with respect to the fact we are spending \$7 billion on solar and wind power. Sure, we should be investing some money in renewable energy, but the fact of the matter is that is not going to be enough to manage the needs of Ontarians either in terms of residential needs or industrial needs in the next 10 to 15 years. Now what we've got is a realization that maybe we aren't going to be able to power General Motors on solar power; maybe we need something else. Now, all of a sudden, they're devotees of nuclear power; all of a sudden, out of the blue, gee, the light has gone on that we need to be investing in this. The problem is that we've put all our money in renewable energy. So they can make announcements till the cows come home, but the fact of the matter is, we don't have any money for that. Where they think it's going to come from, I have no idea.

As for the plan that we're going to close those coal-fired plants by 2014, don't hold your breath. It's not going to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he speaks a lot of home truths. He started off his speech talking about the \$1.1-billion contribution per year that this government is going to make on the backs of future taxpayers—\$1.1 billion per year over a period of some five years. He talked about how that is going to add to the debt load that Ontarians are facing, particularly the debt load that people, some of whom aren't even born yet, are going to have to pick up in subsequent years because of this government's actions. I think he was absolutely right.

He talked about the costs of electricity having gone up 75% over the last number of years, and I don't think anyone can deny that that is true. Certainly people from my riding contact me talk about the enormous costs, and they show year after year how those costs go up. Even the member from Peterborough showed and admitted that his costs since last year—he said they only went up \$8, but they still went up. If he can notice an \$8 increase, I'm sure that people on more fixed incomes would feel that much more.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked about the increase of 46% that is budgeted over the next five years and how that is going to cost consumers. He also talked about what is going to happen after those five years. If you're no longer getting the 10% reduction five years from now, and if this government, by some miracle, were re-elected, they would have to be borne then, and the cost would jump enormously. Or the more likely thing is, it will be cancelled after one year and people will be left to fend for themselves.

I congratulate the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for bringing these facts to light.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Mississauga–Brampton South, Whitby–Oshawa and Beaches–East York for their contribution and comments.

The sad reality—and I only have two minutes left—is that this government is doing everything it can to confuse and obfuscate the issue here. They want everybody to believe that somehow we are going to be the world leader in clean energy, we're going to be the world leader in manufacturing clean energy components. Everybody wants to believe that they can be the world leader and everybody wants to believe that somehow that goal is achievable at little cost. But what they have not been straight about from day one is that you can't do those things. They want to mask it and talk about all of the other problems that they have in the system and everything. The reality is that they have bitten off way more than the Ontario family, Ontario business and Ontario senior can digest.

This government and their policies and their long-term commitments to massively subsidizing the production of power in this province—who wouldn't want the cleanliness of renewables versus some other choices? Who wouldn't want them? But this province and this government always talk about its international relationships.

You're right. We are not an island unto ourselves. We do have to compete in the big, wide world, and if you don't have an electricity policy that makes you competitive, we will struggle and everybody in this province will suffer as a result, and the blame will be at the feet of Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My, my, what an election will do to political parties, especially when they're in govern-

ment. I have been in this place for some 20 years and I'm just amazed every time we come to about E minus 360—in plain talk, that is about a year before an election—and we see governments all of a sudden just start to react to what they think are going to be the issues in the next election.

I give this government full credit. You know what? They woke up. All of a sudden they woke up one morning and said, "My God, Dalton, we've got a problem, and it's electricity bills." They said, "We need to do something because people across this province are mad. It doesn't matter if they live in southern Ontario or northern Ontario, they're mad every time they open that electricity bill."

I look at my good friend Mr. Bailey; Sarnia–Lambton is his riding. People in his riding—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What is it?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I got it right for a change. Not bad, eh? Maybe one day I can sit in that chair, Speaker, because I remembered a riding other than my own.

I listen to my friend from Sarnia–Lambton, who gets the same experience with his constituents that I do. They open their bill every month. They work hard. They pick up their bill at the mail. They open it up and find out their electricity bills are going up to the point that they can't afford to pay.

We have stories in our constituency offices—and the government members have the same—where people are saying, "Can I afford to pay my hydro bill or do I not pay my rent? Can I afford to pay my hydro bill or do I buy groceries for my family? Do I pay my hydro bill or do I make the payment on my car?" Those are the kinds of decisions people are having to make.

I'm not complaining. I make a good buck, so I'm not going to start complaining that I don't have enough money. I make \$130,000 a year, so if I can't pay my hydro bill, there's something wrong with my personal finances. But I have to tell you that when I look at the hydro bill that I get at both my house and my cottage, I'm just floored.

I've got a property out at Kamiskotia Lake and I heat that place 12 months a year. When I'm not there, I turn the thermostat way down. I didn't need a smart meter to tell me that. I didn't need Dalton McGuinty to tell me that. When I'm not there, I've got this thing set up on an electronic control panel that basically says, "When you're not there, you don't detect motion inside the building, turn the heat down," and I just keep it warm enough to not freeze the pipes. But when I go back there, the electric heat comes up. I put the wood in the wood stove and I get the heat back up again. Do you know how much I used to pay about four or five years ago with a 22,000-kilowatt heater back then, versus now that I've got a 12,000-kilowatt heater? My hydro bill has tripled. I've gone from \$175 a month to—last year, I was paying over \$600 a month. And I say, I can afford it. I've got a good wage; I can pay that \$600. Am I happy about it?

Absolutely not. But I'll tell you, in our constituencies, how many people make \$130,000 a month?

1520

Mr. Michael Prue: A year.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A year, excuse me. I wish I made \$130,000 a month. Oh, Lord Almighty, that would be great. I think I got all the members excited there all of a sudden. Whoa. What a cha-ching that was. They were listening. I had their attention, that's for sure.

But the point is, how many people in our constituencies make the kind of money that we do and are able to pay those kinds of hydro bills? I think most of them can't.

This government all of a sudden woke up and said, "We've got a problem." Andrea Horwath and the rest of the NDP caucus were coming into this place day after day after day last spring and this fall, saying, "You've got to take the HST off the hydro bill. Not only is hydro going up to a point that people can't afford to pay, but you've given them a double whammy by taking the HST and applying it on the hydro bill, where it wasn't applied before. So people are having to pay the provincial sales tax on a hydro bill that they never had to pay before." Day after day, Andrea Horwath would come into the House and say, "Take off the HST. Take off the HST." Then, the Liberals did what the Liberal policy is. First of all, they denied there was a problem: "No, no. Andrea Horwath doesn't know what she's talking about. Hydro bills aren't too high in this province."

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, there they go again. Some of them are a little bit later than their Premier. They basically said no—deny, deny and deny. "There's nothing going on." And when denying didn't work, they said, "Oh, well, then she's wrong. She doesn't know what she's talking about." So they'd return to the House day after day and they'd say, "Well, you know, Madam Horwath, you don't know what you're talking about. People in Ontario feel happy about their hydro bills." Then they did the third part of policy development in the Liberal caucus and they adopted what the NDP wanted in the first place.

That's typically the way it works around here. We're glad to give you a suggestion that finally the government has listened to. For that, we're probably going to have to vote for this bill, Paul. I know my friend from Hamilton—Centre?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton East.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hamilton East—Stoney Creek? My friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek I know is going to have a hard time coming and voting on this, but you know, my good friend, we've worked hard to give people a cut on their hydro bills. We came into this House, we had the petition campaigns, you travelled around the province, along with our leader and others, and we managed to get this government to finally recognize that they've got to do something.

So they're going to take—I know; I understand the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is going to

correct me in a minute, and I do know that this is a temporary measure. But 10% off the hydro bill now—man, I don't care if it's temporary or not, if I live in Hamilton East—Stoney Creek or I live in Timmins. "Give it to me now," is what I've got to say.

We're going to probably have to vote for this, because it is a step in the direction that we wanted to take you. We think you should take off the HST. That would make it permanent. That's the first step. I'll talk about the hydro policy part after, but at least the 10% is a help.

I've got to say, reluctantly, the government has come and all of a sudden woken up to the light and said, "God Almighty, we've got to do something." So they've offered a 10% reduction, retroactive, January 1.

Now here's the problem. I know my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek would get up and would make sure that I make this point clear: This is a temporary measure. This is not just a temporary measure in the sense that it's only for five years, but read the bill. The bill basically says, "With a stroke of the pen at cabinet, the government can annul the 10%." They don't even have to come back to the House.

Okay, so I know the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, like I and everybody else in Ontario, doesn't believe that this government's going to come back for a third term. I don't believe it; you don't believe it; I don't think most people in Ontario believe it. But let's say it was to happen. Dalton McGuinty could walk to the cabinet table and say, "I, the Premier of Ontario, sign this particular order," and the 10% is taken away.

I'm saying to people in the next election, hey, be wary, because we know what these people are like. We've seen them before. The Dalton McGuinty pledge that he took in the first mandate when he ran against the Conservatives way back when—"I will not raise your taxes" was the pledge. And what did he do? He did the HST; he did the health tax.

Mr. Paul Miller: Eco fees.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Eco fees. He has done all kinds of taxes since then. So I don't trust that he's actually going to maintain a promise the third time around. He didn't maintain it the first time. Why should I think he's going to maintain it the second time? And I certainly don't believe that he's going to maintain it the third time. You know that old saying, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me? That's basically what this is all about.

Let's understand what this is all about. This particular provision in Bill 135, although a good measure, is a response on the part of the McGuinty government saying, "I've got a political problem. We need to fight the next election. People in our constituencies are complaining, as they are in opposition members' constituencies, and we need Liberal candidates to say 'Here's some good news that we can give to the voters in the next election.'" It couldn't be a promise, because they knew a promise would not be believed on the part of the voters, so they had to do something concrete going into the next election. That's what this is all about.

The first part is that this is a temporary measure, and it could be taken out by a stroke of the pen by way of a cabinet order after this is passed into legislation. I say, would you really trust Dalton McGuinty to maintain this promise after the next election? I'll let you decide that, the voters of Ontario. I know which way I'm voting. I'm voting for Gilles Bisson, because I think he's a great representative, and he's a New Democrat. Oh, that's me. Sorry. I can't do that, can I? I thought you'd have some fun with that one.

But here is the second part, and you have to ask yourself a couple of questions: Why is it that the hydro rates in this province are going through the roof? Why is it that we find ourselves in this position where our hydro rates, which used to be the most competitive in North America—when I came here 20 years ago, the electricity rates in Ontario were among the lowest hydro rates in North America. Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia: We were in the pack. We were the lowest in North America when you compared our hydro rates. My Conservative friends, I know you're going to have a problem, but I've got to say that it started with you guys, unfortunately. There was a guy by the name of Mike Harris, and then eventually a guy by the name of Mr. Eves, who said, "Do you know what? We don't like this principle of power at cost." Ontario Hydro back then was set up as a crown corporation, and it basically said, "We will produce electricity, distribute electricity and sell electricity at cost because it's an economic development tool," as the member from Renfrew correctly said. Industries in Ontario, our natural resource-based and manufacturing industries, are industries that use a loss of electricity. For us to have a competitive edge on our competitors in places like Illinois, Washington and other places around North America, Ontario maintained a low electricity price as a competitive advantage for the province. We built our economy on the basis of cheap, reliable electrical power. That was the system we had back then.

The Conservatives came along and they said, "Well, we're smarter. We think the private sector will do a great job." Well, guys, it has been five or six, seven, 10 years now. It has been about 10 years. Are they doing a better job? We started the privatization of hydro under the Conservatives. We started the deregulation. I'll give the Conservatives some credit. They didn't accelerate the privatization and the deregulation so much. They announced it, but then they got turfed out of power and the Liberals got elected. Now remember that Mr. Dalton McGuinty in opposition stood with New Democrats and said, "We are opposed to the initiatives of the Harris-Eves government to privatize and deregulate the electricity market. We think that's a wrong thing." Mr. McGuinty gets elected, and my God, he's a Conservative on steroids. That guy was going faster than any Conservative dared to do when it came to the privatization initiative. They continued along the path of deregulation. They continued down the path of privatization, entering into what they call now a competitive market. Some competitive market: We've now gone from the lowest electricity rates in North America to some of the highest.

Mr. Paul Miller: Number one.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't know if we're number one, but you might not be wrong. But we are certainly amongst the highest in North America.

What consequence has that had? The member from Renfrew had it right: It's scaring jobs out of this province by the oodles. In the community I come from, Xstrata used to be the old Kidd Creek mine. They operated a smelter and refinery, concentrated in the city of Timmins. Why did they build the refinery? Why did they build the smelter in the city of Timmins back in the 1970s? It was electricity. You could build a refinery in Ontario and it made economic sense. It didn't matter if you were Texas Gulf from the United States or you were Falconbridge from Canada or you were some other mining company from somewhere around the world. You said, "Where am I going to build a refinery? North America, Ontario: cheap electricity rates, lots of workers, the ore is right in the backyard." Everything was there, so they said, "We'll build this." So they built it and it employed, with the full-time staff and with contractors and everybody else who works in that place, probably about 2,000 people.

1530

So here we have this great investment, value-added opportunity in the city of Timmins where we were refining and smelting ore, and we were doing it greener—greener—than anywhere else in the world. Our refinery and our smelter was the greenest refinery-smelter in the world. What did we do? We ended up shutting it down. Why? We sat at the cabinet table with Premier McGuinty last winter when we went through all of this, and Xstrata said, "We are leaving Ontario for two reasons. One is the electricity prices. We can't afford to do business in Ontario." And the surprising part is they said, "And your environmental rules." I thought, boy, if I was the Premier of Ontario and some company came and told me that, I'd take them to task, but that's a whole other story. But they closed. They have since closed the plant and they've now moved production into the province of Quebec, where what? You're able to buy electricity at cost again, because Quebec Hydro runs as the old Ontario Hydro used to, which is as a crown corporation, owned by the province of Quebec, that produces, delivers and sells electricity at cost. Why? Because it's an economic development tool, and a great economic development tool. They took 2,000 jobs from the city of Timmins.

We look across the province, and it is the story. Which paper mills are going to come back up and running when the market comes back? Which pulp mills are going to come back up and running when the power comes back? Which sawmills in northern Ontario are going to come back up and running when the price comes back? It's going to be those that are able to operate at the lowest cost, and when we push electricity prices through the roof, well, then, my friends, it is very hard to do economic development.

For the average individual citizen living in any community across Ontario, it's the same story. They are finding it impossible to be able to pay their hydro bills at

the end of the month. An increasingly larger number of people every month are having the problem of paying their hydro bill. So the government basically took the Conservative agenda, they put it into fast gear and they started to privatize.

Then they went to the next step, and I know some of my friends in the environmental movement are going to have a problem with me, because I'm going to say what I think is part of the problem. Green energy is something that we should be doing. I don't think there's a member in this House who doesn't believe that green energy is a direction to take, but how green is the green energy we're producing in Ontario if we're not dealing with conservation? You've got to ask yourself the question. If we really believe in green energy, then what you need to do is lower the demand. The way you lower the demand is not by shutting down the plant by driving the price up. You do that by going to companies and individuals and saying, "What can we do in order to lower your need for energy within your business or within your home?"

Imagine a province like Ontario that, rather than investing on the generation side of green energy, had said, "We're going to invest on the conservation side of green," and if we were to go to the member from Stoney Creek and say, "In your riding, sir, anybody who has a home and who wants to save energy will have a retrofit program in order to assist the person to put in new insulation, to change windows and doors, to change heating systems, to be able to use appliances that use less electricity." In your riding, and I would argue in your riding, the member from—

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Kitchener—Conestoga, people would be running at the doors saying, "Where can I get some of this money? I've got a house that's 40 years old, that's got old insulation; the windows need to be changed etc." It might mean all of that costs \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000. But if you had a conservation program that said, "We're going to pay a part of that by taking the money that we've invested in green energy that we're putting forward today, such as smart meters"—one and a half billion dollars—and a whole bunch of other initiatives that the government has got that I believe are not driving conservation, people would be lining up at the doors to do the retrofits on their homes.

What would that do to our economy? That means you can't outsource those jobs. You can't contract out those jobs. Those are jobs that are going to be done by people here in Ontario. But not only that; the consumer's going to save because for the investment of being able to do the green energy conservation in their home, they would be in the position of being able to save not only on the hydro bill but on their gas bill as well. So Ontario would be doing what no other province and no other jurisdiction has done if we were to do what the NDP has proposed, which is to be extremely aggressive on the conservation side of green, not necessarily just on the generation side of green.

That's my problem with what the government is doing. What the government is doing is taking pretty well

all of its eggs—not all of them, but most of them—and putting them on the generation side of green. They're saying that the way we deal with green energy is by building green energy generation—wind, solar and others—that are extremely more expensive than what we pay for hydro, nuclear, coal and the rest.

Should we shut down coal? Yes. That's not my point. My point is, we are subsidizing the generation side of green where I believe we should be subsidizing the conservation side of green. That would allow us to keep our rates down and to use less electricity, which means to say we would generate less electricity.

It seems to me, as an environmentalist—which I am; I consider myself an environmentalist from northern Ontario—you get a bigger bang for your buck on the conservation side. Part of the problem here is that one of the reasons that our hydro bills are going up is the government is taking the money, the public purse, and also the money with regard to the hydro rates in order to fund the green generation side.

For example, under some of the programs, where it costs Ontario hydro on average about five cents per kilowatt hour to generate electricity, we're paying some people 80 cents per kilowatt to generate electricity. Who in their right mind would do that? I understand that you've got to give an incentive in order to encourage some of those technologies; listen, I get it and I would do some of that. But to say all my eggs are in the basket of the green generation side? We're driving the price through the roof; that's why we're figuring that electricity is going to go up over 50% over the next little while as far as the rate. It's because all of this green energy that's coming online is going to have to be paid for. The government says, "Look at us, we're green; it's wonderful; it's great for the environment." I don't doubt that it is, but is it the smartest way to be green?

I'm saying we should have taken the money and put it on the green conservation side and put some on the green generation side. We should have looked at this as a bit more of a longer-term thing because the government has tried to accelerate this in such a way that suits their political fortunes: "Let's get all this green generation announced and online so that we're in a position next election to go run around and see the windmills and see the solar panels and all the other stuff that we've done to say how great a job we've done." But I would argue that we probably should have taken a bit of time to figure out what the right mix was. I think that's where the government is wrong.

Will I vote for this bill? Probably, because it is giving a 10% reduction on hydro bills. Will the government maintain it for five years? I doubt it. I don't think McGuinty is going to get re-elected for a third term, but if he does, I believe they'll sign this and kill it pretty quickly after. I think that this is an admission that the government's energy plan does not work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always a pleasure to make some comments following a presentation by the member

from Timmins–James Bay. There's no question that he always speaks from the heart for his constituents and he's one of those defenders of the true north. But I'm looking forward this afternoon to hear another champion of the north, Mr. Bill Mauro from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who is extremely well familiar with the issues affecting the north, especially in his own riding.

I am sure he will be talking about not only the thousands of jobs that have been kept, but the new jobs that have been created and the new industries that opened up in the north which are so important. We must not forget when we address the House, especially on the so-called 2010 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review, that this government has come a long way in the few short years that it has been in power, considering that for the last 10, 20 years, so many facets of our economic and social situation have been neglected by all levels of previous governments. Now the government has to face reality coming out of a very deep and strong recession.

I think we have done very well. I think we are leading, not only every other province in Canada, but I think any other state in North America. We have created hundreds of thousands of jobs. We have retained most of our jobs. We have cut taxes for 93% of our people. We have cut taxes for our small business people, and I think we continue on the same path. I believe that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are on the right path.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

1540

Mr. John O'Toole: I enjoyed listening to the remarks from the member from Timmins–James Bay. It has been said that he stands up effectively for his riding. Even today in question period, he asked a question of the McGuinty government, to stand up for First Nations in Kashechewan, I believe it was, in his riding who are suffering, and they blamed the federal government. He's standing up for things like fire safety standards, which, of course, are provincial. I listened intently, and I'd encourage the viewers to listen intently as well. He spoke in a most informed way on the whole electricity file. He was saying, "Can you imagine"—I'm not sure if he said "the stupidity," but it would have been an appropriate choice of words, for charging 80 cents for electricity and trying to have a competitive economy.

If you check out today's report, Today's Innovation, Tomorrow's Prosperity, this booklet—and for the viewers at home, it starts off at the top saying, "Ontario businesses trail their US peers significantly in patent output." At the very top are California and Massachusetts; the bottom is sort of a tie between Ontario and Quebec. This is an independent report that was established by the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, a highly respected organization, primarily made up of academics. They often want to talk about Jack Mintz and other things, but this is a report by Roger Martin—highly regarded—from the prosperity institute. He's dean of the Rotman school of business.

Mr. Bisson is correct. This report is correct. And who's wrong? The McGuinty government. They're on

the wrong path. Name one issue in your own house that hasn't been affected negatively. Think about your home: the electricity bill, your property tax. Can you get to see the doctor? Drugs cost more. There isn't a thing they haven't ruined. The—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for his comments. Once again, he touched on some important areas.

The government does stand up and say, "Where's your plan?" I think Premier McGuinty has been saying that for a whole week. Well, I'll tell you, let's talk about our plan. In the state of California, they use a lot of electricity.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Madam Speaker, I can't hear myself speaking. It's too loud there.

I've got to say that the state of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a second, please. If people would like to have private debates, I suggest that they go into the lounges and have them. Meanwhile, a speaker has the floor. Let us hear the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll give an example. The state of California started a conservation program. They use a lot of electricity for cooling in the summer, probably way more than we do. They have dropped their consumption by 40% through conservation from retrofitting homes, factories, businesses and schools. They didn't have to build one more nuclear plant, with a much larger population than we've got.

I would say that this government is moving in the wrong direction again. They're going to put us in debt up to our ears again. Our kids and grandkids will be paying off those nuclear plants for centuries, because they're not heading in the right direction. You can cut your consumption between 40% and 60% on any home in this province, if you want to, with the proper retrofitting. That's where you'll save consumption.

Half the factories are closed. We're not using as much electricity as we were, because they're all going somewhere else. So you're heading in the wrong direction, for sure.

And the 10% rebate? That's laughable. But we'll have to support it because they'll stand up and say, "Your party voted against it."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate.

It's a matter of the choices that you make as a politician when you bring your ideas and your opinions to the House. Each of the parties obviously will have its own opinion of things, but when the economic statement comes out, it's a chance to take a look at where you are as a jurisdiction, perhaps at how you compare to other

areas around the world, around the country and around the continent.

If we look at post-secondary involvement that we have here in the province of Ontario, how many of our young people go on to post-secondary, you'll find that we have the highest rates in the world.

When you look at what people find is important, the things that they want to have some money spent on—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —it's clean air, it's education, it's hospitals.

When you look at our taxation system—obviously, the other parties have said a lot about that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could you stop the clock for a second, please. I would ask that the members who have spoken, especially the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, listen to the questions and comments from the member from Oakville.

The member from Oakville has the floor. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: When you look at the taxation system we have here in the province of Ontario, we've got the lowest corporate taxes in North America. Nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers have seen a reduction in their provincial personal income tax.

During a time when you'd have every excuse for not doing it, during a time when you've got a global recession unlike anything I've seen in my lifetime, certainly, we saw fit to introduce full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, because we know that—

Mr. Paul Miller: That will help the recession.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Well, it will help, member from Hamilton. You maybe want to take a look at some of the advice that's coming from educators around the world. If you want to do something about poverty, if you want to do something about an information technology age, if you want to train our young people for the future, you want to look at full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in our public schools, because it's something that helps.

There are choices you can make. You can close hospitals, you can fire nurses or you can do what we did: We cut drug prices in half.

I think we've set ourselves on the right track, and I think Ontario is doing quite well right now, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Timmins–James Bay has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members who commented. I just want to pick up on where it was left off.

The member said—the member from—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Oakville.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Oakville. Thank you. That's another riding I don't know.

The member from Oakville said it's all about choices. You're right: It is all about choices. But I don't believe that the average voter out there feels they're any better

off after seven years of the choices that your government has made.

It's pretty clear: 76% of those polled are saying they want a change. They're not voting Liberal in the next election. It's pretty clear you guys are gone. I think part of the reason for that is because you've made some choices that people aren't happy with.

You just have to ask yourself a very simple question: Am I any better off now, seven years after having elected Dalton McGuinty? The answer is no.

There are more job losses. There are more people who are worried about losing jobs than we had seven years ago. You have longer waiting lists in some cases, especially in the emergency wards of our hospitals. You've got real problems when it comes to energy prices in the province of Ontario, which is the subject of this debate. We are paying more taxes than we did seven years ago, when we entered into this contract with the Dalton McGuinty government here in Ontario, just on the HST alone. We went and added 8% provincial sales tax onto the service bills when it comes to fixing your car, calling a contractor into your house or paying your hydro or gas bill. People are not any better off.

I think the member made the argument that at the end of the day it is about choices. I think people will choose to get a change in the next election when it comes to what choices they want their government to give.

I believe that voters in the next election are not going to want governments that are going to do radical things. I think what people are going to want is what New Democrats are going to be proposing: that we've just got to do things right. We've got to slow things down a bit and fix what we've got now before we go off and do anything else crazy, any other grand scheme, such as we've seen come under this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to enter the debate here this afternoon.

I've been around most of the afternoon and have heard much of what has been said so far on the budget bill. I don't mind saying that I think it has actually been one of the better debates that I've heard in my time here, so I'm actually pleased to venture into it this afternoon with my 20 minutes.

As is no surprise, I don't think, to most, the opposition is using their time to continue their focus, to try to polarize the electorate on one issue, that being energy costs in the province of Ontario. That is fine; that is their strategy. They are looking to make that the ballot question going forward in October of next year, 2011. We've seen that be the pattern for the last two or three months, and I don't imagine that's going to change until we rise from this place next spring. They will continue to talk about energy. That will be what they want the public to walk into the polling booth on next October.

I'm not sure if that's good, bad or indifferent. If I was a member of the opposition, I would think I'd want to expand my platform and my policies a bit beyond that

and give people a reason to vote for me rather than a reason just to simply vote against the other guy. But we'll see what comes from them over the course of the next eight years.

1550

As we know, on energy neither opposition party has yet put forward a plan. At some point, they're going to have to do that. Quite frankly, their discussion on energy in the House is full of contradictions, in my opinion, but there will be an opportunity to speak on that as we go forward.

What they want to do also, as they focus the people of the province of Ontario on energy and energy only as we go forward into an election next year, is get them to forget about everything else that has been good, in my opinion, that's been accomplished by this government since we were elected in 2003. I can just highlight three very quickly.

They don't want people in the province of Ontario to remember—and I think every member in this place could list a series of examples—that this is a government that has spent \$60 billion, or close to it, on infrastructure since we came to government in 2003. When we came to government in 2003, we very clearly articulated that we saw infrastructure as one of three things that we thought were in a deficit position in the province. Long before there was a recession, we had made a decision through ReNew Ontario that we would contribute \$30 billion to infrastructure in the province of Ontario. We did that and followed it up with another \$27 billion.

There's nobody in this place who hasn't been a beneficiary of those investments. There's nobody in this place who can't speak to hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs being created through those infrastructure investments. I speak to this often because I can tell you, the small communities in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, communities like Conmee and O'Connor and Gillies and Neebing and Oliver Paipoonge, small communities with a huge land mass but a very small tax base—are the people we help the most.

Two things would have happened: (a) They simply could never have afforded to do the infrastructure projects that we helped them with, or (b) they would have done them at great expense on the residential property tax base. Those communities that I just listed off in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, many of them, do not have large industrials within their tax base. It's almost all primarily residential and, as I said, a very small residential base scattered over a large land mass. They wouldn't have been able to afford it—infrastructure of almost \$60 billion.

The NDP and the Conservatives don't want anybody in the province to remember that. They want you to forget about it. They want you to just think about energy.

How about education? I was just glancing at the clippings today, or I don't know if it was on the weekend. Ontario rated as, if not the best, one of the best places in the world to have your children go to school—one of the best public education systems in the world. Go back to

2003 when we arrived here. What was the situation then? That's another thing that the NDP and the Conservatives don't want the people of the province of Ontario to remember. I can tell you, the parents who have young children in school, parents who have kids in post-secondary, the teachers and everybody involved in education I think are going to remember that when they go to the polls next year. It won't just be about energy for them.

What about health care? They don't want anybody to think about health care either. I could sit here and use all my 20 minutes and another 20 on top of that talking about the improvements in health care not only in the province of Ontario but in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Some of my proudest moments in my seven years representing my constituency have been being able to show up and make announcements relative to health care improvements not only in my community—sometimes specifically my community of Thunder Bay, but oftentimes for the province as a whole.

Just last week, I was at Sunnybrook. We were video-linked back to Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and we announced that Sunnybrook and Thunder Bay will be the first two places in Canada to have a machine called HIFU, high-intensity focused ultrasound. They are now going to begin trials doing surgery with a beam of light that will require no scalpel, no anaesthetic, no needles, no nothing. They're doing the trials right now. That's happening in Thunder Bay.

Health care in the province of Ontario is leaps and bounds ahead of where it was in 2003, but, of course, the NDP and the Conservatives don't want to talk about that. I get it. They only want to talk about energy. But I think we've got about 10 months as Liberals to remind people what we've done. We'll compare our records, and I think we'll compare our records very favourably, to the administrations of 1990 to 1995 under the NDP and 1995 to 2003 under the Progressive Conservatives. I look forward to that debate, actually.

When it comes to energy rates, as I said at the beginning, that's a lot of what has been talked about. There still continues to be in this place this assertion that it is energy prices that caused the loss of manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario. Again, I could talk for 40 minutes or an hour on this. It has been one of the best misdirection plays that I've ever witnessed in my life. I will give some credit to the former leader of the NDP for pulling it off. He managed, over the last four or five or six years, to convince the people of Ontario that electricity rates were the reason why every large industrial in the province of Ontario was closing and leaving Ontario. It is absolutely ridiculous.

But that's not the focus of the discussion today; that's not the focus. I've talked in here before about what happened, not to mention currency, global competition, declining markets and a credit crisis, and on and on it goes. But that's a little bit too complicated for some people to talk about. They just want to talk about energy, completely misleading the people in the province when they say that is the reason why manufacturing left. My goodness. Come on, we all know better than that.

One example: For one mill in my riding, Abitibi-Bowater, a one-cent appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar, one penny, is a \$3-million to \$4-million expense for them. At only one mill, \$3 million to \$4 million. When we were elected in 2003, the currency was 73 cents. It peaked out at \$1.10. Now it's at about a buck. That's 27 cents times \$3 million or \$4 million annually into their bottom line costs. That's what they're saying has nothing to do with the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me for a second. If you could stop the clock please. I hear a BlackBerry. It's buzzing. I'm asking members to check that their devices are off.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: That sounded like the horn. You know, when you get that call that says boop, you've run—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That's not a point of order. Thank you very much.

The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan has the floor.

Mr. Bill Mauro: On the large industrial file, we have many of our large industrials who are very happy now with the programs that we've brought forward on energy, the \$20 per megawatt hour that was announced in the spring budget as well as fixing the global adjustment part of the energy bills. We'll be making more announcements on that in the not-too-distant future. I'm very happy to announce as well, with AbitibiBowater in Thunder Bay, that through a lot of great work by a lot of people the pension piece has been accommodated. They're coming out of bankruptcy. We expect to see a great announcement from them in the very near future relative to a cogeneration plant at that mill, a major multi-million dollar investment securing the jobs at that mill. A lot of good work has gone into that over the last time.

On the energy file, as others have talked at length, I have to mention as well the Ontario clean energy benefit, a 10% reduction on your total electricity bill. I'm very proud of that and I want to thank all members of the northern caucus especially. I know others have said that they've been working on it for a long time, and maybe they have, but I can tell you that the northern caucus has been on this for quite some time. I'm very proud of the work that we've done on this. I'm happy that we've brought it in.

It's a little interesting now to sit back and watch. You don't expect that anybody is ever going to say, "You did good; you did you right." You always wonder how they're going to try to change the channel and what they're going to move on to next. It seems, at least in regard to this one, that at least some members of the third party are pretending like it never happened. I would say to the member from Timmins—James Bay that he did acknowledge it and I thank him for that, although there is at least one other member of your caucus who is pretending that it didn't happen and holding rallies to say as much. I actually found it a little bit funny when I saw it on the news the other day.

We'll get back to the energy piece in a little bit, but I do want to talk generally, very briefly, about the Ontario

economy as we sit here today. We saw the Minister of Finance state in the fall economic statement that economic growth, GDP growth, in the province of Ontario for 2010 is 3.2%—the leading jurisdiction in North America, as I understand it. I could be wrong, but I don't think there is a national or subnational government in North America that had 3.2% growth last year; Ontario did. We're doing something right here.

We all still know that with the American economy not doing well, that places a significant drag on the Ontario economy, given that the Ontario economy is primarily an exporting jurisdiction; and when the American economy is not doing well, that makes it more difficult for us. Having said that, in spite of that, and with a Canadian dollar that's at par, 3.2% GDP growth for 2010 in the province of Ontario. I'm told that 70% to 75% of the lost jobs are back post-recession. In what was the greatest recession since the Great Depression, nobody seems to argue that and yet, under those circumstances of 30 million to 40 million jobs lost worldwide, 3.2% growth in GDP last year and about 70% to 75% of the jobs have come back.

When the opposition parties focus their comments exclusively on energy and nothing else—and nobody denies that energy costs have gone up in the province of Ontario—they only talk about the cost side. They don't remind the people in the province of Ontario of what we have done to help them on the other side of the equation.

1600

What have we done to reduce their costs? I listed very quickly, while I was listening to the debate today, five things, and I know that I don't have an exhaustive list here. I listed five things that we've done that are significant. When you wrap these up—I'll mention them in a second—the stuff that we've done here is part of the reason why you don't see people marching on the front lawn of Queen's Park. If things were as bad as the official opposition and the third party want to make them out to be, where are the great en masse marches down on the front lawns of Queen's Park, like there used to be under my friend Mr. O'Toole's government? When he was in government, I remember there used to be a lot more people visiting this place on a regular basis.

Here's a short list that I came up with. I only got five—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to refer to the riding and not the name.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker.

This is not a Letterman top 10; I only got five. I'm sure there are five more; maybe somebody else, when they speak.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit: I think we added \$400 or \$500 more for seniors. The official opposition, I believe, quite certainly voted against it. I'm not sure about the third party. That's giving another \$400 to \$500, at the maximum level, to about 2.4 million people, I believe it is, in the province of Ontario. As well, almost all seniors will receive \$400 to \$500 more than they were. I think we took it from about \$625 to well over

\$1,000—voted against by the opposition members. That's one of the reasons seniors aren't phoning my constituency, complaining about these things.

The northern energy credit: Again, I thank the northern caucus. We worked on that for a long time. It's an energy credit available only to northerners.

There's the 10% reduction that we just announced in the fall economic statement, the Ontario clean energy benefit; and the transition cheques that people in the province of Ontario are getting.

Here's one of my favourites that not too many people talk about anymore, the personal income tax reduction: 1% on the first \$37,000 of income, everybody eligible. If you make \$20,000, that's 200 bucks; if you make \$37,000, that's \$370. If you're in a dual-income household and you both make \$37,000 or more, that's \$740 with that 1% reduction.

You want to talk about why people aren't marching on the front lawn of Queen's Park; why the unions aren't there, upset; why the anti-poverty people aren't there? I haven't even mentioned the Ontario child benefit. There's my sixth; the list will grow as I speak. It's because these people know about these things. They are aware of these programs.

I don't expect the opposition to talk about it, but I think it's important that we, as Liberals, on this side remind people about that.

Personal income tax: 1% on the first \$37,000 of income—\$370. I've talked about this particular one in here before. To use up just that one—I listed five others—to use up just that one in relation to the HST you'd have to spend, I think, about \$4,000 or \$5,000 on items previously exempt from the PST before you'd use up just that one tax reduction, just that one. And that's only one of six that I could think of off the top of my head.

I always love it when the Conservatives talk about pocketbook issues as well. I wish I had 20 minutes just on that one, because that history, from 1995 to 2003, provides a wonderful example of how people who like to say they're taking care of people's pocketbooks in fact aren't.

Again on energy: We all have a record on this. We know that when the Conservatives were in government they created the debt retirement charge. It came in in 1999; 1999 is when it went on your bill for the first time.

We also know that from 1999 to 2003, while they were collecting that debt retirement charge for three or four years, the total debt went up by about \$1 billion.

I don't know how much they collected in those three or four years. I'm going to guess, on the conservative side, \$1 billion to \$2 billion; on the high side, \$3 billion to \$4 billion. I don't know what the number is; I acknowledge that. But let's round it off and say it's \$2 billion to \$3 billion.

So while they collected for the first time the debt retirement charge that's on everybody's hydro bill still today, created by the Conservatives, the debt went up by \$1 billion. They got \$4 billion, \$2 billion, \$3 billion they

brought in. Where did that money go? Where did it go? The debt went up. We don't know where it went. It went up by \$1 billion while they collected \$1 billion, \$2 billion, \$3 billion or \$4 billion; I don't know how much.

Diesel generators, the privatization: The member from Timmins—James Bay talked about that one. I remember it very well, and I remember specifically the part related to Hydro One. As a northern member, it scared the death out of me, I don't mind telling you, that the Conservatives were willing to go forward and privatize Hydro One. Take a ride on the highways of northern Ontario and you'll understand why. When you see those transmission wires and that infrastructure stretching for miles, with nothing in between—you can just imagine somebody privately owning that infrastructure. And we're going to try to get them to invest and maintain that when there's no return on that investment up there? That would have been an absolute disaster for northern Ontario, but the Conservatives wanted to do that. Everybody has a record on energy.

The NDP cancelled Conawapa. Boy, would that have been a boon for northwestern Ontario. That transmission line from Manitoba would have come right through northwestern Ontario. It would have created construction jobs. It would have been one of the biggest construction booms in our history. They came to government in 1990, and they decided to cancel it. The deal was already signed. It would have brought in clean, renewable hydraulic power at about four cents a click for 20 years. They cancelled it—I'm not sure why; they'll speak to it, perhaps—and they paid the government of Manitoba \$150 million to get out of the contract. I'm sure there's a reason.

The member from Timmins—James Bay talked about conservation. That's what he would do. They cancelled all the conservation programs when they came to power, and they didn't replace them with any. Hydro went up by 40% in five years under the NDP government.

They don't like nuclear. I don't know how you're going to support the demands of business if you don't like nuclear. You're going to have to explain it. Again, it's about a long-term plan. You're going to have to tell people at some point how you're going to do it.

I've got two examples that I'll mention to you. There are five coal plants in the province; two of them are in my riding. Our government is committed to converting both of those. The one in Atikokan is being converted to biomass. The one in Thunder Bay is being converted to natural gas. I consider those to be green energy projects. If you think we're paying too much for green energy—and I heard the member from Timmins—James Bay say we are, and he's not alone; others are saying the same thing. I'm interested to know if you're going to support those conversions. Those two conversions are going to cost money. They're going to be about \$300 million to \$400 million worth of construction for the building trade unions in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. All the men and women from the surrounding jurisdictions are going to get work there. Some \$300 million to \$400

million worth of construction value—and of course, the price point is going to go up when we produce energy with biomass and with natural gas. Do you support it? I support it. Hopefully, at some point we're going to find out if you do as well. Again, you've got to pick and choose. If you say you don't like coal and you want to go off coal, let me know what you're going to do; if you support those. I know that people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan are very excited about those two announcements.

On a general basis, the economy in Thunder Bay, relatively speaking, is doing quite well. Our unemployment rate in Thunder Bay for the last year or two has been one of the lowest in the province of Ontario. And before somebody stands up and says, “Well, that's because all the guys are out west, working,” do you know what? All the guys are out west, working in Chatham or Sarnia or Toronto or Windsor or wherever you want. The numbers are relative and they're relevant. They make sense. We're doing very well.

I could speak for a long time about what's going on at Bombardier. I could speak for a long time about what's going on at Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute. I just mentioned the last great announcement that we had there that occurred at Sunnybrook, linked back to Thunder Bay Regional. What an incredible piece of good news Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute is. Some \$15 million from our government helped to seed the beginning of that institute in Thunder Bay some four or five years ago. There are 100 incredible jobs there now, with another 100 soon to come—a knowledge-based economy, diversifying the economy of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

Northern highway money has never been higher—750 million bucks; infrastructure dollars like crazy for the small municipalities. A brand new courthouse coming, brand new long-term care coming, the AbitibiBowater cogen that I talked about, the coal plants, going on and on—the construction trade sector is going to be busy for years to come, primarily as a result of investments that we've made in our riding. I'm very proud of it.

I'm happy I've had an opportunity to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always like to listen to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, because I think he's one of the members over there who does work hard. I think he may have missed his opportunity for cabinet. I know he often is not using the scripted speeches they give their members over there. I just want to think that he at least has a summary of what they've achieved. The five points he mentioned—I was listening very carefully. He articulates very well. The first one was the Ontario energy property tax credit for seniors. I think that it was a good thing, and we did support that provision. Here's the issue: We supported it because you went way too deep, way too fast on the HST on energy. Everyone in Ontario agrees with that. Why did you do it in the first place?

He's claiming it as a victory. I claim it as a retreat. That's what that one is.

1610

Number 2 is the energy relief for northern Ontario: more proof that northern Ontario was hemorrhaging up there because you've closed almost all the mills in the north because of the rates of the cost of energy.

Number 3 was the 10% reduction. Now, here's the issue on the recent bill, the one we're debating, Bill 135: They did give a 10% cut on the bottom line of your energy bill. What they didn't tell you, the other part, is that they charged you 13%, so you're still paying an additional 3%. Just don't pay attention to what he's saying, because he thinks these are victories. They're all failures, every single one.

Number 4 was the personal income tax credit. It's true: 1% on the first \$37,000. Let's just take a normal expenditure of \$100 a week for 52 weeks of the year. You would actually pay, in taxes, on that one expenditure of \$100 a week—it could be gas, electricity, whatever—\$676. The relief at \$37,000 is \$370. That's picking your pockets clean, and they're taking credit for it.

The last one was the issue that he talked about—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I listened to my friend from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I guess he's got a particular view of the world, and I would just like to bring him back to reality. He makes it sound as if there has never been an investment in the province of Ontario, but specifically northern Ontario, except since Dalton McGuinty came to power. Yes, there are some investments that are happening across the north—you have some in your riding; I have some in my riding—as there are across the ridings of northern Ontario. We're building a brand new long-term-care facility and we've got a \$2.7-billion OPG project going on, but those things happened before your government came around as well.

When I was in government in 1990 to 1995, we built three co-generation plants in and around my area. There was the building of brand new greenfield wafer board mills in the cities of Timmins and Wawa and other places. There was the restructuring of the forest industry that happened under, yes, the Bob Rae government, that allowed your community in Thunder Bay to restructure some of the mills in your community that were having problems.

I just want to say to the member, it's good that you're enthusiastic and excited, but don't get the idea that somehow or other there has never been an investment that has happened in Thunder Bay–Atikokan or Thunder Bay–Superior North before the time of Dalton McGuinty, because they certainly existed.

He also talks about how great the economy is in Thunder Bay and notes that the unemployment rate is down. Yes, I've seen the numbers in Thunder Bay, as I've seen the numbers in Timmins, in Sudbury and in different communities across the north, but the reality is that a lot of those jobs we had in the early 1990s and we certainly had at the time that Dalton McGuinty was

elected, back some seven or eight years ago, are gone. How many Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union members do you have in your riding at this point, sir? How many steelworkers do you have in your riding at this point, sir? How many of those high-paying jobs that used to be organized under the Steelworkers, under CAW and under CEP have gone away? And, yes, most of these people, unfortunately, have gone to other places to get work.

So if unemployment is down—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was here for most of the speech from my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and it certainly articulated the activities in his riding.

It's always interesting when you scan the headlines in our clippings that we all get every day. I just noted one here today from the *Globe and Mail* on November 27. It says, "Pop Quiz: Which Province's School System Ranks Among the Best in the World?" This is a survey that's being released by McKinsey and Co. just today, and it talks about Ontario being one of the leaders in the world. It's an interesting report. From time to time, we hear other members cite independent reports, so I recommend that they take the opportunity to read this report. Ontario is the leader in the world when it comes to public education.

I always find it interesting to read editorials. I just picked up this one from the *Sault Ste. Marie Star* of November 26. The editorial says, "Most Costly Plan is No Plan at All." It said, "Ontario residents would be well served if they knew how the NDP and Conservatives would build a renewable energy network and how it would be financed." That's an editorial from the *Sault Ste. Marie Star*.

Something closer to home for me: The very interesting Peterborough Examiner had an editorial on Friday, the 26th, that talks about giving the McGuinty Liberals "credit for ... coming clean on what an upgraded, cleaner electricity generation network will cost" Ontarians. They go through the plan. They talk about how this investment "will produce tens of thousands of direct jobs in construction and manufacturing. It is also supposed to spur a large new sector of green energy companies manufacturing wind turbines, solar panels and other innovative products." And of course, they talk about how it's very relevant to Peterborough, because we have the GE Hitachi partnership employing in excess of 500 people who are part of—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to respond briefly to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan because he outlined his views with respect to Bill 135. I think he mentioned the commitment on the part of the government to close the coal-fired electricity generating plants.

I recall quite vividly the 2003 election, when I was seeking re-election to this Legislature, and an all-candidates meeting that took place in the community of Elmira, where the Liberal candidate gave a passionate

answer to a question and promised—in fact, committed—if the Liberals formed the government they would close the coal-fired generating plants by 2007. That was four years from the time that she was speaking.

I know that as a member of the government caucus during those days when we were listening to many of the experts in the energy field, we were advised that it was absolutely, technically impossible and not feasible to close the coal-fired generating plants in Ontario until at least 2014. That became our statement during that election campaign, but I was told by the Liberal candidate at that time that they would do it in four years.

So I'm wondering if the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan could explain by way of his response what happened. Why is it that the government couldn't close the plants in four years? Why is it that now, some seven years and a few months later, they still haven't closed the coal-fired generating plants? Why is it that they've had to break that promise several times now? Why do the coal-fired generating plants continue to exist? Why are they still belching noxious fumes into the air? Why would the government not have done something by now? Why is it that the government continues to break these promises? I would ask the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan to please address that issue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank all of the members who spoke, but less so for my friend from Durham today. I thought his comments were a bit more pointed than I have come to expect from him. Where did you get that \$600 number from? Where did it come from? Shout it across the floor and I'm going to try to work it into my two-minuter here. I don't know where that \$600 came from. You acknowledged the 1% reduction that's going to give you \$370, and if you've got a partner in the house who's working as well and making \$37,000, then it's \$740. I don't know where the \$600 came from, but you only talked about one of the reductions.

Anyway, none of that really matters. Right? What I'm trying to do is paint perhaps a bit of a broader picture here. We're talking on a budget bill. I'm trying to paint a bit of a broader picture for people who are going to the polls next year, and of course it's understandable that the opposition would not want to do so. People are going to think about infrastructure and how that's helped them in their particular communities. They're going to think about education. They're going to think about health care. They're going to think about the environment.

I'm a bit surprised, quite frankly, already a full year ahead of an election, that the members of the second and third parties are only going to focus on one thing, and that appears to be where they're going to plant their flag when it comes to the election. We do know that when you go into a campaign, at some point those members will have to articulate their plan for energy, and we do know that at some point those members are going to have to talk about their record, or lack thereof, when they were in government and what it is that they did.

You've heard us. I think we've been pretty fair on the file when we say that all parties of all political stripes in the past have maybe not done as good a job as they could have on the energy file. I think we've been pretty fair on it. I hear the language phrased that way. The Conservatives and the NDP will have to support and defend their record when they were in power, as we will ours. But it's not just about energy; it's about infrastructure, it's about health care, it's about education, it's about the environment and it's about a lot of things that we've done since 2003.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / *Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.*

1620

An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month / *Loi visant à désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.*

An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / *Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.*

An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / *Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.*

An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / *Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.*

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND
MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE
AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES
ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and

Budget measures and other matters, which stands in the name of the Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance. It received first reading in this House on November 18, and here we are debating second reading of this bill, which amounts, really, to a budget bill. Of course, it flows from the economic statement that was read into the House by the Minister of Finance a couple of weeks ago.

Our caucus has a lot to say about this issue. Of course, generally speaking, the budgetary policy of the government is bankrupt. But at the same time, this bill is its best effort to try to address some of the issues that have arisen in the last seven years. We continue to scrutinize it very carefully.

Our caucus is prepared to acknowledge that this is another in a string of omnibus bills that the McGuinty government has introduced. Many of the amendments are highly technical and warrant greater scrutiny. The amendments divert attention from the real issue, namely, that the fall economic statement is further proof of the McGuinty government's fiscal mismanagement. Expert economists have judged Dalton McGuinty as the worst fiscal manager amongst all the other Premiers in the country, and Ontario's real per capita GDP has declined by 8% since 2000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty Liberals spend \$2.1 million more per hour than they collect in revenue—and we would add that we don't believe that people can trust that the McGuinty government won't use provisions of this bill to raise taxes even further.

The government has used this bill to talk about a promised 10% reduction in hydro bills, and they call it the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act. This is intended to offset to some degree the significant increases in hydro bills, and the government would want us to believe that they are responding to the concerns of the people of Ontario. I'd like to read an email that I received from someone who lives in my area. I received it on November 15 and it reads as follows:

"I'm probably sending this out to deaf ears, or to someone who might not care but it's worth a try.

"I'm a single mother and work very hard for everything I bring to the table. I ask for no handouts and am proud that I can raise my son on my own. I do have a very tight budget, and having electric heat puts a real strain on my son and I, especially in the winter months that are upon us.... Question: Do I keep my son's tummy full or do I keep him warm, you tell me because HST is going to affect my hydro bill big this year. I'm really concerned about how much I have to subtract from my grocery bill in order to keep the house warm and my son from getting sick.... I don't know where to turn but I'm sure hoping you can help."

We talk about people who might be out there in our communities who have to choose between whether or not they're going to pay their hydro bill or whether or not they're going to go to the grocery store. Here is a constituent who, unsolicited, expressed that very view to me. That should be something that concerns all of us.

In terms of the response to this bill, I want to point out some of the editorial comments that have appeared in the

press in recent days about Bill 135 and some of the provisions in it. This is an article by Randall Denley of the Ottawa Citizen. In his article, which appeared on November 20, he indicated, “The Premier is living in a fantasy world where we pay alternative energy producers unrealistic prices for the power they generate, then pretend it’s not pushing up our bills.

“By shifting costs from power users to taxpayers, McGuinty is really just taking the money from your left pocket instead of your right. This clumsy attempt to mollify those concerned about high power bills will cost \$6.4 billion over five years. You’ll pay all that later, with interest. And the Liberals think this will make us vote for them next year.

“The government would have us believe that the gambit is affordable because the provincial deficit will be only \$18.7 billion, \$1 billion less than a previous estimate. Surely McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan must realize that a somewhat smaller deficit doesn’t generate new money to spend....

“If McGuinty manages his own finances the way he manages this province’s, expect to see him at the soup kitchen soon.”

Another article which appeared in the National Post—and it’s an editorial—I think bears repeating in this place. This is from November 19:

“Ontario’s economic update is in—and the provincial Liberals’ desperation level is clearly up. In advance of the update, provincial Finance Minister Dwight Duncan had already leaked the Liberals’ plan to cut hydro bills by 10% for five years by using \$1 billion in borrowed money. That populist sop would be ill-advised under any circumstances, but especially so given Ontario’s projected 2010 deficit of \$18.7 billion.

“In 2003, Premier Dalton McGuinty declared: ‘I won’t lower your taxes, but I won’t raise them either.’ Well, he kept the first promise; but as for the second—not so much. In 2004, he subjected Ontarians to an annual health tax of up to \$900 per family. Over the next few years, he increased various licensing fees, including those for cars, boats, hunting and fishing. In 2009, he instituted upfront ‘recycling fees’ on a host of items, and in 2010 attempted to bring the second wave of his ‘eco tax’ (which he had to withdraw amid howls of protest.) And of course, he also introduced the Ontario HST, which has been calculated to cost the average family in the province an extra \$480 a year.

“And now there’s the hydro bait-and-switch, which will be paid for by future taxpayers. If Mr. McGuinty thinks this short-sighted stunt will put the province’s opposition Tories in a corner, he is wrong: Paying for this rate cut with borrowed money fools nobody.”

Obviously, the editorial writer had a good understanding of the government’s policy, because the writer is right on.

I would also make reference to an article which appeared, again, in the National Post on November 20. This is written by Lawrence Solomon, who in the past has been the executive director of Energy Probe; I

believe he still is. He called this plan a rebate scheme. He says:

“The rebate scheme—which is sure to dampen public revulsion at the way the power system is being managed—is especially impressive in how expertly the government has disguised its activities. To read the press reports, the government is deftly rejigging its provincial borrowing and fast-forwarding revenues from a long-term land registry contract to finance the rebate during a five-year transition period to a cleaner energy infrastructure. Sweep aside these sleight-of-hand explanations and the reality is actually much simpler: The provincial government is in reality providing voters with a five-year break on their HST while rapidly escalating the power prices that all consumers face. Because the province and the municipalities overwhelmingly own the power system, they are making off like bandits as power consumers get squeezed.”

He continues, “Large industrial electricity consumers are also losers. Because these companies don’t vote, the Liberals would have drawn no political benefit in applying the Ontario clean energy benefit to them. To the contrary, by collecting the HST from them, the Liberals are obtaining the cash they need to top up the rebate from 8% to 10%. In effect, the Liberal government is merely transferring the HST rebate that the large industrial consumers aren’t getting to the pot of money going to the smaller consumers that can vote—residential consumers, small businessmen, and farmers.

“Of course, under the Ontario scheme, all consumers become losers. Rates, by the government’s own accounting, will be climbing another 46% over the next five years, and then rates will jolt up another 10% as the Ontario clean energy benefit expires. By then, the new power system may also have expired. It took Ontario Hydro, running as a government-owned non-profit, 90 years to go bankrupt. Hydro’s government-owned for-profit successors will be far quicker at reaching bankruptcy.”

Strong words which continue to undermine the credibility of the government with respect to its hydro policy.

1630

Obviously, from our perspective in opposition, we are seriously concerned about this particular bill and about the government’s budgetary policy generally, as well as its management of the hydro system. As we know, in the seven years that the McGuinty government has been in power, we have seen dramatic increases in hydro rates. Hydro rates have increased approximately 75%, and we know from the government’s own document, its 2010 economic update, that they predict—and this is their very own document—that residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46% over the next five years, an average annual rate of about 7.9%.

At the same time, we know that many of the factors that are driving these increases continue unabated under this government. This is one of the significant reasons, I believe, why the government has experienced a significant decline in its popular support in recent months,

going back to approximately May of this year, where we now see, according to the public opinion pollsters, that if an election were held today, this government would face a resounding defeat.

I want to go back a few years to, actually, about seven years ago, when the government was newly elected and many of the members on the government side who are still here were newly elected in the Legislature. There was a great deal of heady optimism with the new Liberal government. They believed that they had been elected with a strong mandate to reinvest in public services. Certainly it was difficult, from our perspective in opposition, to contest that basic point, although we did our job in opposition in those days.

At the same time, I had an opportunity to bring forward a private member's resolution in December 2003. I chose to bring forward an idea that I'd had for some time, asking that the government of Ontario commit itself to a 25-year debt retirement plan, articulating five-year interim targets, such that the province of Ontario would be free from its debt in the fiscal year 2029-30. I outlined the reasons why I thought that the government should make debt retirement a higher priority. I believe very strongly, based on a very simple economic proposition, that during good economic times governments should seek to pay down debt as a high priority. If governments did this during good economic times, they would be in a stronger financial position if there was an economic downturn down the road.

I actually quoted from my very first speech in the Legislature, my maiden speech which I gave in the Legislature, again, about 20 years ago this very month. I said at that time, 20 years ago, "We in Wellington understand the economic value of hard work and the social value of personal responsibility. From this understanding stems a serious concern when our government refuses to live within its means, when our government grows until it begins to inhibit overall economic growth, when even excessive taxation does not prevent the expansion of government debt." That was my maiden speech, 20 years ago. I would still suggest that over the 20 years that I've been here, I have tried to bring forward ideas and suggestions that were entirely consistent with those value statements that I made when I was first elected here.

I would continue to build on that argument to suggest that the government should make debt retirement a high priority. We had support from a significant number of interested groups: the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, chambers of commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and others. I cited examples of other provinces across the country that had committed themselves to long-term debt reduction plans, including the province of Manitoba, which at the time was governed by the New Democrats. They were making debt repayment a high priority. I went on and on and on and called upon the new government to try to make debt repayment a high priority.

Unfortunately, the new government didn't think that was a good idea. They believed they had come into office

and they were going to spend. They were going to open the vault and spend and tax like there was no tomorrow. There was absolutely no interest in what I was saying at that time. There was no support. The government members, every single one of them who were here, voted against it, in spite of the fact that the New Democrats, if I'm not mistaken, were somewhat supportive.

I pointed out in that speech the Liberal government's campaign document that they had used in their 2003 election. Some of the Liberals who are here today campaigned on it and were elected on it. Some of them might remember it. In their campaign platform, which they called at the time *Achieving Our Potential*, they made reference to debt reduction. They said:

"We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down.

"We will not add to the provincial debt. We will pay down the debt as conditions allow, with all surpluses going directly to debt" repayment.

Unfortunately, as we know, that commitment was not kept. In fact, next year, if the current spending patterns hold, the Liberals are on track to double the debt from the level it was when they took office in 2003. What a shocking record of fiscal incompetence and profligacy.

This is the message that we're sending to our children and our grandchildren: that government cannot live within its means; that the government isn't interested in living within its means. The government will just add billions and billions of dollars of debt onto future generations and force them to pay higher taxes, because this generation is incapable of or is unwilling to live within its means. I find that to be totally unacceptable, and I would hope that the members opposite will give some pause to consider some of what I've said today, because we should all be concerned about the future generations and the financial legacy that we're going to be leaving those generations. Quite frankly, they're going to look back upon this time, and if future generations learn that the debt doubled during the period of 2003 and 2011-12, I think they're going to rightly draw the conclusion that this government was bereft of any willingness to live within its means and of any fiscal discipline. They will quite rightly point back to this government as a government that did not provide the kind of leadership that they deserved.

We know also from this 2010 economic statement that despite four quarters of consecutive economic growth, the Liberals have only reduced the deficit by some 3%, not 25%, as they claim.

They have not reduced discretionary spending by even one penny.

Revenue is up \$789 million, the vast majority of which is corporate revenue. It is obviously good news that companies are making a little more money but, at the same time, it is troubling because of the way the government is managing it.

The expenses are down \$246 million, and we understand that's a result of lower interest on the debt, explained by lower-than-projected interest rates and a lower

borrowing requirement because of the Teranet revenue and the lower deficit.

Under Premier McGuinty, program expenditure has increased by 80%, compared to a 60% increase in total revenue. We also see that, in terms of comparative economic data, the Ontario 2010 deficit is projected to be \$18.7 billion. We note that the deficits of every other province combined will total a fraction of this: only \$12.4 billion. Therefore, Ontario's 2010 deficit is \$6.3 billion greater than that of the other provinces combined—a shocking statistic. By comparison, the 2010 deficit for Quebec is \$4.5 billion, and in British Columbia, it is \$1.4 billion.

I think it's also important to point out the unemployment rate in the province of Ontario, which is also too high and very troubling. Ontario's unemployment rate is 8.6%, which is higher than the national average of Canada, which is 7.9%, higher than Russia, higher than South Korea, higher than Argentina, higher than Brazil, higher than Mexico and many others.

We know that unemployment is bad for an economy because it's a wasted resource, and a healthy economy allocates resources efficiently. But on the micro-level, persistently high unemployment acts as a drag on consumer spending, which in turn affects the entire economy. Typically, in a healthy economy, we would argue that consumer spending accounts for the vast majority of economic activity.

It would seem that the Premier blames Ontario's job situation on the global economic downturn, yet Ontario's unemployment rate has surpassed Canada's national average every single month since January 2007, which is almost two full years before the financial crisis.

Even prior to the economic crisis and collapse, Ontario had a net loss of 208,300 manufacturing jobs. In effect, Ontario has acted as a millstone on Canada's wealth creation for the last three and a half years. Ontario lost a net 141,600 jobs last year, and last summer Ontario's unemployment rate hit a 16-year high. We also know that under this government, Ontario has lost 295,000 manufacturing jobs in total, a 28% decline.

1640

The Liberals have claimed that the introduction of the HST will create 103,000 net new manufacturing jobs within 10 years. We have yet to see them.

Since 2005, Ontario's population has grown by about 500,000 people. That means that the provincial economy must add at least 100,000 jobs a year, on average, just to keep up with immigration and population growth. Dalton McGuinty's current annual average is approximately 61,000, considerably less than what is needed just to keep up.

These are some of the facts and some of the reasons why our party is strongly opposed to this government's budgetary policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for his input and some good stats.

This recent announcement by the government for the 10% Ontario clean energy benefit: If you look at the presentation the minister made—I think it's on page 11; I could be wrong—he admits that in the next few years the hydro costs are going to go up over 40% and even higher, maybe up to 70% when they implement the Samsung deal. The 10% that they've scrambled to give the people of Ontario: If you read the fine print, you're actually going to be paying a lot more in the next few years, way more than the 10% rebate that you're going to get. Once again, it's a half measure, or maybe even a quarter measure, to supplement the hard-hit Ontarians in many sectors, whether it's housing, whether it's poverty, whether it's hydro bills, whether it's the failed eco tax, HST. You name it, they've been getting hammered for the last seven years.

Job losses: They stood up today and were bragging about 140,000 jobs that they've created. They've lost 460,000 in total. They've gained 140,000 back, but the 140,000 jobs are minimum-paying jobs or a little above. They're not those \$50,000- and \$60,000-a-year jobs that supported a family of four and kept them above water and kept them in a manageable, decent style of living. These are jobs that some of these people have to work two and three of just to pay the bills. I've got people coming into my office who have nowhere to go, let alone can afford to pay their hydro bill. Their utility bills outweigh their rent. That's scary stuff, considering they can't even afford their rent.

This government has got a huge problem on its hands, and I'm certain the people of Ontario will be sending them a strong message next year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate again and pass comments on the remarks made by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. Obviously, we have a different recollection of what state the province was in in 2003. The province that we inherited from the Progressive Conservative government in 2003 was one that was pretty bleak, in my opinion. Ontarians didn't know if the lights would stay on. The previous government relied on five coal plants. That means that 25% of our electricity in 2003 came from coal-fired generation. That's not what Ontarians want. What they want is a change. What they want is clean, green energy, what they want is clean air, and I certainly know that in Oakville, with things that have gone on from a power perspective.

During a time of increased demand, somehow the previous government managed to decrease electrical output in this province by 1,800 megawatts. If you look at that in a general sense, what does that mean? That's the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry completely. Somehow, at a time like that, at a time of increased demand, we had a government that was providing us with less electricity.

They had a brief experiment in deregulation in the market in 2002. The market simply rejected the crazy

ideas that were being put forward on the spot market. In a panic, they implemented extremely low, artificially low energy prices.

People were talking about some of the facts and the figures. What do we look forward to? GDP growth projection for Ontario is 3.2%, private sector growth for 2011 is about 2.4%, real GDP growth projection for 2011 for the province of Ontario is about 2.2%. We understand we're just starting to recover as a province. We understand that people need assistance. The clean energy initiative for the 10% off the bills is just to help people along.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I waited patiently to hear the member from Wellington–Halton Hills because with his experience here he brings fairness and balance to his commentary. I think it's fair to say, if you look at the numbers objectively, without all of the political rhetoric that we're hearing, that what he's saying is true. In fact, the numbers announced in Bill 135 and around it indicate clearly that the debt will be doubled and the deficit, which is almost closing in on \$20 billion on a budget of just over \$100 billion—20% of the spending today is money they don't have. On top of that, in the balance and fairness that he brings to it, all of the agencies—the universities, the schools, the hospitals, the children's aid—have deficits, all of them are struggling, all of them are afraid to speak out too aggressively because the government will slam them. He brings fairness to it in a government that fails to be straightforward with the people of Ontario and tell them that they have made a lot of mistakes.

They have spent a lot of money. That doesn't always equate to improved service. I'm worried for the people of Ontario under the failed plans in almost every category. There are some successes, and we would like to think they'd come up with some fresh ideas, but they seem to be backtracking. Most of this bill is about backtracking on errors they've made. The 10% off your electricity bill: Don't be fooled by it. They're trying to buy you with your own money.

In fact, if you want to look at it, you're paying 13% more for electricity just on the tax, the HST, and they're going to give you 10% back? They're still taking 3% from you, so they've failed on many accounts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: When you listen to the member across, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, you would not know that our dollar has gone from 67 cents to almost parity with the US. You would not hear that there has been a world recession—never happened. You would not hear that the US, where 80% of our imports go, is still in a deep recession. You would not hear that Ontario has regained 75% of our jobs, when, in the US, they have only regained 10% of the jobs that they lost during the recession. You would not know that Ontario is showing world leadership getting out of coal—a tremendous,

tremendous decision. All countries will be out of coal in 20 years. Ontario has taken the leadership on that.

He did not mention that the incidence of asthma in children is down from 13% to 10%. He did not mention the ban on the cosmetic use of chemicals—something they would never have supported. There are two major chemicals that are down 80% in our urban streams as a result of that ban. He did not mention that.

Look at the Globe and Mail article last Saturday. Ontario schools rank among the best in the world. This is just tremendous. I'm just looking at that article, and we see the achievement of grade 3 students has gone from 54% to over 70%; and the achievement of grade 6 children has gone from 54% to 66%. These are amazing figures. They cover reading, writing and mathematics.

At the same time, we know that we inherited an infrastructure—whether it was in transportation, whether it was in energy—in 2003 that was in a shambles. We've spent that money. We've reinvested in our people. We have reinvested in our infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank my colleagues the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Durham for their supportive comments. I would respond to the member for Oakville, who talked about the situation that he recalls in 2003 when their party took power. I certainly remember those days very well. He criticized our government's policy with respect to hydro. Again I would ask him, why is it that his party promised that the coal-fired generating plants would close in 2003 during that election? The commitment was that they would close by 2007. Our party, at that time, articulated the truth, which was that it couldn't be done until at least 2014, and unfortunately the government has eventually found that out after having broken the promise several times.

1650

The member made reference to the green energy issue. I'll tell you, if you come up to our area sometime you would find that Green Energy Act is not very popular. In fact, it's seen as a huge drawback in terms of government policy because of the effect of the wind farm proposals that are pitting neighbour against neighbour and causing very serious concerns throughout rural Ontario in many of the ridings that the government currently holds. I would suggest that they listen to their constituents on that.

In terms of responding to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, listening to his response, I was just thinking it sounded very much like the mantra that we used to hear from Bob Rae's government. In the early 1990s, when they were in government, they tried to explain and excuse their difficult situation by blaming on it a high dollar, the recession, the US economy, anyone but themselves, and we know what happened at the end of their tenure in government.

The member indicated that all countries will be out of coal in 20 years; I dispute that. I doubt very much that the

Americans will close their coal plants any time within the next 20 years. They have a huge stock of coal as one of their natural resources. Even if we do close our coal-fired generating plants, if we really believe that the Americans will—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I get into the meat of my presentation, I'd just like to make a statement. I remember coming here three years ago and sitting here and watching the finance minister stand up, point across the floor and start yelling that the opposition party left them with a \$5-billion deficit.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's \$5.6 billion.

Mr. Paul Miller: —\$5.6 billion; thank you. I guess if you live in a glass house you shouldn't be throwing rocks. I think we're at \$19 billion and climbing.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: The member across said I should get out more. Well, I do get out in Hamilton and I know that from 2004 to now—I believe the party opposite has been in power for seven years, 2004 to 2011. From 2004 to 2011, we've lost over 20,000 jobs in Hamilton in manufacturing. They just made an announcement about a potential 300 or 400 jobs coming to Hamilton. Well, we're about 19,600 short, so things aren't as rosy as they'd like to you think.

Getting into the meat of it, they have titled this bill the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibility Act, 2010. I'd like to start off with this ridiculous name for a piece of legislation. It's an ongoing fault of this government that they don't seem to be able to call things right. Why don't you simply call it the "managing clean energy benefit, OMERS and WSIB responsibility act"? That way, at least any member of public would have a marginal clue about what this bill intends to do, although, as is usually the case, the myriad of provisions make it a difficult slog even for those who are familiar with the all-encompassing legislation.

The area particularly to my interest, the WSIB, is specifically about the unfunded liability. This is a significant issue and one that requires micro-examination by the many organizations representing injured workers who understand, at the front-line level, the impact of recommendations. The Ontario NDP proposed an Ontario retirement plan, one that addressed many of the Arthurs expert commission's—appointed by the government, by the way—recommendations on pensions, a retirement plan that would address the concerns of 65% of Ontarians who do not have a workplace pension plan. The plan would work very similarly to the Canada pension plan and has several publicly managed pension plans ready to manage it. Using the CPP payroll deduction mechanism would maximize simplicity and minimize costs. Contributions to the Ontario plan would be collected using the same mechanism used to deduct CPP contributions. The Ontario retirement plan investment function would operate at arm's-length from the government as an expert entity similar to the CPP investment board, which invests

a portion of the Canada pension plan. It would have sufficient scale to operate at low unit costs, therefore benefiting plan members. But the government has failed to recognize the simple, clear-cut system that could be implemented quite quickly. This government seems to think that the large insurance companies and banks would be better managers. Well, I'm telling you, the insurance companies and big banks certainly haven't helped me over my last 59 years. In fact, I'm always paying service charges and I'm always getting milked and even my investments are going down instead of up, so I'm not quite sure I want those guys managing it. That would only ensure more fees taken directly out of my pension plan, not in any way in the best interests of plan members.

One of the most significant recommendations that the NDP made on the Arthurs expert commission recommendations was an Ontario pension agency. This agency would take pension plans that have been stranded or left without a plan manager when a company declares bankruptcy. Nortel and AbitibiBowater are recent examples of pension plans that have been left stranded. The lack of support from this government for the Nortel disabled retirees, who right now need the government to ensure that their lawyer is able to get the transcripts of the most recent court decisions so that they can craft an appeal—their pleas have fallen on the deafened ears of this government.

I want to quote to you from an email received in our offices pleading for help to get the transcripts before the end of November so that an appeal can be properly filed:

"The Nortel disabled bankruptcy court case was heard in Toronto in Judge Morawetz's courtroom twice in 2010: March 3 to 5, 2010, and September 29 and 30 and October 1, 2010. The disabled retirees have been trying to get the transcripts of these proceedings. Numerous phone calls have been made but with no success, so they have resorted to written records. To date, the transcripts have not been received. For obvious reasons, most of the disabled were unable to attend the court proceedings. In some cases, written affidavits were submitted to the court and at the September hearing. These individuals were conferenced by telephone; however, video conferencing was declined by the courts.

"The Ontario disabilities act of 2005 requires accessibility and/or accommodation to be made for the disabled. Although the attachments explain in detail the nature and extent their disability, the fact is they have been deemed disabled by Sun Life and, in most cases, by the CPP plan and therefore we are only requesting that an intent of the Ontario disabilities act be administered accordingly."

Not exactly fair; very, very badly handled.

In addition, these individuals cannot afford to travel and also cannot afford the outrageous 50 cents per page to secure the documents for themselves. They have to pay 50 cents for a page to read about how they're basically being screwed out of their pensions; pretty sad when you've got to pay to know the bad news.

Documents from parliamentary discussions are available within 12 to 24 hours, and the fact that the disabled have been advised that the requested documentation is not available for a minimum of six weeks after a formal request is just not acceptable. These documents are necessary for the lawyer and the disabled group to make effective appeal documents by November 30, 2010. I think that's tomorrow. I guess they're out of luck.

Not only did they not get co-operation from the justice minister, they didn't get co-operation from the courts, they didn't get co-operation from the people who have the files and wouldn't release them so they could mount a defence. These are individuals who face poverty on January 1, 2011, when their disability benefits coverage will end—didn't even get a chance, didn't get their day in court, didn't even get a chance to defend themselves, didn't even get a chance to receive the documents so they could mount a proper defence.

You should also note that the earliest written request for the information was dated October 13, 2010, which exceeds the six weeks' notification requirement. Given this information, I am requesting answers to (1) why have the requests for the court transcripts not been accommodated, and (2) why is it that the federal Hansard transcripts can be obtained the day of the committee hearings but court transcripts take six weeks after the initial request? You can get the Hansard transcripts from Parliament the next day but you've got to wait six weeks to get the transcripts from the initial request. If they can get it out in one day, why does it take six weeks to get to these disabled people?

1700

The disabled cannot afford to pay for these documents, and their lawyer is already working pro bono. Therefore, he could hardly be expected to obtain these transcripts, and there are piles of them, at 50 cents a page. He's already working free for the disabled, and they want to charge these people 50 cents a page. Why are the disabled not being given accessibility or accommodation to the documents in a timely manner in order to examine and make an appeal to the courts?

What a disturbing story, and this government has turned away from their pleas. We have written to the minister's staff, asking that they help, but after four workdays—four workdays—we still haven't had an answer, and these disabled workers are still being treated badly by the government.

The creation of the Ontario pension agency would have saved these injured pensioners from the extreme stress of this whole court process and the fight for their basic right to get the court transcripts in a timely and cost-affordable way. This government should be ashamed of the callous response to these Ontarians who have contributed so much to our economy over the good years and who are now cast aside in lean times.

The decision to hire Dr. Arthurs to head the funding review of the WSIB unfunded liability is good, but I fear that all his good work may fall on the same deafened Liberal ears that his good work fell on for pensions. Dr.

Arthurs will be looking at time limits to fully fund the WSIB, as well as the many issues related to the unfunded liability. But if the same types of forces that swayed the government to ignore many of Dr. Arthurs's excellent recommendations on the pension file are pushing their own agenda on this file, we can expect even more ignored recommendations. We have to fear the possible impact on benefits and whether the opposing forces are able to convince this government to reduce this in any way.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's getting a little loud, Speaker. You told me to be quiet a little earlier.

But the thing that is most offensive is that we are here, 15 years after the WSIB was re-created as an insurance system rather than a workers' compensation system, and this government hasn't done one thing to fix that basic problem. That any injured worker is fearful of contacting this organization that was created to protect employers from being sued by their employees who are injured on the job is wrong to the core—wrong to the core. That workers injured on the job with no doubt at all that the injury was caused solely on the job are refused their claim is absolutely unacceptable.

I heard one such case of a teacher whose student grabbed her arm and twisted it up her back, causing a rotator cuff injury, and her claim was denied. How can that be? How can this system reject the claims of injured workers when there are witnesses that the injury was completely a result of performing their work duties?

It's cases like this that have injured workers' groups demonstrating in front of the ministry annually. They'll be out again on December 3, standing in front of the ministry, falling on deaf ears. The minister will come out and speak and promise them they're working on it, and the head of the WSIB will come out and talk about how wonderful a job he's doing. But why are those people out there for 20 years, every year, in the freezing cold, standing in front of that building, asking for the elimination of experience rating, the elimination of deeming, and also to have indexing for their pensions, when they're living on pensions from 15—they get a lousy 1%, Speaker. You try and live on that. All they hear are platitudes from the talking heads who spew the party line and who seem to have no real sympathy, compassion, understanding or drive to fix an obviously gravely flawed system.

I guess that's why they have appointed Mr. Arthurs and all these experts, because they finally realized that the system is pathetic. It was meant to help workers, but they've put up roadblocks. They've put up adjudicators who attack—attack—the workers rather than help them. This whole system was put in place so workers could not sue businesses. It was an insurance plan. It's like any other insurance company nowadays: You have to fight them to get what you're entitled to.

Although I'm very happy that Dr. Arthurs has been given the task of figuring out the unfunded liability, I believe that we should be taking a far broader approach

on WSIB. We need to look at how the system is failing injured workers in every area, and we need to start the process by returning to a workers' compensation system, casting away completely the insurance-based system that works to refuse injured workers' claims rather than to work through the system with them to ensure that they are fully compensated, retrained and re-employed wherever possible.

Another part of this complex, multi-faceted piece of legislation is the changes to the Ontario Securities Commission. The bill will give the OSC the power to force derivatives traders to register with the OSC, thereby bringing a bit more transparency to this piece of the system. This would, if implemented and regulated correctly, provide the mandate to move ahead with the creation of an Ontario-based system to trade and clear over-the-counter derivatives, but we need to monitor very closely how the regulations to this legislation are written, as they are not subject to public scrutiny before becoming effective.

Once again, when they legislate this type of legislation, they certainly are not going to favour the big banks and insurance companies, I hope. I'm not quite sure that's the way it is, because I do believe that one of the members over there wanted to bring a bill forward for insurance companies to handle pension plans. That would be real interesting: billions of dollars coming out of the plan and going to private industries. Wonderful.

They are not subject to public scrutiny before becoming effective—they could weaken the impact of these changes to favour the banks, which are notoriously against regulation. Ontario is not unique in this action, as security regulators across the country are working on a registration plan, with Quebec as the lead regulator on derivatives.

The G20 mandated that member countries move derivatives trading onto the exchange floor and clear them in the central systems by the end of 2012. With the Bank of Canada and the six largest Canadian banks working on clearing this problem, we can expect that there will be some influence from this group on how the regulations are worded and implemented. We can be sure—absolutely positive—they'll have a big say in how this goes down. I'm not quite sure how many people from the public sector will be invited.

On another front, Ontario is moving to regulate credit rating agencies, although this legislation is not strong in this area. To really protect consumers, credit rating agencies should be legally liable for getting a rating wrong. They should also be liable for containing incorrect information on an individual which can only be corrected by the organization that provided it in the first place—interesting. If one wants to check their credit rating, they are required to provide personal information that the credit rating agency may not already have. Big Brother is watching you, but you're going to provide all the information that they haven't got so they can do their job and you end up getting a poor credit rating. That's wonderful; give them more information to lower your

credit rating. Individuals should be able to keep additional or new personal information out of this record and should be able to access the information easily.

At least one of these credit rating agencies is owned by a private—I repeat, private—US company, so that our credit information could become available to foreigners without our knowledge and not necessarily with our prior approval. We should be making efforts to control this kind of personal information and to give consumers a much stronger hand in the use of their credit and corollary personal information.

One of the most invasive and offensive uses of the credit rating agency is by insurance companies, which use it to determine the rate of a household insurance. Although they are not permitted to use a credit rating to determine the premium for auto insurance in Ontario, they are able to get the information when offering an umbrella-type policy where auto and home insurance are grouped for a premium discount. This simply allows the large insurance companies to collect personal and credit information which could, without one's knowledge, be applied to both premiums. If this government had actually wanted to protect consumers' interests, they would move quickly to forbid any access to credit ratings for any insurance in this province.

This is so wrong in any case, but it is particularly wrong during a time when we have businesses closing down, an escalating jobless rate and pensioners suffering due to companies closing and their pensions being left stranded. This is the time when Ontarians should be able to turn to their government to protect and help them through a crisis. This bill does not stand up for Ontarians in that way and in other ways they so desperately need. This bill does not cut it.

This government's clean energy benefit is a pathetic attempt to buy votes from Ontarians before they are hit with the full impact of the increasing hydro rates and the excessive HST on hydro. This increased cost will hit all hydro consumers except for the larger users, who will be benefiting from changes in the global adjustment formula—I haven't heard that one before: the global adjustment formula—for businesses.

1710

The NDP has taken the position that the HST should be removed from all hydro bills, that this government must protect everyday, low-use hydro users, not give deals to larger users. They're taking it from the little guy, giving it to the big guy and hammering the little guy again.

Our movement to remove the HST from hydro bills is receiving widespread support across this province. As noted in the latest polls, 76% of Ontarians want a change in government. They want a different government. It went up to 82% who say that they're moving in the wrong direction. But this government steadfastly spews a line that you'll be better off in Ontario—when you haven't got a place to live, you can't turn on your lights and you can't eat.

We receive email every day from yet another Ontarian whose hydro bill is reaching the point where they won't

be able to pay it. This is frightening when we are at the beginning of a time when many Ontarians who do not have access to natural gas or propane must use electricity to heat their homes. What do they do to protect their family from the cold and still be able to feed them? I don't know. They've got a real job on their hands trying to feed their families with these rising costs.

There's no answer from this government. They bellow the party line and leave Ontarians to fend for themselves. I will continue with my NDP colleagues to stand up for Ontarians and fight for those changes that will make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, create more jobs for the working people of Ontario and stop removing what little they have left in their wallets with these crazy systems that they want to put in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I found that dissertation really enlightening from a member who supports the party that brought in the Friedland formula, which attacked injured workers in a way that none of us could ever imagine.

Mr. Paul Miller: I wasn't here then.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Oh, you weren't here then, so you're not associated with what your people did before. That's amazing. It's the sort of thing that you normally would hear.

What is this bill really about? He wants the HST taken off electricity. That would take 8% off. This bill takes 10% off. Right? That's right. So 10% off your bill. You want the HST—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would you stop the clock for a minute, please? I would ask the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—he had his chance to speak; he's listening to the comments and questions.

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: They were yelling and screaming when I was talking. I think it should be on both sides. If you're going to reprimand me, reprimand them, too.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. I'm quite capable of chairing without your help.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Apparently, I've touched a chord.

My constituents appreciate this bill. This bill brings a 10% reduction off your electricity bill, even including the taxes. It includes the taxes.

Starting on the first of January, consumers will see bills that are down a net 10%. That's important to the people I represent. The folks I represent across northern Ontario who will be receiving—if they qualify, and most will—a \$200-per-family benefit for the northern energy credit, will also see a 10% reduction right on the bill. You'll never to have pay. You don't have to apply for it; it just takes 10% right off.

That is of help, and I think the people on my side of the House are going to support this. I want the member to

tell us whether he's going to support this bill. I think he's going to stand up and vote for it, unless he decides not to appear. I am delighted to be in a position to stand up here, talk straight and tell the people that I will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would never fault the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for standing up for injured workers. That's one of his main fortes as a former member of the Steelworkers at a steel plant. He knows of what he speaks.

I think there's really something important on that WSIB file; very few members on the other side have read this, I'm sure. Under schedule 21—people should be aware of what it does. Under the assumption of liability, which is \$12 billion, which isn't tied to the government—that's in addition to the debt and deficit of \$20 billion—there's a provision under future liabilities actuarially for them to fund the number of people who are injured, who have accidents, whether they're a FEL award or a NEL award, and cost those actuarially into the future, and they haven't been doing it. Mr. Mahoney—I am so disappointed in the current board there, but that's another debate.

What they're saying here is the future benefits; that's the change. What this means—because there's not one nickel of provincial money in the WSIB. It's an independent agency of the government. However, where their revenue comes from is the worker and the jobs.

This is another subtle tax on jobs. That's what it is. It absolves the government, in section 21, of any future liabilities. Periodically, governments used to intervene for the plight of injured workers and fund them up. I think a lot of members over there haven't got the foggiest idea—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Oh, no, no.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it's true. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin probably doesn't know. I'll tell you right now, he should read the section.

But the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek stood and made the argument, very accurately so, I think, about trust. I think that was ultimately the general theme that I kept hearing of the government's plan on energy and a number of things.

The 10% reduction is just a promise of your own money back. That's all it is.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and I've listened to some of the comments that are being made here on the government side about what he had to say. Quite frankly, he talked about affordability. He talked about energy costs. He talked about affordability and everything that was related to that. He talked about pensions and the WSIB, in fact, issues on which he has enormous passion. We know that over the years from watching him: He has enormous passion on those issues.

He pointed out quite correctly that bills are going to go up some 43% in the next five years. Yes, there is the 10%, and I think he talked about the 10%. But we as New Democrats don't think that that 10% is going to do it. Is it more than the 8% that you'd have taken off the HST? Yes, it is.

But the HST is likely to be permanent, and this bill that is being passed, that you're asking to us to pass, is for one year only—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Five years.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's five years, but it can be taken away at the stroke of a pen, without the say-so of this House. It has been opined that should the Liberals not win the next election, which is a very likely outcome, this is gone.

I think this is what he was trying to say. I would ask the members opposite, look in this House. I look at it every day: There's an eagle up there telling me to always be vigilant, but there is an owl looking at you to tell you to always be wise. You cannot be wise when you're attempting to shout down a man who is speaking to you with passion. You cannot be wise when you are rejecting every single argument that comes from this side of the House. If you want to do your job right, please look at that owl from time to time and do the job right. He has a lot to say, and he should have been heard.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I look to the eagle, and I look to the owl, and I ask if either one of them has a copy of the NDP's energy plan, because I certainly don't.

I know that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek speaks with passion about how many ways he and his party or the party opposite will reduce everybody's costs. Frankly, I don't know why they're only reducing them a little, because if all you're ever talking about are cost reductions, why don't they eliminate all the costs?

But we all know that the net effect of our energy plan is a 3.6% increase each year for the next five years for consumers. That's if you consume the same amount of energy that you are now. It doesn't even speak about decreases from further conservation.

So the real question is to compare what they're going to do with 3.6%. Everybody wants to know what they're going to do, so what are they going to do? Are they going to bring in more coal? We don't know, but we're waiting to hear. Are they going to shut down power so that nobody has the lights on in their houses in the evening or on weekends? Well, we don't know.

I look to the eagle and I look to the owl and I say, where is this plan? Where is the plan? Share just a page, maybe two pages with us. It would be so helpful if we could see. Are they going to do more nuclear? Are they going to do more wind? Are they going to do more solar? Are they going to do less? Oh, we'd so much like to know. But how do we know what the cost will be if they won't tell us anything about the plan? I tell you, this plan must simply be blowing in the wind.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: Some people use shovels; other people use front-end loaders.

Anyway, the bottom line here is that that was very passionate speech from that minister over there. But you know what? What he doesn't tell you is that they give half measures to all bills they bring in here and then they say, "Well, your party voted against it," because it isn't enough for what the people need, and they'll say, "Oh, you're going to support this." Certainly we're going to support a 10% rebate, but it falls way short of what you should have done.

You want a conservation plan? Well, you're going to see one. The minister is going to see a conservation plan. Maybe he'd like to look at what happened in California. In California, which he didn't pay attention to, they've reduced their energy costs by 40% with retrofitting, with conservation, not building new nuclear plants, overruns. They're not doing that.

This minister is doing gestures. He's not paying attention. He's being silly as usual. That's fine, because you know what? He doesn't want to hear our answers because our answers are going to embarrass you and our your government. That's why in 2011 the people of Ontario will have woken up, smelled the roses, and you'll be gone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In the hopes that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is finished his speech, we will continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Obviously, everybody brings a certain amount of passion, brings a certain amount of philosophical outlook and philosophical ideology to the debate when you're talking about the economic affairs of the province. Everybody will have their own ideas. Everybody will have things that are unique to their party that they think are important. As I said earlier, it's a matter of the sorts of choices that you're prepared to make on behalf of Ontarians.

I often think that we judge the real value of a government on how it handles things when times get tough. I think the sign of leadership is when a government is able to steer its jurisdiction through times when—the economy obviously goes through cycles, and often those cycles include some good times and often they include some bad times. You really test the mettle of the government when the economy is going through some bad

times. I think for most of us what we've witnessed in the past few years is probably a downturn in the economy unlike anything we've ever seen in our lifetimes, certainly in my lifetime. I've heard about other recessions and depressions in the past from people who are older than I am, but I've never experienced them first-hand.

Certainly, it has an impact on your community; it has an impact on the jurisdiction that you have the privilege to govern, and you have to make choices. The choice that Ontario has made, and the choice that the McGuinty government has made, is that it is intent on bringing this province of Ontario out of the recession much stronger than we went in. I think some of the measures that have been implemented during these times are an indication that we're serious about that, that we think it's achievable, that we think we can make progress as we come out of a recession, as we deal, obviously, with an increasingly global economy, deal with emerging economies like China and India. We need to be seen as world leaders and we need to do things within our own economy, within the legislation that we pass within this Legislature, that are going to equip our young people with the tools they need to compete in that global economy as we move forward. So it's not surprising that you would see, despite every reason for not doing it, that we've invested in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. As I said earlier this afternoon, any educator worth his or her salt around the globe will tell you that if you invest in young people early in their lives, it's going to pay off in huge dividends in the future. It's going to set those young people up for the sort of success that you need in an information-based society.

When times have turned tough in the past, you've seen a variety of choices employed by other governments, so it's no surprise today that you'll hear a variety of opinions from all the parties. But let's look at what has happened in the past; let's look at things that have happened in the past.

Let's go back to the previous government. The PC government had a fire sale of Highway 407. It left us in a state where the province now, because of contractual reasons, has no approval rights with respect to fee increases. The private company that's operating the highway can increase fees pretty well to the point that it sees fit. Ontario is a province, as a result of the deal that was struck by the previous government, that has no ongoing revenues that come in from that highway. The PC government of the past failed to negotiate any participation rights in that agreement.

At the same time, when times were relatively good compared to what we've seen in previous years, the previous government managed to add billions of dollars to Ontario's debt. They hid a deficit from us. Obviously, we all know that. We had quite the debate in the House about that: \$5.6 billion, hidden. There's a deficit in the province of Ontario today, but it's out in the open. We're able to debate it; we're able to talk about it. Ontarians know about it. It hasn't been hidden.

What isn't often mentioned is that under the previous government, Ontario had the highest-ever accumulated-

deficit-to-GDP ratio in its history. That seems to be forgotten often in the comments that are made.

I know at that point in my life I was serving as a regional councillor, as a town councillor, trying to keep the essential services in the town of Oakville and the region of Halton going, but dealing with provincial downloading—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Kevin, tell us about downloading.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Downloading? I mean, the Conservative government were the masters of downloading, believe me. They followed the slash-and-burn approach when it came to hospitals, when it came to schools. They had neighbourhoods having battles with each other on a regular basis as to which school would stay open, which school would close. My own hospital was badly in need of expansion. It simply couldn't get the approval from that government to do anything about it.

Today, we have the opportunity to follow a number of paths in order to bring the Ontario economy back to where it should be. I think that by any objective analysis, you can look to the job creation, the replacement of jobs that have come as a result of actions that have been made by our government, the McGuinty government. You'll see in the United States, our neighbouring jurisdiction, they've managed to recover about 10% of the jobs they had when they were going into the recession. In the province of Ontario, with 12.5 million of us, we've managed to recover 75% of those jobs.

So when you compare two jurisdictions that are quite similar to each other, neighbouring states and provinces that deal with each other, that trade with each other, that share a common border, and you look at the way that we've handled our economy here in the province of Ontario and you look at what's happened in the United States, I think anybody, by any objective analysis, would say that we're doing quite well in Ontario compared to other jurisdictions.

Also, I come from Oakville, obviously. The member mentioned that it's been decided that a site that had been previously picked by the Ontario Power Authority to put in a natural gas power plant will not be moving ahead, and that's wonderful news for the people in my community. I think it's wonderful news to anybody in a local community that believes in local democracy and in people coming forward and being able to talk to their government and being listened to.

But times weren't always rosy for Oakville. Oakville, as you'll know, is the home of the head office of Ford of Canada. It's also the assembly plant for a number of vehicles that are selling very, very well. But you have to go back to the days of 2008 and 2009, and you have to think how important the auto industry is to the province of Ontario. Economists and experts in the auto industry will tell you on a pretty regular basis that for every one job you create on the auto assembly line, you create between six and seven in the community. So when you get 2,000 or 3,000 jobs in an assembly plant, say for example, in Woodstock or a GM plant in Oshawa, for

every one job you're creating on the line, you're creating another six or seven in the community.

1730

When the Fords of the world, the GMs of the world and the Chryslers of the world were going through some pretty tough times, we had a decision to make as a government, and obviously there was a difference of opinion. The Leader of the Opposition did not support the 2008-09 auto bailout. He called it corporate welfare. Think of the jobs that would have been lost had that auto pact not been supported. Think of the CAW jobs that would have been lost. Think of those well-paying jobs in the community, on the assembly line, and also think of the recovery that's been made by the auto industry as a result of strategic help by this government at the right time. Certainly when you look at Ford in my community, it's doing extremely well. You look at GM in Oshawa: They're starting to turn the corner. They've just entered the market again with their shares; the shares are doing quite well.

When you look at Ford, for example—at one point I think Ford was trading at \$1.50 a share; the last time I looked, it was somewhere between \$12 and \$15. That's a tremendous recovery and it means a lot to the people that work in my community.

You have to look at the conduct of the previous government. Under the Harris and the Hudak regimes, there was no new auto investment in Ontario during that entire period. They failed to attract a single auto plant to this province. One single auto plant—they couldn't get one of the auto manufacturers to come to the province of Ontario and invest, but the United States managed to get 19 during that period. What was happening in the United States that wasn't happening in Ontario during the regime of the previous government?

The productivity gap between Ontario and the United States during the period of the Mike Harris era under the Tory government doubled. Farmers lost their livelihood. We talk about the agricultural sector. During the last five years of that government, over 1,000 farmers per year lost their farms. There was a decline of 25% of all jobs in agriculture in this province, and that was during good times.

So now here we are faced with some challenging times in the province of Ontario, and what we don't want to see is a repeat of the past. We don't want to see closing hospitals. People tell me that. People in my community, people around the province of Ontario, will tell you that one of the things they value most about Ontario and about this country, Canada, is that the health care system that we have here looks after you based on how sick you are, not on how rich you are; based on how much you need their services, not how much money you're able to pay.

We're not going to fire nurses like the previous government. What we've been able to do instead, through strategic moves and strategic legislation, is cut drug prices in half in the province of Ontario, so that now people in Ontario only have to pay half the price they

paid before, or the province of Ontario itself only has to pay half the price it paid before to drug companies.

Wait times, certainly in my own community and around the province, when you look at a variety of surgeries and procedures, are down, in some cases quite dramatically. You look at MRIs, you look at surgeries, you look at the wait times in emergency rooms, which once were escalating at a pretty dramatic pace, and you see that they've come down as well.

Certainly in Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, which is a hospital that will be closed in the next few years as we open a brand new one at Dundas and Third Line in Oakville, a brand new, state-of-the-art hospital to replace one that served the community very well but simply got too small and simply didn't have the room to expand—that hospital is going through its RFP stage, and a decision will be made on who will be building that hospital within the next few months.

What we were able to do was we were able to keep people working. Today, I had the pleasure of announcing in Oakville, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, that we've just opened—anybody who drives through Oakville, anybody who's going west tonight will drive and see that we've opened 16 kilometres, just this morning, of HOV lanes right throughout the community of Oakville. That's going to be excellent for the environment. It's going to allow for more emission-free travel. It's going to make GO Transit more efficient. Those people who want to do their part and carpool will now be able to carpool and move through Oakville. Certainly, anybody who travels from Toronto to Hamilton will know that that's been a challenge. This is going to help quite significantly.

We twinned the bridges over Sixteen Mile Creek, twinned the bridges over Bronte Creek, spent \$380 million on improving transportation throughout the western GTA, and there's a lot more to come. And what did that do? That allowed the building trades to keep working. That allowed the suppliers of the asphalt, the concrete, the tools, the heavy equipment and organizations such as the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793, which is in my riding—that's allowed their members to keep working through some of the tougher times that we've faced as an economy.

Previous governments, as I said, added billions of dollars to Ontario's debt during good times. They hid a deficit from Ontarians in their 2003 budget, and it wasn't until later that they were forced to admit that they actually, in good times, managed to run the government into \$5.6 billion of more debt.

The NDP government didn't fare much better, but you have to go back some years to 1993. It probably would be unfair to the two members who are in the House, because obviously they will tell us that they weren't here in 1993. But you do go back and you see public sector wage cuts, which this government has decided is a road they're not going to travel; we have implemented a freeze on civil service wages, a pay freeze in the province of Ontario. We agree it's the right thing to do. They almost

doubled the province's debt in five years and they carried four straight deficits. That's something that I don't think Ontarians want to see.

When you look at the progress we've made in the province of Ontario, there are more young people participating, as I said earlier, in post-secondary education than anywhere else in the western world, right here in Ontario. We see some of the initiatives we're making now on clean air: You see us starting to close down the coal plants, see that we're starting to look at airsheds and air zones and ways that we can reduce the asthma rates for our young people in Ontario.

We know that people are suffering. We know that people are going through some tough times and we know that this is a time when they need their government most to assist them. So what we've done for business, in order to help them create jobs, is we've asked them if they will invest in Ontario. One of the reasons that we're saying they should invest in Ontario and we're seeing them invest in Ontario is that we enjoy the lowest corporate income tax in all of the country; we've got the lowest provincial personal income taxes in the country. In fact, when it comes to corporate taxes now, we've got the lowest corporate taxes in all of North America.

I think, all in all, you're going to hear a variety of opinions as to what should be done, as to what are the best things to do to move this province through some of the troubling times that we've seen in the past. You have to look at, I think, if you're going to be consistent. I'm just going to use a few quotes. Somebody very recently said, "We understand how that (single sales tax) can help the economy." That was Tim Hudak.

He says also, "I agree that there's little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply two separate taxes and policies and collect two separate group of sales taxes." That was Tim Hudak talking to the Economic Club of Toronto in 2009. We're still not sure if he's going to commit to repealing the HST, if he's going to keep the HST; we're still not sure about that because, as a previous speaker said, there doesn't appear to be any plan, just a lot of statements that don't really add up to much.

1740

Now, the NDP, I think, still has a request in to the Premier, unless they've taken that request away, asking if the Premier would raise the provincial sales tax by 1%, which would be a \$2-billion tax hike. I'm assuming they don't want to do that anymore. I'd like to hear somebody say that they don't want to raise the provincial sales tax by 1%. I don't think that would be a good idea. I can't help but think that the NDP doesn't think that would be a good idea, either.

But we still haven't heard anybody from either side, and certainly they've had their opportunities. Are you going to repeal the HST? It's a simple yes or no. "Yes, we are." "No, we're not." They've been asked over and over again. The media is asking over and over again, "What are you going to do? What's going to be in your platform? Are you going to repeal the HST?" Tim Hudak

was in favour of it the last time I looked. It seems to me that, suddenly, he seems to be in favour of the HST. I have no idea where the NDP stands on the HST, and I'm not sure if the NDP knows where they stand on the HST.

It's going to be interesting as these parties are forced to account. These parties have to come forward with plans. The media and the people of Ontario are starting to ask, "What is your plan?" It's very easy to stand here and say, "Well, I don't like that. I don't like this. I don't like that." Sometimes you get called to account. Sometimes you've got to stand up and say, "I believe in this."

If the NDP achieves official party status or we have to change the rules again—I'm not sure; I don't know what official party status will be. It appears to be whatever number of seats the NDP gets becomes official party status.

So as I said, there's going to be a variety of opinions expressed. It's a lot of fun. It's a lot of fun when you listen to the NDP try to present itself as a serious party and get laughed out of town. Every election time, they get their hopes up, and then every election time, they come in here in the single digits. It's just kind of sad to see that, but—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Hamilton East.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think I'm done here, Speaker. It's been a pleasure to speak for 20 minutes. I look forward to responding.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was hoping the member would continue. He's starting to back up his remarks and sort of retreat.

And if I recall, some time ago, the member from Oakville—truly a very nice person, having served as regional councillor and that. I thought for sure that he was going to actually take a run at a senior job there in the region, but as it turned out—now, he did run at one time, as you would know, for the NDP.

Interjection: He was an NDP?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. He actually has quite a long and convoluted history in his—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Why don't you explain it for us? Tell us more about it.

Mr. John O'Toole: He saw the light, but actually I think he was dazzled by the light.

But he was saying this: He was asking a lot of questions of what we'd do. In his remarks, he was saying, "What would the NDP do, and what would the Conservatives do?" He's training to be in opposition, because, actually, after October, they get to ask the questions.

In all fairness, those are fair questions, but you should keep in mind that you've had seven years—

Mr. Robert Bailey: And you didn't get it done.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and you didn't get it done. Not only that, in seven years—and you have to ask yourself, how is it? How are you doing?

I've said it before, and I think it's worth repeating: The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. And what have they done? They've broken promises, raised taxes and pretty well ruined the energy system, as well as other—now, to be fair, they have done a few things rather decently. But, look, practise up on asking questions, because that's going to be your role in the next year or so. As a respectable member, I think you've sort of run out of ideas, and that's forgivable. Look, you've had seven years. I understand you've hit the wall.

They're flailing for ideas. I expect the NDP will come up with some really good ideas for you, because you probably heard them when you ran for them the last time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as always, to the member from Oakville. He talks about his party planning all this energy for the future, but I remember, just six months ago in this House, member after member—the Premier, the finance minister, the energy minister—all of them standing in their place and talking about the dire necessity of having a gas plant in Oakville and how the whole place was going to fall apart unless we got this gas plant in Oakville.

I remember the member from Oakville being so upset about this. He packed the whole place with his friends to try to say, “No, no, it wasn't me; it wasn't my party. Honest, it wasn't us.”

Oh yes, then they had to bring in Erin Brockovich to tell the government what they needed to do. And now the government announces to much fanfare, “We don't need the gas plant in Oakville. We never needed the gas plant in Oakville because we have enough energy.”

This is the same government today, which has enough energy, that is trying to say, “We need \$87 billion worth of new nuclear stuff.” This is a government that admitted, after six months, that they hugely overestimated what they needed; they didn't need Oakville at all. They needed to listen to people like Erin Brockovich.

And there you've got this member who's still on that sort of time warp where he's talking about, “We need all this energy.” Hasn't he learned the lesson? Haven't the people of Oakville and the people of Ontario learned the lesson? The lesson is, all these people who are talking about this overwhelming need for energy are overestimating it. It probably is not necessary.

I ask the member from Oakville, and I hope he will explain it in his two minutes, what is so different today that we need \$87 billion worth, but we can spend hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars to get out of the Oakville gas plant contract?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I certainly think that this is a lively debate. I just wanted to add the fact that we sometimes forget, in our macro look at this, our micro interests, and those are our own communities.

I just want to talk about the economy of Toronto. I know that we sometimes forget that if local economies

don't work, provincial and national economies don't work. I would think that, in this very challenging period economically, we've been very fortunate in the city of Toronto that our major industries are still vibrant. I know that our financial services industry, despite the massive meltdown on Wall Street, because we've got good rules in our financial services here in Ontario, the Ontario Securities Commission and our banking act here in Canada, has been able to stand pretty strong through this incredibly tumultuous time.

I know that our construction industry in Toronto, the men and women in my riding who work on construction, have been very fortunate. They've been able to keep their jobs, and that's thanks to the provincial government's partnership with the federal government and the stimulus program. We've had a lot of roads repaired, a lot of bridges repaired. We've had housing built. Also, the private sector has been quite buoyant through these very turbulent times. If you look at Liberty Village in Toronto, for instance, which is an old derelict area that used to have all kinds of empty plants, there are about 20 cranes in the skies there. People are building houses and condos, which is good.

Again, these are troubled times. So as much as we would like to castigate each other—and obviously, it is the job of opposition to castigate the government—there are some good things happening in this great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd just like to take up where the member from Eglinton–Lawrence left off when he talks about castigation. There's lots to castigate about.

I listened very carefully to the member from Oakville's comments, and I very much enjoyed them. He got on there about back in the 1990s. If I recall right, it was Paul Martin who was cutting transfer payments to the provinces that led to these cutbacks. Actually, the provincial government of the day was investing in health care, and it was Paul Martin who actually cut transfer payments. But anyway, that's a debate for another day. We won't get into that right now; we've got lots of other things today to talk about. I look forward to this debate as well.

I must have different constituents in my riding, because I'll tell you, the people I hear from back in my riding are concerned about these higher energy prices and the HST. They're telling me that they don't believe in these high-priced contracts that they've signed with these green energy companies, the Samsung deal that was done in secret. We can't find out any of the details about it. Among the myriad deals and obfuscation that were done, I keep referring back to that Sussex strategy, Sussenomics, that we were fortunate to have access to. I look at everything through the prism of this Sussex strategy, where it said that the first order of business would be to confuse, obfuscate and drag a red herring across the trail when people were trying to understand what the costs were, what the benefits to this Green Energy Act were. We

don't even hear anybody talk about the Green Energy Act anymore. Now it's clean energy. We went from green to clean.

1750

Anyway, I look forward to that debate. I'm sure there are other members who would like to add to that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oakville has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to respond. Certainly I enjoyed some of the comments. Some of them I'd almost agree with; some of them I think are basically fairy tales.

As I said earlier, it's a matter of the choices you make. When GM was in trouble—this would be for the member from Durham. I know as a former employee of GM, he knows what a proud history that company has in our province. He knows what it means to his community. He knows what it means to the province of Ontario. So when his leader called assistance to them corporate welfare, I didn't hear him do it publicly, but I bet behind closed doors he took his leader to task. I bet he told Mr. Hudak, "Don't do that to my community. My community needs help. GM's going to pull through this somehow. If they get some help, if they get a little bit of help, they're going to make themselves a healthy company again and keep hiring people in my community." I don't know that that conversation took place, but I'm hoping it did. I'll put my faith in the member that that is actually what happened.

Also, when people at the Ford plant and people at the Chrysler plant needed help, they looked to this government for assistance and this government responded to save those jobs. It responded to the point that Buzz Hargrove, I believe—I don't know if he was kicked out of the NDP or he left the NDP. I'm not sure exactly what happened to Buzz Hargrove, if he left on his own or he was asked to leave, but certainly Buzz Hargrove is a man I respect. I think he understands this province, I think he understands what it means to save jobs, and I think he understands what it means to invest strategically in industries like the auto business. Certainly I don't think he was very happy with what the NDP was doing, and I'd always seen the CAW and the NDP as very strong allies. Obviously, the NDP was up to something that the CAW didn't like.

I think we're on the right track. I think the other parties maybe have different ideas, but I think we're taking Ontario down the right—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise before the House today to speak to Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. In particular, I would like to speak to schedule 13, the so-called Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010.

This omnibus bill is just another in a long string of omnibus bills that this government has introduced. It looks to amend 21 separate pieces of legislation in one fell swoop. Many of these amendments are highly technical,

and rather than debate them individually, they have been presented in a single piece of legislation.

This bill diverts attention from the real issue, that the fall economic statement is just further proof of the McGuinty government's fiscal mismanagement.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you. The member from Durham's coaching me here, so I'll take his advice.

Expert economists have judged Dalton McGuinty as the worst fiscal manager amongst all the Premiers. That's not my judgment. That's fiscal judgements from across the province and across the country.

Ontario's real per capita GDP has declined by 8% since 2000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty Liberals spend \$2.1 million more every hour than they collect in revenue. Don't trust that the McGuinty government won't use the provisions of this bill to raise taxes further.

Despite many different issues tackled in this bill, I would like to focus on the skyrocketing hydro rates across our province. One of the things that Bill 135 aims to do is provide a 10% reduction in hydro rates. A reduction is clearly an admission that this government's green energy strategy has failed. It has failed hardworking Ontario families and failed many manufacturing companies that are leaving our province due to unaffordable hydro rates. A 10% reduction won't solve the problem when this government is committed to ever-increasing hydro rates.

Time and time again, both PC and NDP members have risen in this House and demanded that this government invest wisely in affordable, efficient and dependable energy rather than throwing the money of hardworking Ontario families away into sweetheart, sole-sourced deals like Samsung or other expensive energy experiments. When will this government make the details of the Samsung deal public?

Many hydro bills are climbing across the province. Last week, this Liberal government introduced their so-called long-term energy strategy. In this announcement, the government revealed that hydro bills paid by Ontario families and businesses are set to skyrocket 46% over the next five years; this on top of this government's 75% hydro rate hike, HST and other charges since 2003—75%. In 2003 typical family bills were \$87 a month, but after this government's 46% price hike, families could be paying as high as \$166 a month by 2015, based on current Ministry of Energy projections.

I think that the Sussex Strategy Group document was right where it said, on page 2, "In this, it will be critical"—critical—"to 'confuse' the issue in the political/public/media away from just price...." Ladies and gentlemen out there in TV land, that's on page 2 of the Sussex strategy document, which inadvertently came to us, luckily for Ontario families.

Families are near the breaking point, but instead of fixing the problem, the Premier has decided to give everyone a 10% reduction and continue on his way to further increase hydro rates; with borrowed money, I might add. They're in debt over \$20 billion and they're

going to borrow more money to give people a 10% cut. It is because my colleagues on the other side believe that money in the pockets of Ontarians is unlimited. I find it very hard to believe that they are not receiving the same types of phone calls, letters and emails that I am from seniors on fixed incomes and struggling, hardworking Ontario families. Realizing that their re-election chances are in serious jeopardy, the McGuinty Liberals announced the Ontario clean energy benefit, which will cost families \$1 billion a year in taxes instead of through their hydro bills.

These are just a number of letters that I received from my constituents, and I'm sure the government members would love to read a number of the letters they've received. Some of them are actually from their ridings.

Since this government seems unable to hear the voices of hardworking Ontario families and seniors struggling on fixed incomes to pay their McGuinty energy experiment and hydro hikes, I'd like to give them an opportunity to hear some of the hundreds of people who have written me.

A man from Brights Grove writes:

"I am writing in regard to today's debate on HST and Ontarians' hydroelectric bills.

"We're in times when the Liberal government is asking everyone to tighten their belts.

"It's hard tightening our belts when the Liberals are using that same belt around our necks to choke us.

"A former party member myself"—this is this gentleman writing—"my opinion is the HST was a burden much too huge for the Ontario people.

"I ask that you convey my concerns during debate today."

I've done that today.

Another man, from Camlachie, another small community in my riding:

"I am strongly opposed to the extra fees being applied to hydro bills. As we should all aware, since private suppliers are being paid large sums to generate electricity using wind and solar, our hydro bills are going to skyrocket—there is no question that this must happen.

The HST is only making a bad situation worse. There are people who are not going to be able to afford to use electricity as it is.

"Our hydro bills that I receive, the actual cost of electricity is less than half the bill. The rest is taxes, debt retirement, regulatory and delivery charges. It is already ridiculous and going to get worse. Is it sensible to shut down Lambton when Detroit Edison is right across the same river and does not have the scrubbing technology that OPG uses?

"As a nation we are too apathetic about things like this and I wish to speak up at this time."

This is another letter from a woman in my riding. It's addressed:

"Mr. Bailey,

"You and other politicians at Queen's Park will debate on the future of hydro bills. I urge and expect to you fight for the removal of the HST from hydro bills. Furthermore, you can push to get rid of the smart meters as well. That is another ridiculous cash grab. The Ontario government taxes us enough already and should not be in the business of punishing us for using energy. I know your party is for limited government and low taxes. Please prove it."

Another letter:

"I am writing to advise you of our disgust with the HST being applied to hydro bills. Once the smart meter comes into effect, the cost of hydro will increase. As the cost of hydro increases, the HST tax will be compounded. Granted, we can all do our part to use less electricity, but basically we feel that it is immoral to tax a necessity of life. Our displeasure with the Liberal government's approach to the citizens of Ontario re the HST on hydro will definitely influence how we will vote in the next Ontario election."

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. I ask the member to take a pause there. It being 6 of the clock, I declare this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Toby Barrett
Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Leeanna Pendergast, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Steve Clark, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
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Maria Van Bommel
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Wayne Arthurs, M. Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Association of Ontario Health Centres	
Mme France G�elinas	3756
Mohamad Fakih	
Mr. Khalil Ramal	3756
Canadian Educational Resources Council	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	3756
Employment practices	
Mr. Jim Brownell	3757

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / D EP T DES PROJETS DE LOI

Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2010, Bill 140, Mr. Bartolucci / Loi de 2010 favorisant des collectivit�es fortes gr�ce au logement abordable, projet de loi 140, M. Bartolucci	
First reading agreed to.....	3757

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / D CLARATIONS MINIST RIELLES ET R PONSES

Affordable housing	
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	3757
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	3758
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	3759

PETITIONS / P TITIONS

Highway improvement	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3759
British home children	
Mr. Jim Brownell	3760
Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3760
Chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency	
Mr. Bill Mauro	3760
Parkinson's disease	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3760
Diagnostic services	
Mme France G�elinas	3761
Cemeteries	
Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield	3761
Replacement workers	
Mme France G�elinas	3761
Cemeteries	
Mr. Jim Brownell	3761

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010, Bill 135, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur l'aide aux familles ontariennes et la gestion responsable, projet de loi 135, M. Duncan	
Mr. Michael Prue	3762
Mr. Bill Mauro	3765
Mr. Ted Arnott	3765
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	3765
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	3766
Mr. Michael Prue	3766
Mr. Charles Sousa	3766
Mr. John Yakabuski	3769
Mr. Paul Miller.....	3769
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3770
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	3770
Mr. Charles Sousa	3770
Mr. John Yakabuski	3771
Mr. Paul Miller.....	3773
Mrs. Amrit Mangat.....	3774
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	3774
Mr. Michael Prue	3774
Mr. John Yakabuski	3775
Mr. Gilles Bisson	3775
Mr. Mario Sergio.....	3778
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3779
Mr. Paul Miller.....	3779
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3779
Mr. Gilles Bisson	3780
Mr. Bill Mauro	3780
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3784
Mr. Gilles Bisson	3784
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	3785
Mr. Ted Arnott	3785
Mr. Bill Mauro	3785
Royal assent / Sanction royale	
The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo)	3786
The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker).....	3786
Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010, Bill 135, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur l'aide aux familles ontariennes et la gestion responsable, projet de loi 135, M. Duncan	
Mr. Ted Arnott	3786
Mr. Paul Miller.....	3789
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3789
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3790
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	3790
Mr. Ted Arnott	3790
Mr. Paul Miller.....	3791
Mr. Michael A. Brown	3794

Mr. John O'Toole	3794
Mr. Michael Prue	3794
Hon. Christopher Bentley	3795
Mr. Paul Miller	3795
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	3795
Mr. John O'Toole	3798
Mr. Michael Prue	3799
Mr. Mike Colle	3799
Mr. Robert Bailey	3799
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	3800
Mr. Robert Bailey	3800
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	3801

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 29 November 2010 / Lundi 29 novembre 2010

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Robert Bailey	3743
Mr. Reza Moridi	3743
Mr. Steve Clark	3743
Hon. Monique M. Smith	3743
Mr. Ted Arnott	3743
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	3743
Mme France Gélinas	3743
Hon. John Milloy	3743
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	3743

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Energy policies

Mr. Tim Hudak	3743
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3743

Energy policies

Mr. Tim Hudak	3744
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3744

Energy policies

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3745
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3746

Smart meters

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3746
Hon. Brad Duguid	3746

Tobacco control

Mr. Peter Shurman	3747
Hon. Deborah Matthews	3747

Poverty

Mr. Michael Prue	3748
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	3748
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	3748

Energy policies

Mr. Charles Sousa	3748
Hon. Brad Duguid	3749

Illegal drug operations

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	3749
Hon. James J. Bradley	3749

Freedom of information

Mme France Gélinas	3750
Hon. Deborah Matthews	3750

Consumer protection

Mr. Mario Sergio.....	3750
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	3750

Identity theft

Mr. John O'Toole	3751
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	3751

Long-term care

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3752
Hon. Deborah Matthews	3752

First Nations

Mr. Michael A. Brown	3752
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	3752

Wind turbines

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	3753
Hon. Brad Duguid	3753

First Nations

Mr. Gilles Bisson	3753
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	3753

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act, 2010, Bill 101, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2010 sur la sécurité et la sensibilisation en matière de stupéfiants, projet de loi 101, Mme Matthews

Third reading agreed to	3754
-------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3754
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	3754
Mme France Gélinas	3754

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Smart meters

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	3755
---------------------------	------

North York General Hospital

Mr. David Zimmer	3755
------------------------	------

Apprenticeship training

Mr. Randy Hillier	3755
-------------------------	------

Peel Children's Centre

Mr. Vic Dhillon.....	3755
----------------------	------

Local Democracy Week

Mr. John O'Toole	3756
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover