



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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de l'Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 5 June 2001

Mardi 5 juin 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 June 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 juin 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

I rise today as the member for the Upper Ottawa Valley to convey to the Harris government the incredible and dumbfounded response of my elderly constituents, who are hearing these past few days that their community care access centre is going to be withdrawing very valuable and important home care and home support services from hundreds, perhaps thousands, of elderly patients in communities from Arnprior to Stonecliffe, and from Pembroke out to Barry's Bay and Palmer Rapids.

These older people are absolutely incredulous. This government, which has closed scores of hospitals and taken over 7,000 hospital beds out of the system, promised in good faith just a few years ago that there would be more, not less, money from the Ontario government to support the frail elderly at home.

I've got a constituent, to name but one, who is an 84-year-old woman with Alzheimer's and a broken hip and she's now going to lose valuable home support, personal care service. She and her family are absolutely distraught and the family is making a great effort to sustain their mother at home.

This is an outrageous breach of faith with the elderly people of the Ottawa Valley and elsewhere in Ontario.

Just a few weeks ago, we had the Ontario budget promising a \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut—billions for corporations, fewer and fewer dollars for 84-year-old women with Alzheimer's trying to stay and be cared for at home.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Today I rise in the House to recognize a volunteer from Northumberland county, Mrs Minnie Pennell. It is wonderful to have the opportunity to acknowledge a local volunteer who has been honoured by the province with a Senior Achievement Award. Mrs Pennell has been a long-time volunteer for the town of Cobourg's environmental advisory committee and the Cobourg Area Environmental Association. Her main accomplishments have been the establishment

of an exceptional ecology garden and a wonderful arbor-etum.

Yesterday Minnie had the opportunity to lunch with Lieutenant Governor Hilary Weston after she received one of only 24 achievement awards presented this year. The present Queen's father once said, "The test of our worth is the service we render," and clearly Minnie has passed that test with flying colours.

Since June is Seniors' Month, it gives us all a wonderful opportunity to thank the seniors such as Minnie Pennell for all of their sacrifices and for all of their contributions over the years.

I would like to personally congratulate Mrs Pennell on her award and on the outstanding work that she has done within Cobourg over the past 20 years.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise today to bring to the attention of members of this House the threat which exists to the property in this city known as High Park, an area enjoyed by not a few but by thousands of people as their connection with nature. Instead, being put forward and foisted upon local citizens, through a decision of the Ontario Municipal Board, is an excessively large development that threatens to disturb the grounds and the water which provide one of the most pristine opportunities for the people of Toronto in general, not just those in my riding of Parkdale-High Park, to enjoy.

A condominium development has been exempted from the regular planning process by the Ontario Municipal Board. It is necessary for the province, and for the members of this House to encourage the province, to act, through the Environmental Assessment Act, to make sure that this development does not do what is feared and upset the delicate balance of nature, the wetlands, Grenadier Pond and so forth, because on this site are two service stations that were in business for 70 years, which have not been remediated and won't be remediated to a standard to protect this precious and fragile natural resource right here in the city, unless it draws the interest of the members of this House.

High Park deserves special consideration from the members of this House. This development is right on the edge of the most public of public parks in this province. It requires the sensitivity of the people of this House to ensure that there is an environmental assessment done in full before any development can go forward. Surely the

interests of those future residents and of all the residents of the area have to be put first and an environmental assessment done on this development.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Ontarians are outraged at this government's initiative to give public dollars to private schools, and no less in my riding. I don't have time to read all the e-mails that have come to me, but I've selected two for your benefit.

One is from Fern Mosoff and Paul Magder, which reads: "The decision to spend/tax credit \$300 million of the public purse on private education at this time in our province's social history is shameful, immoral and myopic. (What world are these decision-makers living on? Ultimately, this planet has only one tier.) We want to register our disgust with the arrogance of the Harris government and dismay at this further gross injury to our public school system."

The other letter is addressed to the Canadian Jewish Congress from Steve Werbin and copied to me. "I am writing to you today on behalf of myself regarding your recent approval of the tax credit the provincial Conservatives are introducing for parents who send their children to private schools.

"I am a lower-income resident living in the city of Toronto. I am dismayed and appalled at this apparent support for the wealthy Ontario residents at the expense of the less wealthy.

"In a climate where the public educational institutions face huge class sizes, sharing of textbooks (many times old books), a poisoned relationship between teachers and their employers, and funding formulas that simply do not work, it is a shock and even sick that our government would offer money of the public purse"—

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

Mr Marchese:—"to aid in essence the private school system (albeit indirectly)."

The Speaker: Sorry, I looked away and he carried on. The member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Lately the opposition, including that member over there, has focused much of its time telling the government that they do not support the idea of letting parents have choice in the education of their child, or maybe it's choice as they define it. I want to take this opportunity to give yet another example. I am receiving hundreds of letters every day and thousands of petitions every day supporting parents having choice in their child's education.

This one here is from Simon Jeynes, who is a principal and administrator of Christ Lutheran Church. He writes: "I want to both thank and commend you and your government for providing some equitable treatment for all parents in Ontario. The tax credit program that you have introduced addresses the ability of parents to make choices in the education of their children and is a crucial step in enabling all parents to make wise and informed choices for their children."

Mr Jeynes also states, "Contrary to Mr McGuinty's slanderous statements about our parents, they are neither elite nor rich but represent a cross-section of society both socially and economically."

Mr Jeynes has only been in Ontario for the past eight months, but reflected on an Alberta experience with the Edmonton Public School Board. The school board there "encompasses Christian schools, specialist schools, Suzuki, academic, fine arts, regular neighbourhood schools and Jewish schools, all accessible to any student within its jurisdiction."

It's obvious that other parts of the country are finally giving more choice to parents on their children's education. It is also obvious that the opposition, especially its leader, is trying everything it can do within its power to keep that right away from parents in Ontario.

1340

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY MONTH

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): June is Acquired Brain Injury Month. This is a wonderful opportunity for us as citizens to acknowledge a group of people who need our help, and also to thank the families and the organizations in our various communities that provide that support.

I have had the pleasure of knowing two individuals with acquired brain injury, and their perseverance, courage and determination are just phenomenal.

We have a number of organizations across Ontario that provide support for these people, but I would like to pay special tribute to Pathways for Independence in my riding. They operate a home for citizens who have had brain injuries, along with a number of other homes. They have an absolutely dedicated, caring staff, a strong administration, a good board. For the people who work for Pathways, it's not really a job; it is more a calling, they are so committed to their clients and rejoice in each and every step of progress these individuals make as they return to a normal life.

However, Pathways to Independence is facing a very difficult time. Funding cutbacks to them have caused them to close two of their homes, lay staff off and reduce services to the community. Our most vulnerable citizens are not being provided with services they need. I see the staff and administration and board spending time fundraising when they should be serving their clients to help our fellow citizens.

I call on this government to put our persons with disabilities ahead of funding golf tournaments. We can do better in this province, and we must do better now.

ALS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): Once again this year volunteers from the ALS Society of Ontario will be selling cornflowers in my riding to mark the beginning of ALS Awareness Month.

It is important for Canadians to know that ALS is not just Lou Gehrig's disease; it is a disease that right now is

affecting about 3,000 Canadians. Imagine not being able to walk, write, smile, talk, eat, and eventually even breathe on your own, and yet your mind and senses remain unaffected. This is what having ALS is like for those who suffer from this disease.

It can strike anyone and results in complete paralysis and death, generally within two or three years of diagnosis. While ALS is not considered a common disease, it is not rare. As a matter of fact, according to statistics in 1996, ALS claimed more than 1,100 people in our country, only 15% less than the number taken by AIDS. Yet the disease remains largely unknown and misunderstood.

Sadly, two or three Canadians die every day from ALS. A number of years ago my own father succumbed to this disease. As a result, I personally know the pain family members go through as they deal with ALS. Although promising research studies are being conducted, there is still no known cause, and no cure is yet in sight.

Throughout the month, volunteers will be canvassing in the malls and public areas across the province to raise funds to fight this devastating disease. All the funds raised will be spent on ALS scientific research. Please make a generous donation to the ALS Society so that the dream of finding a cure becomes a reality.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Community care access centres were established across this province to provide services to people who would then not need those services within an institutional care setting.

Unfortunately this government has decided to underfund the community care access centres. Patients today are discharged quicker and sicker from hospitals, and there are fewer hospitals open today for them to be discharged from. A freeze in the CCAC budget means a cut when numbers are increasing and will result in a \$175-million shortfall this year across Ontario, in places like Sudbury, Windsor, Hamilton and Niagara. A budget freeze will put at risk our most vulnerable citizens, often the elderly and often those with disabilities.

Niagara has the largest per capita seniors' population in all of Ontario and will feel these cuts most acutely. CCAC Niagara's caseload increased by 12.5% this year, adding another 500 clients, and they will face a deficit of \$9.4 million as a result of this government's freeze.

We have \$2.2 billion for corporate tax cuts, \$235 million to be spent on blatant partisan government advertising, and we now have the government embarking upon yet another tax scheme to deprive revenues from the government. Where indeed are the priorities of the Harris government?

EVENTS IN DURHAM REGION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the Legislature today to tell the people of Ontario about an event in my

riding of Durham, one showcasing the village of Newcastle's strong historical ties to agriculture in our community and indeed our country.

On Saturday, June 16, the Newcastle Village and District Historical Society is hosting the Massey show, a day-long event where visitors can see antique farm machinery and other memorabilia made or owned and operated by the Massey family, whose descendants included Governor General Vincent Massey.

In the 1840s, Daniel Massey arrived in Newcastle village and established his family farm business, known to us today as the Massey Ferguson Co. His innovative farm implements gained the trust of Ontario farmers. The family business received worldwide acclaim in 1867 at the Paris exhibition, where the Massey mower impressed everyone, including Emperor Napoleon III. It's interesting to note that this agricultural machine company is the only one started in Canada and still operating today.

Visitors will be able to see the Massey tractor show at the Lovekin farm. The Massey family will also be presenting the Vincent Massey Memorial Award to the best-restored '44 Massey.

The Masseys made a lasting contribution to Newcastle before moving to Toronto.

Thanks to the historical society's Massey show committee—Ron Locke, Myno Van Dyke, Sanford Haskill, Dick Lovekin, Jack Gordon, Ken Stephenson, Pat McConnell, Bill Lake, Mort Lake, Francis Jose and Pippa Schmiegelow—for their efforts in preserving our significant history in Durham, and in fact agriculture in Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act to satisfy the criteria for contribution by the Government of Canada set out in the Canada Health Act / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé pour satisfaire aux critères régissant les contributions du gouvernement du Canada et énoncés dans la Loi canadienne sur la santé.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The bill amends the Health Insurance Act so that the Ontario

health insurance plan satisfies the criteria set out in the Canada Health Act and the province of Ontario qualifies for receiving the full cash contribution from the government of Canada described in that act. Those criteria are public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility.

The bill states very clearly that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals oppose the Harris government's attempts to privatize our health care system.

PROHIBITING PROFITING
FROM RECOUNTING CRIMES ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 INTERDISANT
LES GAINS TIRÉS
DU RÉCIT D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Young moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to protect victims by prohibiting profiting from recounting of crime / Projet de loi 69, Loi visant à protéger les victimes en interdisant les gains tirés du récit d'actes criminels.

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

The Attorney General for a short statement?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'll make a minister's statement, if I may.

1350

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
AMENDMENT ACT
(WORKPLACE VIOLENCE), 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ
AU TRAVAIL (VIOLENCE AU TRAVAIL)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to acts of workplace violence / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en matière d'actes de violence au travail.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'll give you the précis version of the explanatory note, which is rather lengthy.

The bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to impose duties on employers, supervisors and workers with respect to acts of workplace violence, which are defined to be acts of physical or psychological violence that persons commit in a workplace.

In conjunction with the workers and supervisors, an employer must develop a written code of conduct with

respect to workplace violence and post a copy of the code in a conspicuous location in the workplace.

An employer must establish strategies to deal with acts of workplace violence. The strategies must include establishing a team of specialists in the areas of management, human resources, security, labour relations, health, law, and risk management who identify and assess potential situations and acts of workplace violence and make recommendations to the employer on dealing with those situations.

An employer must develop a written policy of progressive disciplinary measures that the employer will take to deal with workers who it finds have committed acts of workplace violence.

Supervisors and workers must report to their employers all acts of workplace violence of which they know. An employer must keep accurate records of all reports received.

Finally, upon receiving a report that a worker has committed an act of workplace violence, an employer must have the worker undergo a psychological assessment.

I look forward to working very closely with the Minister of Labour in ensuring that this becomes law.

HOMES FOR RETARDED PERSONS
REPEAL ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 ABROGEANT
LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS
POUR DÉFICIENTS MENTAUX

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to repeal the Homes for Retarded Persons Act, amend the Developmental Services Act and make related amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 71, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur les foyers pour déficients mentaux, modifiant la Loi sur les services aux personnes atteintes d'un handicap de développement et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

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

The minister for a short statement?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): By resolution, the Ontario Association for Community Living has called the Homes for Retarded Persons Act inappropriate, intrusive, restricting and demeaning. I agree, as I'm sure all members do.

Advocates for persons with a developmental disability have called upon the government and the Legislative Assembly to repeal this relic of the past and to reject the outdated, devaluing philosophy behind it. This bill would repeal the Homes for Retarded Persons Act and replace the outdated terminology in more than 30 acts.

I look forward to working with all members on all sides of the House on this important piece of legislation.

FISH AND WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION AMENDMENT ACT
(DOUBLE-CRESTED
CORMORANTS), 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON
ET DE LA FAUNE
(CORMORAN À AIGRETTES)

Mr Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 in respect of double-crested cormorants / Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune à l'égard du cormoran à aigrettes.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): The bill amends the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, to permit the hunting of double-crested cormorants, subject to specific restrictions. Section 1 of the bill permits the hunting of double-crested cormorants from September 5 to the end of December in any year. It goes on to impose daily and seasonal limitations on the number of double-crested cormorants which may be hunted. Section 2 of the bill makes it legal for a person to destroy, take or possess the nest or eggs of a double-crested cormorant.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION), 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

Mr Hampton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to protect consumers / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité afin de protéger les consommateurs.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The leader of the third party for a short explanation?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): We believe the best way to protect consumers would be not to privatize and deregulate Ontario Power Generation. But while we're trying to persuade the government to do that, we want to pass this bill to protect consumers by prohibiting, until a date to be prescribed by regulation, the unsolicited marketing of electricity to consumers in connection with the opening of the electricity market. Consumers are entitled to invalidate any contracts made in connection with a breach of the prohibition.

MARRIAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MARIAGE

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Marriage Act / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le mariage.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): This act, if passed, will create a new position in the province of Ontario: a marriage commissioner. I don't know if my colleagues are aware of this, but it is difficult if not impossible to have a non-denominational marriage ceremony performed in Ontario. The problem only increases in rural Ontario.

That is why I've introduced this act. Through it, six marriage commissioners will be appointed in each of the 103 electoral districts in Ontario, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. These commissioners will be able to perform marriages during their three-year term, much like justices of the peace performed marriages in the past.

Marriage is a sacred institution; it should not be entered into lightly, nor should it be any less of a celebration of lifelong union. A religious ceremony has always been an option in this province. Up to a few years ago, a non-denominational ceremony was also an option. The Marriage Amendment Act will restore this second option to the people of Ontario.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It is my pleasure today to introduce a separate amendment to the Ontario Legislative Assembly Act. I believe it is an amendment that makes common sense out of a ticklish issue we faced recently: our salaries as MPPs.

If passed, this act will see Ontario's Integrity Commissioner, a person appointed after consultations with all political parties, be the one who determines how much the members of this House will be paid. I believe a truly impartial figure is the only one who should be setting the

pay schedules of politicians. I believed this when I was the reeve of the township, I believed it when I was the warden of the county and I believe it now.

That is why the Ontario Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2001, if passed, also contains a provision that all municipalities in Ontario can opt into using the Integrity Commissioner's service in this matter—an impartial look at a thorny issue.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Ontario is a leader in promoting victims' rights and in working to keep our communities safe. We believe that victims of crime not only deserve justice, but also deserve to have a strong voice within the justice system.

It is simply unacceptable that criminals could benefit financially from the pain they have caused to victims and their families.

Since 1995 the Harris government has implemented several initiatives to enhance victims' rights and to make Ontario's towns, cities and communities across this province safer.

Last month we took another step to enhance victims' rights and to help keep Ontario's communities safe by introducing the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act. If passed, it would be the first legislation of its kind to use civil law to freeze, to seize and to forfeit, in appropriate situations, the proceeds of unlawful activity. It would return illegal profits to the victims. It would place that money back in the hands of the people from whom it was taken.

Today I am very proud to stand in this Legislature to announce that we are proposing to do even more to enhance victims' rights, more to keep our communities safe.

Earlier today I introduced the Prohibiting Profiting from Recounting Crimes Act for first reading in this assembly. This represents a further step in fulfilling this government's promise, this government's commitment to strengthen victims' rights.

I want to pause, if I may, for a moment and reference the fact that today we are joined in the House by Sharon Rosenfeldt and Scott Newark. Both Sharon and Scott work with the Office for Victims of Crime. They work each and every day dealing with people who are placed in very unfortunate situations: victims of crime across this province. They are here today to indicate their support for the legislation that I have introduced and that will hopefully pass through this chamber over the next short while. They are here today on behalf of victims, as are the members on this side of the Legislature, to state

very clearly that there is no profit in crime in this province.

The individuals who have joined us today and my colleagues on this side of the Legislature know that if this legislation is passed, it would send a very clear and very important message to those who consider profiting from the pain and suffering of their victims.

The groundwork for the proposed legislation was laid by my predecessor, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, and also by the Honourable Cam Jackson, who came forward many years ago with what was indeed an excellent first step in protecting victims of crime. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both of them for their insightful and hard work in this regard.

If the bill I have put forward is passed, it would prevent criminals from making money from recounting their crimes in any type of medium, whether it be television, movies, books or the Internet. This bill would apply to anyone convicted of a serious violent crime or serious property crime designated by this act. It would apply to persons acting on behalf of criminals such as a spouse, partner or other agent or relative. It would apply to a corporation in which the convicted person has a substantial interest. It would apply to accused persons for the purpose of any interim freeze orders.

Publishers and media companies across the province that have contracts with criminals would have an obligation in those circumstances to report their contracts. If they choose to do otherwise, if they do not report the existence of a contract with someone convicted of a serious crime, they, along with the directors and officers of those corporations, could and would face personal liability.

I say to you that our motivation in moving forward with this initiative is plain and simple. We are here to state very clearly that we are not going to allow victims to be revictimized. Anyone who has suffered the type of injustice that is discussed in the legislation should not have to be revictimized.

This act would establish a fund that would take the forfeited proceeds from any action instituted on behalf of these individuals by the Attorney General's office and would make this money available to victims.

As I said earlier, our government's priority is to protect victims and to clearly and unequivocally take the profit out of crime. The proposed bill would help to ensure that victims are not revictimized, and it would send a very clear message to any criminal who has any thoughts about proceeding in that manner.

I invite all my colleagues on both sides of the Legislature to join with me and to support victims of crime by supporting this bill.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I find myself looking at this bill and it looks new and smells new, but in fact we have here a new moment in the environmental policy of the Harris government. Never before have we seen such effective recycling, repealing and reusing of an old idea. Not only does this bill reintroduce a bill that

was reannounced and reintroduced in December of last year, only to be killed by this government when it prorogued, but it actually repeals and recycles a law that has been on the books since 1995.

There is nothing new here for victims. This is just another tired old idea from a tired old government. I say to the public and I say to the press gallery, take a look at section 17 of this bill. It repeals the Victims' Right to Proceeds of Crime Act, 1994. What's that, you ask? Well, you look at the press release from the minister and he says this bill is "the first in Canada to protect victims in this way." Then you go to the government's fact sheet and it says that the Honourable Mr Jackson's bill, the VRPCA, was the first law of its kind in Canada. Which is it, Mr Speaker? It's as if Minister Young drafted the sound bites and Minister Jackson drafted the fact sheet. Does that make any sense to you? It doesn't make any sense to me.

I don't want anybody in this chamber to think, and I know the government wouldn't want anybody to think for a moment—I know they wouldn't want to hit that hot button and suggest that this bill in any way would stop films or books being done that will result in revictimization of victims. All this bill does is what Mr Jackson's bill did in 1995, supported by all sides of this House, and ensure that criminals themselves cannot profit from those crimes, arguably already available to the common law.

I say to the government that instead of recycling the bill of opposition member Cam Jackson, as he then was, how about bringing forth some new initiatives being proposed by the official opposition of the day? How about making sure that every man and woman has the right to be tested for date rape drugs so they know whether or not they have had such a drug slipped into their body? How about support for the Bartolucci bills on child prostitution? How about support for Dave Levac's bill on organized crime?

How about bringing forward and supporting a bill that will mandate that trigger locks be installed on all guns manufactured and sold in Ontario so that we will prevent accidental deaths and suicides in a country in which guns are the third-highest cause of death among kids aged 15 to 24, in a country that ranks fifth in the world in terms of firearms-related deaths among kids under 14? We rank just behind Israel and Northern Ireland. I would ask this government to stop talking about victims of crime and start acting on the report on victims' services in Ontario: A Voice for Victims.

1410

In particular, how about recommendation one, which called for a provincial victims' service standard applicable to all victims of crime wherever they are situated in the province of Ontario? Instead, what has this government done for victims? They introduced the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2000, which ensured that this office, which already existed, would have statutory powers, but they haven't proclaimed that bill. Proclaim the bill, I say to the government. They passed the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000. They haven't

proclaimed the bill. Proclaim the bill, I say to the government. They introduced the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act. It died on the order paper, and they reintroduced it. They introduced Prohibiting Profiting from Recounting Crimes Act. It died on the order paper, and they reintroduced it.

I say to the government, for the sake of victims, please stop this policy of recycling, repealing and reusing old ideas, and act on new initiatives and new proposals that are before this House that will act on A Voice for Victims. It will mean there is something new for victims of crime in Ontario, not recycled old ideas, not repealed and reused old ideas, but something new for victims of crime.

It requires a commitment from this government to say no more reusing, recycling and repealing when it comes to victims of crime, because victims of crime in this province deserve better. Victims of crime deserve new rights. They deserve to have a standard that applies to all victims across this province. Act on the recommendations, I say to the government of Ontario.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Well, it's the same old bill, Attorney General, that your predecessor introduced on December 14, 2000, and I have to tell you, we've got the same response now as we did then because things haven't changed.

What an insult to your colleague Cam Jackson, because the New Democratic Party, when it was in government in 1994, passed the Victims' Rights to Proceeds of Crime Act, 1994. It was a private member's bill. It was put forward by Cam Jackson and you now repeal Cam Jackson's bill. You repeal your own colleague's bill, a bill that quite frankly does a lot more for victims than your piece of fluff ever will. You see, what you're doing, Attorney General, is confiscating property that under the Victims' Rights to Proceeds of Crime Act, 1994, would be the property of the victim of that criminal. You're confiscating those proceeds and putting them into your little slush fund so that you decide as government how they're going to be divvied up. You'll decide which victims are worthy of receiving the proceeds derived from their particular perpetrator by his or her crime against them.

I tell you, Mr Attorney General, we're sticking with legislation that works. We're sticking with legislation that protects victims. We're going to oppose any effort to repeal the Victims' Rights to Proceeds of Crime Act, 1994. That's a bill that works. That's a bill that works for victims. That's a bill that represents best the interests of the people of this province. That's a bill that forbids exactly what you're doing. It forbids you and your government from dipping into monies that are rightfully the property of the victims of the criminals who are earning those profits as a result of the recounting of those crimes.

You've got to understand, Attorney General. I appreciate you show up for work at 9:30 or 10 in the morning and you get your script for the day. You get directed east, west, north, south, to wherever it is you're

going to do your photo op. You've got the blue backdrop; you've got a couple of officers in blue standing on one side or other of you. There's been half a dozen of them with you already. You read your script well. I have no hesitation in telling you that. But I have to tell you, Attorney General, that you're the Attorney General. You are the Attorney General whose provincial prosecutor cut a deal when a 17-year-old boy was struck dead by an illegal truckload down in Milton-Burlington while he was working at his job, so that the charges would be pulled and that trucking company would merely have to make a \$2,000 charitable donation, and get a tax receipt to boot so as to get a credit at the end of the year. That's how you and your government value the rights and interests of victims in this province.

You haven't been here long enough but you had better read some of the files in your ministry, Attorney General, to look at the history of your government's Victims' Bill of Rights. Talk to people like Linda Even and Karen Vanscoy, victims of the most atrocious crimes that could ever be imagined, deserted and abandoned by your government.

Indeed, when they litigated with your government to seek some enforcement of their rights under the Victims' Bill of Rights, your very own lawyers, the Attorney General's lawyers, argued that the Victims' Bill of Rights didn't mean a tinker's damn, that it wasn't worth the paper it was written on. It was the most successful day in court this Attorney General has ever had, because Judge Day agreed with the government's own lawyers who argued that the Victims' Bill of Rights provides no rights.

Your Premier, Premier Harris, promised amendments to that bill, to give teeth to the Victims' Bill of Rights, to give teeth to victims' rights here in Ontario, and you've broken that promise. You've broken that promise day after day, month after month, since you've been at it and you're breaking it again today.

You want to talk about victims' interests? Then why, Attorney General, did you pull the support to the Sudbury restorative justice program, a program that had received two years of funding and had demonstrated itself to be incredibly successful at responding to crime at a community level in the community and surrounding area around Sudbury? It had the support of every single stakeholder and actor in the criminal justice system, it had the support of the community, and it was successful. You pulled the plug on that because you're not about law and order, you're not about safer communities, you're not about making our streets safer for our folks or our kids to travel on; you're all about photo ops and recycling old press releases to try to delude the people of this province, to try to con them. You're not the Attorney General, you're the province's top con man—

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member to withdraw the word "con."

Mr Kormos: —withdrawn—believing that the people of this province receive any protection at all from their Attorney General or their Premier or their criminal justice system under your watch here in Ontario.

The Speaker: Just before we begin question period, a quick reminder that we're going to try to keep it to one minute. The questions have tended to creep up a little bit. As you know, I'll try to remind you at about 50 seconds. Hopefully that isn't too intrusive when I yell "question" or "answer." That will be a reminder you have about 10 seconds to wrap up. If all members could adhere to that, that will allow us to get more questions. As is usual, we tend to take a little bit longer as the session goes on. Your co-operation would be much appreciated.

VISITORS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the gallery today we have students from my riding who were the successful candidates for an educational program: from l'école Ste Marie de l'Assomption of Green Valley, the gateway to Ontario, Rachelle Décoeur et Andrée-Anne Lefebvre, and from l'école L'Escale de Rockland, Marie-Pierre Lalonde.

Also, thanks to VIA Rail which has complementary transportation for this program.

Bienvenue à l'Assemblée législative.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It is now time for question period.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I know the Minister of Education is here. Oh, there she is. We have questions for the Minister of Education.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My questions are for the Minister of Education. You continue to boast, day in and day out, about the \$13.8 billion you're going to spend on education this year. I want you to put that number in some perspective.

Back in 1994, in the Common Sense Revolution, it said, "Ontario spends \$14 billion a year on primary and secondary education — more per pupil than any other province — and still gets a failing grade." Well, since 1994, enrolment has grown by over 62,000 students. What that means, Madam Minister, is that you haven't provided a single new dollar for those students and their education. Forget about enrolment for a moment: the Bank of Canada calculates that our schools would need over \$15.9 billion just to have kept up with inflation.

The good news of late is that you've been able to come up with \$300 million more for education in Ontario, but you, Madam Minister, want to put that into private schools. The question I have for you on behalf of Ontario's working families is, if you've found \$300 million for education, why wouldn't you invest it in public education where we need it?

1420

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): The facts are very clear. As the honourable member knows, in 1995-96 it was \$12.9 billion, if you're comparing apples to apples. It is now \$13.8 billion. We did increase that amount. We put over 360 million new dollars this year, one year alone, a one-year increase into our public education system because it is a very important priority for this government.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, you may want to make reference to your own documents. You tell us that you're spending \$13.8 billion. The Common Sense Revolution, on page 11, tells us very clearly that Ontario was spending, at that time, \$14 billion a year on primary and secondary education, and there's no fine print in this either. It was all very straight up and voters relied on it.

To add insult to injury, not only have you cut funding to public education, now you've put forward an incentive, an inducement for parents to pick up and leave public education, and every time they do that that will cost the local public school board. When you've been presented with this by the media, you have denied that in fact it will mean it's going to be a loss in funding to the local school board.

Let me read to you from this weekend's Kingston Whig-Standard. "Rob Savage, a Ministry of Education spokesperson, said that an enrolment drop in Hastings and Prince Edward is responsible for transfer cuts in that board. When a school loses one student, it also loses funding, said Savage."

Minister, why won't you now admit what your press secretary already has in print: every time a parent leaves a public school for a private school, public education pays a price?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We've also been very clear that we fund our public education system above enrolment, as we should, and that will continue.

Secondly, we could add all kinds of things into the spending for public education. We could add in, for example, teachers' pension plans. But what we do over here on this side of the House is make sure that the figures we put out for our public education system are apples to apples: \$12.9 billion; it is now \$13.8 billion. This year alone, over 360 million new dollars to our public education system. That's one increase, one year, on top of what was increased last year. That kind of investment in public education is important and it should continue. It's above enrolment, as it should be.

We are also making sure that our school boards are putting more of those dollars in classrooms. That's why we've had less administration, fewer school boards, fewer school board politicians—things that the honourable member fought against. He may think we should have lots of money in school boards—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure why it is that you're having so much difficulty understanding what it is that your party committed to in 1994, and what specifically they said when it came to funding for public education.

In 1994, they specifically said that the Ontario government was spending \$14 billion on primary and secondary education. Today you trumpet that we're spending \$13.8 billion. That means that you are spending less today than you said we were spending back in 1994. That's what that means, and the evidence is painfully obvious through public education throughout the province of Ontario.

The truth is that in that financial context for public education you now want to take \$500 million and put that into private schools. We are aware of your cuts to everything from heating our schools to busing and textbooks. Families want to know why it is, if you've been able to come up with \$500 million, while you've even estimated it could be as high as \$700 million, if you've been able to find that much money for education in Ontario, why would you not invest it in their schools, in their public schools?

Hon Mrs Ecker: When this government increased money in this budget for children's treatment centres, I didn't hear the honourable member saying, "Oh, that's going to come out of the public education system," because it's not. When this government increased funding for health care, I didn't hear the honourable member saying, "Oh, that's going to come out of public education," because it's not. But somehow or other, when five years from now \$300 million is going to go to the parents, the hard-working Ontario families who choose to send their children to an independent school, he says that's going to come out of the public education system. It is not, and he knows better.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I want to bring to you the case of Mr and Mrs Christmas, who are an elderly couple resident in Hamilton. Mrs Christmas is 86 years of age. She suffers from diabetes and recently, as a result of complications, she had one of her legs amputated, so she is confined to a wheelchair. Her husband, Mr Christmas, also recently had an operation and he is fragile as well. They have applied for home care through their local CCAC and have been informed they're entitled to one hour of care every week. They need home care for help with their personal needs, with bathing, use of the washroom etc.

Premier, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Christmas and our parents and grandparents just like them throughout the province of Ontario, why have you got \$2.2 billion for additional corporate tax cuts, you've got over \$200 million for partisan government advertising, you've now got \$500 million for private schools, but you haven't got enough money to enable people like the Christmases to enjoy some basic dignity and a modicum of care in their own home?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm sure in the supplementary the minister will want to respond with some of the specifics and the details.

We did announce in this budget \$15 million this year by way of tax credits. That's one five, \$15 million, by

way of tax credits for those parents who are double-paying for education, which as we said will certainly help support low- and medium-income families, just to correct the record on your preamble.

Yes, we have been a party that wanted to cut taxes to allow businesses to be able to compete here in Ontario, to invest here in Ontario, to create jobs here in Ontario, so that the Christmases' children and grandchildren could have jobs right here in this province.

With regard to CCAC funding, we have increased the home care portion 72% since we took office, which is a massive increase in a fast-growing area. If the member would like us to look into an individual case to see if the case was assessed improperly, I'm sure the minister would be pleased to do that. If you're suggesting there's more to do, we agree. There's more to do in a whole host of areas, including home care.

Mr McGuinty: If you go from the specific, then, Premier, to the general, let me tell you about CCACs and home care throughout the province as it's developing and how it reflects your commitment and levels of funding. Here's a press release put out today from the Algoma Community Care Access Centre. They say they've approved reductions in services to current and future clients to reduce expenditure levels to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's 2000-01 funding allocation level. They're saying they've got to make cuts because of something you've done here through your government. They say the planned reductions include, for nursing, elimination of health supervision visits; elimination of monitoring of wound care.

That is what is happening on your watch. That is an accurate reflection of your commitment to home care for our parents and grandparents throughout the province. The question I have to you is, Premier, why are you able to come up with money for corporate tax cuts, you're able to come up with money for private schools, you're able to come up with money for partisan government advertising, but you can't come up with money for our parents and our grandparents as they get on in life?

Hon Mr Harris: I think it's really important that we review the facts. When we took office, we had an \$11-billion deficit. We have taken care of that \$11-billion deficit with tax cuts to create jobs and prosperity for the Christmases' children and grandchildren and for all of those seniors' children and grandchildren in this province.

The second thing we had to deal with was a rapidly escalating cost of health care. We put \$5 billion more into health care over that same period of time, 72% more into home care over that same period of time. We thought we had a partner in health care, and that was the Liberal government in Ottawa. Over that same period of time, your Liberal counterparts in Ottawa have cut funding to Ontario by \$100 million. With all the money they've put back in in the last couple of years, they're spending \$100 million less than they did six years ago when we took office. So we made up \$5 billion; we balanced the books; we put 72% more into home care. Yes, there's more to do—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up.

1430

Mr McGuinty: Premier, let me bring you down to earth here and tell you what's happening in Sudbury, where they're coping with your cuts to their community care access centre. Do you know what they're proposing now? They've got it in the newspaper article here. They are introducing eligibility tests for home care services. To my understanding, this is a first in a long, long time in Ontario. Premier, we're talking about eligibility tests for our parents and our grandparents who are unable to cope with their own basic health care needs, needs around the home.

I looked at your in-home services document that's available on the Web, and it says "You can receive in-home health services if you are an Ontario resident insured under OHIP, if adequate treatment can be provided at home and if your needs cannot be met as a hospital outpatient."

There's no reference to your documentation, Premier, to this new means test. I'm just wondering if you're going to be making it clear now to CCACs throughout the province that you will not accept any means test for our parents and our grandparents when it comes to meeting their basic needs through home care services.

Hon Mr Harris: Those members of this Legislature who actually have their feet on the ground do understand: \$5 billion more we've put into health care, while the federal Liberals in Ottawa cut \$100 million. I think members of this Legislature who have both feet on the ground and who say the same thing out of one side of their mouth as they say out of the other side of their mouth will understand that 72% more money has gone into home care in Ontario. Any member of this Legislature who has both feet on the ground will understand that Ottawa pays not one cent of any home care program. Any member of this Legislature who has both feet on the ground will also understand that the province of Ontario, without a cent from Ottawa, has the most—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sorry for the interruption, Premier. We're getting too loud. We need to be able to hear the answers as well.

Sorry for the interruption, Premier. Are you done? OK.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is also for the Premier. Premier, 15% of parents in Ontario indicate that they will move their children from the public school system into private schools if your government proceeds with your scheme of tax credits or vouchers to fund private schools. If 15% of students move from the public school system to private schools, we know that under your education funding formula you would cut public school budgets by \$2.3 billion.

My question to you, Premier, is the same as my question to the Minister of Finance yesterday: how do

you expect public schools in Ontario to address the educational needs of our students if your tax credit/voucher scheme means they lose another \$2.3 billion a year?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm sure the Minister of Finance can respond.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): As the member knows, or should know if he has reviewed the material concerning the five Canadian provinces that do provide grants to independent schools, he will see that in their experience, which is quite substantial now, the rate of increase has been relatively minor in terms of enrolment changes from the public sector to the independent sector. Specifically, in the 10 years of actual experience in Manitoba, independent school enrolment as a percentage of the total increased only marginally, from 5% to 6.6%, from 1990 to the year 2000.

As I say, if the member is interested in the actual facts as to what has happened in other Canadian jurisdictions in our sister provinces, he can look at them. They are clear that the movement is relatively minor between the two systems.

It does give choice to parents. We believe in choice; I don't know if you do or not, but it's clear that this initiative would give parents the opportunity to make that choice—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr Hampton: The Premier would know that the system of enticements that you're putting forward is completely different from any other funding mechanism in any other province. In fact, your system of enticements is like the pilot projects that are happening in the United States right now. The clearest example is Milwaukee, where 15% of the students left the public system for the private system. That's the clearest comparator.

We asked the board of education in Peterborough what a 15% reduction would mean for them. They're very clear: it would mean laying off 300 teachers and 75% of their speech pathologists and other support staff. The director of education at the board in Windsor says that a 15% reduction would mean closing 10% of the schools, laying off principals, vice-principals and teachers.

The directors of education are all very clear about what this means. They're clear that when you lose students from the school, the funding formula reduces their budget. So, Premier, if 15% of parents say they're prepared to move their children if you give them an enticement, how do you expect the public school system to function with \$2.3 billion less each year because you've cut it under your funding formula?

Hon Mr Flaherty: As I say to the member opposite, he'd do well to look at the actual experience that we've had in our sister provinces. Were Ontario to enact this tax credit, then the majority of provinces in Canada would be providing some sort of assistance to parents whose children are attending independent schools. In another large province, British Columbia, independent school enrolment, for example, rose from 7.1% to 8.5%. Over

the same 10-year period, only one out of every 70 public school students moved to the independent school system.

Those are the facts—not facts from foreign places, not facts from other countries; facts from our sister Canadian provinces.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Finance wants to continue to ignore the only comparative system, the pilot project that is now underway in the United States, where the government offers direct enticements—tax credits, vouchers—to parents. There, 15% of the students moved from the public to the private system.

But just to confirm, I spoke today with the director of education for the Keewatin-Patricia board. They've lost, over the last three years, 700 students, 7% of their children. When they lost 700 students, your funding formula cut their budget by \$4.5 million. The Rainy River school board lost 200 students; you cut their budget by \$1.4 million because of the reduction in the number of students.

The question again, Premier, is, 15% of parents in Ontario say that they would move their children to private schools if you provide the enticement. Under your funding formula, a 15% move in students results in a 15% cut to the public school system. How are they going to function with a \$2.3-billion cut?

Hon Mr Flaherty: As I've explained to the member opposite, in fact the enrolment growth in independent schools in our sister provinces has been relatively minor. But there was a dramatic change in enrolment growth in independent schools in the province of Ontario, and it happened between 1990 and 1995, when the NDP government was in power, when public school enrolment grew by only 9% while private school enrolment grew by 19.1% during the time that the NDP was responsible for public education in the province of Ontario, driving students from the public school system.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Another question for the Premier; the Minister of Finance seems determined to do everything to avoid answering the question. My question is about electricity in Ontario. I put forward a private member's bill today which would stop door-to-door marketers from going to someone's house, intimidating them and telling them a false price or a dishonest price in terms of electricity, and then trying to get them to sign up with a new electricity marketer. Because what's going on out there, Premier, is people are being scammed. They're being told dishonest stories. They're being given unrealistic prices. I'm asking you to support my private member's bill and to stop this kind of misrepresentation of consumers across the province. Will you do that, Premier?

1440

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Energy can respond.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I used to be on that side.

I certainly agree with the honourable member that consumers need protection. I would ask what took him so long, though. In 1998 this Legislature passed the Energy Competition Act, which for the first time brought in consumer protection against unscrupulous marketers. For years under the NDP, gas marketers were out there, unlicensed. There were more complaints. In fact, I was one of those on the opposition benches who brought to the NDP's attention those scams that were going on at that time. So in 1998 we brought in the toughest consumer protection law for energy marketers in this country. It requires a cooling-off period. It requires that marketers operate in an honest fashion, in a fair fashion, that all the contracts be explained; and it is monitored by Floyd Laughren, the former NDP finance minister, and the Ontario Energy Board. They are responsible for making sure marketers operate in an honest and fair fashion in this province.

Mr Hampton: The problem you have, Minister, is that your legislation doesn't provide the protection, and if your legislation doesn't provide the protection, there's nothing the Ontario Energy Board can do about it. Even professor Don Dewees, who participated as a vice-chairman of your Market Design Committee, has come forward and said that he wouldn't have enough information, with all of his expertise, to be able to tell if someone was scamming him in terms of the electricity price they offered or if they were in fact going to offer him a better deal. Even with all his information, he wouldn't be able to tell.

You're allowing these scam artists to go out there and tell people, "Oh, we're going to give you a good deal on electricity," but when you finally add up the price, people are being taken to the cleaners. People are being, literally, ripped off. That's a problem now.

My question is: are you going to do something about it? Are you going to support my private member's bill and prohibit this kind of activity, or are you in there with the scam artists, letting them go out there and lie to people across this province?

Hon Mr Wilson: I'd be happy to support his bill if it did anything different than what's already provided for in our consumer protection legislation. For instance, I have a copy of his press release from this morning and it calls for a cooling-off period so that consumers can cancel their electricity or gas contract. Of course, in the Energy Competition Act of 1998, passed by this Legislature, there is such a cooling-off period. It calls for fines for unscrupulous marketers. We have the ultimate fine, and that is Floyd Laughren can take away their licence to do marketing in this province.

We also have—and I'll give the honourable member credit for this, catching up to the government—a red-tape bill coming before the Legislature that brings in a series of fines against unscrupulous marketers. But right now the ultimate teeth are in the legislation that was passed two years ago, and that's to take away their marketers.

I say to the honourable member: when you were a member of the NDP government, why didn't you protect

consumers then? There were thousands and thousands of gas marketing complaints every month, and they didn't even go to the extent of licensing—

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

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday I asked you whether you were going to abandon plans to merge cancer centres with hospitals. Instead of answering the question, you tried to deny that there even was a plan. Last month you accused hospital board members of intellectual dishonesty. Now you seem to be making the same accusation about Cancer Care Ontario board members who risk speaking out.

You had decided to force through this agenda with no consultation: no consultation with Cancer Care Ontario and no consultation with hospitals. When Cancer Care Ontario wrote you a carefully worded letter, expressing their concerns about staffing and fragmentation of the cancer care system and access to care, you wrote back and said that your plan would be carried out within six months. You said, "The end point of the process has been defined." Any co-operative effort was to be about how to do this, not whether to do it.

Minister, there is no doubt you had a plan, and yesterday's question still stands: are you going to abandon your plan to merge cancer centres with hospitals?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can assure the honourable member and this House that we are not abandoning plans to have better integrated cancer services in the province. We're not abandoning our plan and our commitment to better cancer services for cancer sufferers in Ontario.

We're not abandoning our plan to work with Cancer Care Ontario for the best way to best deliver the best services in the province of Ontario. If she wants me to abandon plans that deliver better services to more people in their home communities in an integrated way, I refuse to abandon those plans.

Mrs McLeod: Today, Minister, you announced that you are setting up an implementation committee. It will be chaired by Dr Alan Hudson, who in the past has advocated exactly the kind of merger you are proposing. You said that Cancer Care Ontario had recommended Dr Hudson's appointment.

In fact, if you were to be straightforward with this Legislature, you would acknowledge that Dr Hudson's name was one of three people put forward by Cancer Care Ontario to be part of an independent panel, not to chair an implementation team. Do you really expect anyone to believe that you're not going to impose this merger on Cancer Care Ontario?

I tell you this is not just about an organization and its future. This is about cancer patients. The Cancer Care Advocacy Coalition and the Canadian Cancer Society, both representatives of cancer patients, are deeply

concerned about what you're doing. I quote the Canadian Cancer Society: "The proposed integration of services will hurt the delivery of comprehensive cancer care in this province and ultimately affect people living with cancer."

Minister, let me try once more. Will you assure concerned cancer patients that you are not going ahead with your plan to merge cancer centres with hospitals?

Hon Mr Clement: I can assure any cancer patients or their families, or indeed all Ontarians, that we remain committed as a government, like a laser beam, toward better cancer care in the province of Ontario. Of course, the funding has been there, an increase of 48% over the last few years.

We are intending to move ahead with what all of the experts have said, indeed what Cancer Care Ontario has said, that we have to continue to integrate the services at the local level. We will continue to do that, because the consensus has been that we move forward with better integration for better cancer care.

So if she asks me to abandon what is better for cancer patients, what is better for their families, I refuse to do that. We now have Dr Alan Hudson, an acknowledged leader in this field, who was in turn suggested by Cancer Care Ontario. He is part of the team now and he will get us to the better place, better cancer care at the local level for cancer sufferers in Ontario. I encourage the member to join us in this crusade for better cancer care, rather than being in the way.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In 1998, the northern Ontario heritage fund provided Lakehead University Paleo DNA Laboratory with \$1.2 million in funding to expand its research facility. Recently—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry for the interruption. Order. There are comments back and forth. We need to be able to hear. I can't hear through you to the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, especially when you're so close. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Miller: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Recently the lab undertook a project to examine DNA from remains of the passengers of the Titanic from near Halifax, Nova Scotia. In recent weeks the media has reported that the member from Nickel Belt questioned the use of Ontario tax dollars for a project conducted in Nova Scotia.

Minister, can you clarify any confusion the opposition may have with regard to this world-class lab located in northern Ontario and the funding they receive?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for his question. The Mike Harris government is proud to support, through funding mechanisms such as the northern Ontario heritage fund, state-

of-the-art research facilities such as the Lakehead University Paleo DNA Laboratory in Thunder Bay.

Facilities such as these highlight Ontario's role as a global leader in a wide range of both basic and applied scientific research projects. The Titanic project represents a unique opportunity to showcase the specific capability of the Paleo DNA. It is my understanding that the actual research component of the project will occur at the lab in Thunder Bay. While the field research and information gathering may occur off-site, the analysis and lab research will be done in Thunder Bay.

1450

Mr Miller: Thank you, Minister, for your response. As a member from northern Ontario, I am always pleased to hear more details about what commitments and opportunities we have engaged in toward the further development of the north. Could you provide more details about this project and other opportunities it has created in the north?

Hon Mr Newman: Again I'd like to thank the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for his excellent question. The northern Ontario heritage fund has provided Lakehead University with the opportunity to create new forensic and paleo internship courses that have brought students and professionals to northwestern Ontario to study, to live and to possibly relocate.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund funding was used to purchase equipment for the lab, to provide training and workshops for the staff, to market the facility and toward further research and development. The lab continues to focus on fee-for-service DNA research. Accordingly, the director and the staff of the lab have been marketing the services available in the laboratory regionally, nationally and internationally.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Ontarians have wanted to know the truth about what happened at Ipperwash. There was a First Nations person who died and an OPP officer convicted of criminal negligence.

Premier, you have said that you would hold a public inquiry once all matters were out of the courts. That time now has come. The final hurdle has been cleared. The George family has in writing—true to their word, I might add, because they have said this all along, that they had no interest in a civil case if you would call a public inquiry. Now, in a communication, a letter to you, they have formally said they would clearly drop the civil case if you would do what you have said you would do, and that is to call a public inquiry.

Now that the final hurdle has been cleared, Premier, will you finally personally—you are the one who can make this decision—make that decision to hold a public inquiry?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Attorney General can respond.

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I have recently become aware of the fact that the George family indicated through their lawyer that they were prepared to have this action held in abeyance; not dropped—held in abeyance. I must say to you that that is not a term that exists within the rules of civil procedure. It is one that I guess their lawyer has made up and thought it might be appropriate but is not known in the area of civil procedure.

Five years ago, the George family came forward and made some very, very serious allegations against senior members of this government. Throughout, the defendants have denied and categorically rejected each and every one of those allegations. We are finally getting close to trial and at this juncture the plaintiffs are indicating they don't want to go to trial. The defendants do want to go to trial. They want their day in court and they want it soon.

Mr Phillips: The George family has been categorical and said that they would finally terminate this when the final inquiry report is presented. It has been clear: Premier, you are trying to bankrupt the George family.

I will read from their letter. This is from Sam George: "We ... believe it is extremely unfair that I and my small family are left bearing the enormous weight of litigating against some of the most powerful institutions in the country, given the universal acknowledgement that this case raises many important issues of public interest. While we are willing and able to carry through with this litigation until its ... end, and will do so if that is forced ... it would be a sad comment on the state of public government and justice in this province if that remains necessary."

This family and Ontario deserves a public inquiry. You can't have them, on behalf of Ontario, bankrupting themselves fighting you and the courts. This demands a public inquiry. You have said all along that you would do that if this matter were removed from the courts. The George family have categorically said they would do that.

Now that you know that, Premier, will you today do the decent and honest and fair thing for the George family and finally agree to hold a public inquiry where they can have a fair day in court and Ontario can finally get to the truth of the matter about Ipperwash?

Hon Mr Young: I'm not sure if the member opposite is reading from the same piece of correspondence that I have been provided with through counsel, but I will tell you what the correspondence I have that allegedly comes from that source indicates. It is as follows: "While we are willing and able to carry through with this litigation until its final end ... if" we are "forced" to do so—they indicate very clearly they are willing and able to carry through with the litigation.

Let's be very clear: the litigation that they started in which they made very serious allegations is a civil proceeding that would allow for the court to assess damages and to attribute blame. The public inquiry that they now want to shift to is a public inquiry that could do neither. The defendants want their day in court—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the Attorney General take his seat. Has the Attorney General finished?

Interjection.

The Speaker: New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, as you know, I represent the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. It's a rural agricultural riding. It's well-known for its fruit and agricultural products. In the early spring I was pleased that our government pledged and distributed \$90 million to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the member take his seat. Sorry, will the member take his seat, please.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt, I have been patient. It's a very controversial issue. We're on to the next question. I can't have you shouting out.

Sorry for the interruption, member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Barrett: Minister, I was very pleased this spring when our government pledged to distribute \$90 million to our hard-pressed grain—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Sudbury, this is your last warning. I just got up and then you continually shout the minute I get down. We don't stand up for our own good. This is your last warning.

Again, I apologize to the member who is trying to get the question out. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Barrett: Minister, with respect to this \$90 million for our grain and oilseed producers, this was thoroughly appreciated by corn farmers, soybean growers and other farmers throughout my area. However, last year fruit and vegetable growers faced weather-related problems, increased production costs and poor markets.

I understand that OMAFRA has developed a proposal to help horticultural producers across Ontario. Could you explain to me and for the benefit of growers across our province the details of this proposal for our fruit and vegetable farmers?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for the question. As you know, our \$90-million contribution to hard-pressed farmers accessed \$104 million of the federal pot of money of \$500 million. Part of the condition of that was that we consulted with farmers who had extreme difficulties this spring, and that included all leaders in our commodities. The horticulture sector in particular will receive \$36 million of the \$104 million, and \$68 million will go to the grains and oilseeds.

This is certainly in recognition of the edible horticultural crops and the difficult season and the conditions they endured in the past year. Producers of the horticultural crops who participated in the 1999 NISA pro-

gram will receive a payment equal to approximately 6% of the eligible net sales for 1999. We have the means and the technology. As soon as we get the money from the feds, it will flow instantaneously.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister. I know that is very much appreciated by our area fruit and vegetable growers.

While any funds that our government may grant to horticultural producers would be appreciated, farmers in all fields agree that the government must improve the package of safety net programs. What is currently being done by OMAFRA to address this concern for a system of safety nets that will do a better job of meeting the needs of fruit and vegetable growers?

Hon Mr Coburn: As the member points out, our government wants to come up with a made-in-Ontario solution. I'm pleased to tell you that the commodity groups have worked shoulder to shoulder with us on that particular issue so that safety net programs and ad hockery is a thing of the past. We have something that will provide some future to the agricultural commodities that they can depend on and make appropriate business decisions.

On May 29, my ministry wrapped up its most recent consultations with the farm and commodity leaders to develop options for safety net programs that will fully meet Ontario's needs in the future. The industry is strongly supportive of our efforts to develop these programs that will boost long-term competitiveness through increased industry self-reliance while still meeting those short-term goals.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Premier. The Walkerton inquiry has let the truth be told, and what we're hearing is shocking. Two previous environment ministers and cabinet were warned that your government's drastic cuts to the environment ministry would jeopardize the environment and public health, but cabinet turned those serious warnings into a public relations exercise. You said that everything was fine, that the cuts would actually improve environmental protection—and then Walkerton happened. Seven people died. Premier, why did you cover up the truth?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. You've got to withdraw that. I'm not going to allow that.

Ms Churley: I'll withdraw that.

Why did you not listen to the warnings?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the actions that we've taken are pretty much a matter of public record. We acted responsibly, in the best interests of Ontarians. We were trying to control costs, obviously, and the \$11-billion deficit that your government transferred to us. If we had allowed that situation to continue, we wouldn't have had a nickel for the environment, education, health care or anything else.

We sought advice from the civil service on how we could best restructure a number of ministries, how we could do more with less, and how we could provide service to constituents. Now, as you know, there is a full inquiry—an investigation, if you like—into Walkerton, and we look forward to those results.

Ms Churley: Premier, you chose to cut taxes over people's health and the environment; that was the choice you made. You killed the only funding program dedicated exclusively to helping municipalities improve their water and sewer systems. Even with the new investment, the MOE budget is still \$43 million less than when you took office.

Even the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound says your government's new water regulations won't work if you don't give municipalities the money to meet the standards. Now the member says that you are going to reach a compromise. Premier, we would really like to know what that compromise is going to be. Are you going to restore funding or are you actually going to weaken the requirements? Which is it, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I think I should, first of all, correct the record. The tax reduction program from the massive tax hikes that you and the Liberals brought in is what led to the jobs, the growth, the prosperity and the \$15 billion more of revenue. It's only with that \$15 billion that we were able to balance the books and put \$5 billion more in health care, while Liberals slashed funding from health care. It's the only way we've been able to increase funding for public education. It's the only way we've been able to increase funding in a whole number of areas.

With regard to the inquiry, Justice O'Connor is undertaking a comprehensive review of the events in Walkerton. He will be bringing forward recommendations. I look forward to receiving the recommendations. I think all of Ontario does. I'm sure Quebec does, because they've made some initiatives in the wake of initiatives that Ontario has made. I think they acknowledge Ontario's initiatives there. I don't think that it serves anybody well to prejudge, if you like, the investigation that Mr Justice O'Connor has undertaken.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to follow up with the Premier on the Ipperwash situation. The Attorney General, in his answer, indicated that one reason why you are not prepared to commit today to a public inquiry is because, in your opinion, the George family has not been categorical in their decision to agree to withdraw their civil case. Is that the reason why you're not agreeing today to an inquiry, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Attorney General can respond.

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate having an opportunity to clarify the matter. I thought it was clear when I spoke earlier, but if the member opposite wishes some further details, I'm happy to provide them to him.

The position of the defendants in this lawsuit is that they are entitled to a day in court, they deserve a day in court, they want to proceed forward to a day in court. The reality is that a civil action will provide an opportunity for all of the issues in dispute to be aired fully and for a decision to be made.

Mr Phillips: Premier, I go back to what the George family has said to you since this incident, that they have one interest and one interest only, and that is in finding out what role you had in the situation, what role your cabinet had and what role your government had. In my opinion, there is substantial evidence of inappropriate behaviour.

You are forcing the George family. The legal bills now are approaching \$1 million: your legal bill, the legal bill of the other cabinet ministers.

The George family has said from the start, Premier, that they would not launch this suit if you would have a public inquiry. They have said today they would stop their civil case if you have an inquiry. Will you, Premier, agree to do the decent thing and finally call a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of what happened at Ipperwash and stop bankrupting the George family?

Hon Mr Young: I think it's worthwhile to take a moment and to consider just how far along the civil action is. The process is well underway. Literally thousands of documents have been exchanged. There is a schedule for discoveries, a schedule that will likely result in those discoveries being completed by year-end, and thereafter a trial will be scheduled and the issues that are in dispute can be resolved.

I say to you that the defendants expect and deserve their day in court. They have done their utmost to advance, to expedite, to move along this civil action so that all of the issues that have been hanging out there, including some very serious allegations made against senior government officials, can be resolved once and for all.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Premier of Ontario was heard by a number of members of this caucus—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I say your member down there is doing just as much yelling. Don't talk to me about the time. Members will know I quite frankly was looking at other members during this period of time and members were shouting things out. I would ask all members, we're dealing with a very, very controversial issue.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. He can get up at any time and do that. I thank the member. All members know they can get up and do that.

It's not a point of order. I listened very carefully. In addition, I have the table listen very carefully as well. It is very difficult when the honourable members, both sides, treat each other like this in all circumstances. I would ask all members on this very delicate situation to try and remain as cool as possible under these very difficult circumstances.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask if the Premier would withdraw that comment.

Interjections.

The Speaker: OK. That's enough. The next one who shouts out something is out, on any side, starting right now. The Minister of Labour, your last warning. You caught it by the very skin of your teeth on that one. We are not going to continue with this. No more points of order.

CHILD WELFARE

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, one of the major initiatives this government has undertaken is the reform of the child welfare system. One of the most crucial parts of that system is foster parents. The supportive and caring environment provided by these families is a remarkable commitment and a crucial contribution to the well-being of these children. What is the government doing to support these families?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Child welfare reform and the protection of vulnerable children has been a real priority for this government over the last five or six years. I want to certainly say and indicate to the member that we recognize that foster families and foster parents are the backbone of the system.

We do recognize the need to revitalize foster care in the province of Ontario, to strengthen the existing capacity of that system and, as well, to seek to find new foster families and recruit them into the system so that more children can obtain the benefits from that.

We've done two significant things in this regard. Most importantly, we've increased the base rate for foster care by 80%. We've gone from \$14 a day to \$26 a day to support foster parents. We've also introduced more flexibility into the funding system. We can provide up to \$67 a day to help meet the unique and challenging needs of children with a disability.

1510

Mrs Munro: Many people in my community who are involved in fostering have told me they are also concerned about the need to increase the number of families providing foster care. Clearly we have to be working together to strengthen the foster care system and find more families that are willing and able to open their homes to a child in need. What action is the government taking to make sure this vital service will be there for children in the future?

Hon Mr Baird: I recognize the concerns that are out there. I recognize the concern she's brought to me as a member representing folks in her constituency. The government is partnering with the foundation of the Toronto children's aid society to launch a provincial strategy to recruit more foster families. We'll be providing \$100,000 in each of the next three years, matching \$100,000 from them, to launch a recruitment campaign to find more

foster homes and also to increase public education about the importance of foster care.

This \$600,000 initiative has a simple purpose, has a simple goal: to try to increase the number of foster homes, of foster parents, by 20% over the next three years, which is a big goal but one we're committed to work hard to try to achieve.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Premier. Premier, you need to know that the physician shortage crisis continues to worsen in the city of Thunder Bay. Over 40,000 people are stranded without a family physician. To make matters worse, Dr Andrew Affleck, the head of emergency at Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, has told me we are short six full-time equivalent physician positions at the emergency department, leaving him scrambling to fill shifts on a daily basis.

The latest blow came when Dr Walter Kutcher, Thunder Bay's only full-time gastroenterologist, announced recently that he was leaving due to the extraordinary demands and the lack of action by this government. I met with Dr Kutcher last week and he told me he would consider staying if another gastroenterologist could be found and if your government took some of the suggestions they have already personally given you that would deal with retention issues for doctors.

Premier, I understand you are coming to Thunder Bay next week for a golf tournament and a fundraiser. Dr Affleck has written you on behalf of the Thunder Bay Physicians Planning Group, asking you to find time to meet with them while you are in the city. Will you agree today to meet with our local physicians while you're in Thunder Bay to hear their recommendations for solving this crisis?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the member shared with me some of the suggestions the doctor had given me, through him. We welcome all those suggestions. In spite of the massive amounts of dollars and incentives to try to get doctors and specialists into underserved areas, it has been a big challenge, not only for this government but for all governments in Canada, and I think the member is aware of that.

We always welcome those suggestions and advice. I'm always happy to try to meet with as many people as I can who have ideas. I'd be happy to take the suggestion in mind. I am in the northwest, as you know, on a number of occasions. We are talking about a new job creation initiative in Thunder Bay, I believe next week. If it fits into the schedule, I'd be happy to consider that.

Mr Gravelle: Premier, what I'd like is confirmation that you will meet with the doctors in our community. If I may, I'll send you over a copy of the letter Dr Affleck has sent to you, if I can get one of the pages to bring it over. I think you're going to find that what is most frustrating for the immensely overburdened physicians, let alone the citizens of Thunder Bay who are experiencing

on a daily basis the lack of accessibility to quality health care, is that many of the short-term solutions have been talked about and recommended for years.

You've spoken of streamlining the process by which foreign-trained physicians can practise in Ontario, yet there's been no real action taken, and many physicians who want to practise in Thunder Bay are, as a result, heading to other provinces to live and to work.

Dr Kutcher also told me that a reasonable retention bonus would make an enormous difference in recruiting and retaining doctors in the north, which even makes sense fiscally when you consider the enormous costs we are paying to fly locums into our community to deal with our extraordinary shortages.

We are desperate and we are scared in our community. We're scared that things will only get worse unless you take some immediate action. Will you confirm that you'll meet with the local doctors? Will you commit to the people of Thunder Bay that you'll take the action that's needed to turn this crisis around and that it'll be your number one priority when you come to Thunder Bay?

Hon Mr Harris: As you know, I met with Dr Affleck in fact last year when I was in Thunder Bay. The minister has met with Dr Affleck as well. We have adopted a number of the initiatives they proposed to us. The fast-tracking of foreign-trained specialists, for example, was part of the announcements we have made this spring as well. Certainly we are trying to make it more attractive to practise in northwestern Ontario. I would be the first to say that in spite of the initiatives we've taken, in spite of the \$5 billion of new money we've put into health care while the Liberals in Ottawa slashed funding to us, in spite of all these initiatives, there is still more to do.

Dr Affleck and his group have had a meeting with me and with the minister, and we are doing our very best to meet their needs. Am I going to commit today to yet another meeting? If there is something new they have beyond what they had when they met with me or the minister, that would be fine, but I think you would agree that there are 11 million—

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

ONTARIO NEW HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. I understand from my constituents that the coverage offered by the Ontario New Home Warranty Program is providing protection from a variety of factors that can impinge on what may be an individual's or a family's single greatest investment. Last month the Ontario New Home Warranty Program celebrated its 25th anniversary. Can you please tell us how the Ontario New Home Warranty Program has developed over those 25 years?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I can't trace all of the 25 years over this short period of time, but back when the Ontario

New Home Warranty Program began there were only 15,000 new homes built each year in this province; now there are 60,000. This program, over the last 25 years, has produced unparalleled protection for new homeowners. Over \$170 million in claims has been paid out across our province.

The good news about this is that the Ontario New Home Warranty Program has been able to drop its fees consistently over the last couple of years because the program is working better and the builders are producing better buildings. The fact is that those total reductions are now some \$220, down around \$500 or \$600 per new home for this great protection.

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Minister. Obviously customer protection is very important to this government. Could you also tell us what kind of protections and services are offered by the Ontario New Home Warranty Program for Ontario new home buyers? As well, many small builders in my riding and in Ontario have indicated to me that they want an alternative protection plan to be considered.

Hon Mr Sterling: Recently there has been a review of the Ontario New Home Warranty Program and its structure. We have looked at various different alternative models, for instance, an insurance model, and we're still continuing to look at it. However, I must say that the unparalleled success this particular organization has had over the last 25 years makes me somewhat reluctant to strike out in a new direction, because of that success and what they have done in the past. In my opinion, they really have proved their worth. They protect people for deposits up to \$20,000 on their new home. There is a full warranty for defects for one year on materials. There is a structural warranty for seven years on the major structural components of the building.

I don't know of any other jurisdiction that has such protection for new home buyers. I'm proud of the fact that our province of Ontario created this in a previous Conservative government. It has continued to live through New Democratic and Liberal governments and it is continuing to survive in another Conservative government.

PETITIONS

PROSTATE CANCER

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

"Whereas prostate cancer is the fourth leading causes of fatal cancer in Ontario;

"Whereas prostate cancer is the second leading cause of fatal cancers for males;

"Whereas early detection is one of the best tools for being victorious in our battle against cancer;

"Whereas the early detection blood test known as PSA (prostate specific antigen) is one of the most effective

tests at diagnosing early prostate cancer;" and whereas the Minister of Health's inaction and the Mike Harris government's policies is literally causing men to die needlessly;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to encourage the Ministry of Health to have this test added to the list of services covered by OHIP, and that this be done immediately in order for us to save lives and beat prostate cancer."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition, as I am in agreement with it.

1520

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : J'ai une pétition ici adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario qui se lit :

"Whereas the annual rent increase guidelines for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increase every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost-of-living increase for most tenants;

"Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June of 1998 would encourage new construction;

"Whereas one in four tenants pays over 50% of their income on rent;

"Whereas over 100,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing, homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years."

I sign this petition and give it to the page here, Sabrina.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

"Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

"Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

"Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

"Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the objective of the Ontario disability support plan (ODSP) is to eliminate the stigma of ‘welfare’ and provide income support to meet the needs of persons with disabilities; and

“Whereas our province will benefit from supporting and encouraging the employment of persons with disabilities; and

“Whereas the present ODSP monthly allowance of \$930 for a single person fails to meet basic living requirements; and

“Whereas a person in receipt of ODSP is allowed to earn only \$1,920 per year employment income without penalty, therein removing incentive to break free of assistance; and

“Whereas this government has made ODSP a barrier to independence for persons with disabilities and in so doing, thwarted personal self-esteem;

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

“Amend the Ontario disability support program such that recipients are not forced to live in poverty without hope. Truly help persons with disabilities find and maintain employment so that they can live productive, independent lives. Enact a meaningful and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act by November 23, 2001.”

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Une autre pétition, cette fois-ci signée par des gens de Timmins qui sont venus à un meeting vendredi passé dans le comté faisant affaire avec l'éducation. Ça se lit :

“To the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas the Harris government is planning to take funds that our public schools desperately need and funnel them to private schools through a tax credit; and

“Whereas the government plans to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools; and

“Whereas this initiative is in effect a voucher system and is the beginning of the end of quality public education in Ontario,

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on all members of the Legislature to fight and defeat this attack on the choice parents most want: stability, co-operation and respect in clean, safe public schools.”

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for London West.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 184 people.

“Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

“Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

“Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

“Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

“Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

ACCESS TO RECREATION AREAS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by about 200 residents of the fine town of Hornepayne.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a number of trails originally made by local people for access to camps and hunting/fishing areas were arbitrarily taken over by snowmobile clubs without consultation or dialogue with those who have historically used those trails;

“Whereas the snowmobile clubs now intend to charge a yearly fee per snow machine for all those who use the trails, regardless of purpose;

“Whereas it is unfair for people who have no intention of using the trails for touring purposes to be denied access to their camps or recreation areas unless willing to pay for the privilege;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish a radius within which people would not have to pay for trail use, thereby protecting local interests without depriving the snowmobile clubs of income from those who are legitimately using the trails for touring.”

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got petitions from hundreds of Ontario citizens opposed to the government's initiative to support private schools:

"Whereas the Harris government is planning to take funds that our public schools desperately need and funnel them to private schools through tax credits; and

"Whereas the government's plan is to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools; and

"Whereas this initiative is, in effect, a voucher system and is the beginning of the end of quality public education in Ontario,

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on all members of the Legislature to fight and defeat this attack on the choice parents most want: stability, co-operation and respect in clean, safe public schools."

I support this petition.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Petitions?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm delighted to present this petition. It's signed by several hundred people from in and around my riding in Kitchener.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

"Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

"Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

"Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

"Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

"Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

"To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible."

I am pleased to affix my signature.

NURSES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the nurses of Ontario are seeking relief from heavy workloads, which have contributed to unsafe conditions for patients and have increased the risk of injury to nurses; and

"Whereas there is a chronic nursing shortage in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has failed to live up to its commitment to provide safe, high quality care for patients;

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

"We demand the Ontario government take positive action to ensure that our communities have enough nursing staff to provide patients with the care they need. The Ontario government must:

"Ensure wages and benefits are competitive and value all nurses for their dedication and commitment; ensure there are full-time and regular part-time jobs available for nurses in hospitals, nursing homes and the community; ensure government revenues fund health care, not tax cuts; ensure front-line nurses play a key role in health reform decisions."

I am prepared to sign this petition as I'm in complete agreement.

1530

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got a petition from many tenants who support my bill for a rent freeze for all tenants in Ontario:

"Whereas the annual rent increase guideline for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increases every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost-of-living increase for most tenants;

"Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June of 1998 would encourage new construction;

"Whereas over 100,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing, homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents, and high rents are a direct cause of the national housing crisis;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years."

I sign this petition in support.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

"Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

"Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

“Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

“Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): This petition is signed by 40,000 residents of Thunder Bay and the district. It's related to the shortage of physicians, and I'd like to read it into the record, a community letter to the Premier of Ontario.

“Dear Premier:

“Our community is facing an immediate, critical situation in accessing physician services and in providing hospital care to the people of northwestern Ontario. While the recruitment and retention of physicians has been a concern for many years, it is now reaching crisis proportions. Training more physicians in northern Ontario is certainly the best response to this problem in the longer term. We are, however, in urgent need of support for immediate short-term solutions that will allow our community both to retain our current physicians and recruit new family doctors and specialists in seriously understaffed areas.

“Therefore, as residents of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, we urge you to respond to our community's and our region's critical and immediate needs. For us, this is truly a matter of life and death.”

I am very pleased to add my name to this petition.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas on December 1, 2000, the government of British Columbia changed the pharmacy bylaws enabling pharmacists for the first time ever to prescribe a product (emergency contraception) directly to patients without their ever having to see a physician; and

“Whereas pharmacists have no idea with respect to the patient's medical history, undiagnosed blood disorders or whether the requested medication is actually for the person making the request; and

“Whereas the primary action of the emergency contraception is to prevent implantation of a new human being in the uterus, thus causing his/her death; and

“Whereas there is limited health safety data available on the emergency contraception, including but not limited to the safety of long-term use in frequent users,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make no changes to the pharmacy bylaws in Ontario or use any other means which would enable over-the-counter sales of the emergency contraception in Ontario.”

I affix my signature thereto.

NURSES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the nurses of Ontario are seeking relief from heavy workloads, which have contributed to unsafe conditions for patients and have increased the risk of injury to nurses; and

“Whereas there is a chronic nursing shortage in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has failed to live up to its commitment to provide safe, high quality care for patients;

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

“We demand the Ontario government take positive action to ensure that our communities have enough nursing staff to provide patients with the care they need. The Ontario government must:

“Ensure wages and benefits are competitive and value all nurses for their dedication and commitment; ensure there are full-time and regular part-time jobs available for nurses in hospitals, nursing homes and the community; ensure government revenues fund health care, not tax cuts; ensure front-line nurses play a key role in health reform decisions.”

I have petitions with another 2,000 names, some on the backs of the petitions. That makes a total of over 12,000 names of people who share the concerns expressed. I affix my signature in full agreement.

OPPOSITION DAY

ELECTRICITY POLICY

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal opposition, I am proud to move the following resolution:

Be it resolved that this House demands that the government immediately:

Enact an Ontario-first electricity policy that guarantees that Ontario electricity will be used to provide Ontarians with a reliable, affordable supply of power;

Create a strong regulatory and genuinely competitive power generation environment that will produce a mix of electricity providers—public and private, large and small, and those providing green power—to assure a sufficient supply and eventually lead to lower rates;

Stop the monopolization of the electricity retail sector by Hydro One;

Introduce consumer protection and information programs to educate Ontarians about the changes to the province's electricity marketplace;

Revoke Ontario Hydro's successor companies' exemption from Freedom of Information legislation; and

Establish an all-party select committee to oversee Ontario's electricity policy, including the transition to a competitive marketplace, the activities of Ontario Hydro's successor companies and conflicts of interest that exist as a result of the restructuring of Ontario's electricity market, including situations in which the government is in a conflict of interest and is favouring the interests of big business and other friends of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Conway has moved opposition day number 4.

Mr Conway: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of my colleagues to address, from the Liberal Party's position, very key concerns we have about the electricity marketplace in Ontario. The cornerstone of the Ontario Liberal electricity policy is that it must be an Ontario-first policy. We are deeply concerned that the Harris government is embarking upon a program to expose the electricity ratepayers of this province—residential, farm, industrial and commercial—to a policy that is going to serve the interests of perhaps our American friends better than it's going to serve the interests of the domestic Ontario consumer.

Let it be very clear that the Ontario Liberal Party believes that a cornerstone of a good electricity policy has to be an Ontario-first attitude. The millions of men and women who live and work in this province expect that the natural resources of this province that are a critical part of the generating of electricity are going to be deployed to the interests of Ontarians. The free marketeers who have given the Harris government its so-called deregulation policy, we fear, are more interested in Bay Street and these hydro companies doing well in the American market than they are in serving the interests of the Ontario market.

Our resolution today, the Ontario Liberal Party resolution on electricity policy, says first and foremost, "Let our policy be an Ontario-first policy." We recognize and we accept that there have to be changes, and I want to say to my own colleagues what I've said in caucus: that we have to go forward recognizing that the experience of the last 35 or 40 years has made plain that we have to consider creative change. But let me be clear: electricity is not a commodity like others. Electricity, as you will know, is a commodity that we absolutely must have and we cannot store. Those two features, the absolute importance of electricity to a modern society and the fact that you can't store it, give electricity a political salience like no other commodity I can imagine.

When these free marketeers talk about, "Let the market decide," I ask them, "Do you not understand how electricity, particularly in a northern climate like ours, where for four or five months of the year we have sub-arctic conditions, is not a commodity like others?"

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Even in May.

1540

Mr Conway: The fact of the matter is, I say to my friends opposite, from November 1 to April 1 we have very severe winters. My friend from Brockville and I will remember the experience of a few years ago when a big swath of southeastern Ontario and southwestern Quebec were without electricity for 10, 12 days. The ice storm of the late 1990s was a powerful reminder of just how essential electricity is to a modern economy.

The first point I want to make is that we believe, as Ontario Liberals, that we must have an Ontario-first electricity policy. I am not interested in the plans that Bay Street has to make money in the American market by either selling our electricity down there or, more worryingly, selling our very valuable electricity assets in the United States market. Our interest as Ontario Liberals, and I would hope our interest as Ontarians, is to devise an electricity policy that puts the interests of Ontario consumers first. I don't see that Ontario-first dimension in the Harris government's electricity policy.

The second point I want to make on behalf of my colleagues is that we believe we can have a reasonably competitive market in the generation of electricity. I personally strongly believe that since Ontario Hydro was never intended to become what it became in the post-Second World War era, namely a monopoly generator, we should contemplate and devise an electricity policy that imagines a number of generators. As our resolution says, large and small, public and private—and, yes, there should be a government-mandated green or renewable electricity standard. Make no mistake about it, I and we in the Liberal caucus believe that the absolute critical dimension of this whole question of our electricity policy is in generation. We have simply got to find ways, affordable and environmentally acceptable ways, to generate the 25,000 or 30,000 megawatts we require to sustain the modern Ontario economy. Unlike the American vice-president, I believe, as I hope all members believe, that demand management and conservation are very important parts of the strategy, as is renewable energy and a green power standard.

One of the key questions for me as the energy critic for the Liberal opposition is the whole question of generation: how do we create an environment where we get the generation we're going to require to meet present and future demands? You know, I was in Quebec the other day and I was very interested to hear from Quebec Hydro as to how they've gone forward. They have something called a heritage pool of electricity: 165 terawatt hours have been set aside by the Quebec Legislature, the National Assembly, at a fixed price, something below three cents a kilowatt hour, in perpetuity for the Quebec domestic market, for the home market in Quebec. My question is, why have we not got, in the interests of an Ontario-first electricity policy, a similar commitment to protect our home market?

Make no mistake about it: under the Harris plan our electricity price-setters are now going to be in the Great Lakes basin, mostly south of us, in places like Saginaw, Michigan; Toledo, Ohio; and Syracuse, New York. Our domestic market in Ontario is very exposed to upward pressure because the government's electricity policy assumes a price-setting mechanism that is essentially south of the Great Lakes.

Quebec has proceeded with a policy that recognizes the need to protect the home market with home resources. I'm not saying our situations are exactly parallel, but I think we have a good example in the Quebec electricity policy of how we might meet the Ontario-first requirement.

I know there are people on both sides of the Legislature who, I suspect, given the current uncertainties, would want to return to the old days where Ontario Hydro generates all of the electricity. I happen not to be one of them. I do believe that there has to be a significant public presence in the generation of electricity, and when I say "public," I mean what we now call Ontario Power Generation, but I also mean public in the sense of local municipal electric utilities: the Toronto Hydros, the Ottawa Hydros, the Pembroke Hydros. Many of those utilities have the ability to generate their own electricity. That's public power, and I think we should certainly encourage that. But governments of all stripes here in the last 15 years have encouraged non-utility generation. Most of it's private. It has not delivered quite what we had expected of it in the last 10 or 15 years, but I do not think the past experience with non-utility generators is such that we should simply say we do not want to allow small, regionally dispersed generators, many of which will be private, to do business in the Ontario market.

So let me be clear. The electricity market that we as Liberals envisage is one where we see a competitive market in the generation of electricity with a goodly number of generators, many of which will be public. Some of those will be Ontario Power Generation; others will be owned and operated by municipal electric utilities. And, yes, we contemplate that there will be some private generators and hopefully some new public and new private coming to the Ontario market. I believe it's only when we get that mix of generators that we're going to have an opportunity. I see my friend from Brockville is here. He will know that Gananoque Power is down in his part of the province, meeting the local demand, and I think, from all reports, quite well.

We have to contemplate a substantial investment in new generation. All of us have to face the painful choices that environmental policy is going to impose upon us. And I'm going to tell this Legislature what I assume it knows, that some of those choices are going to be difficult.

I, for one, certainly would like to see as much of the dirty coal-fired electricity as possible replaced by much more environmentally accepted and benign means and methodologies, but I suspect to do that in the current and

intermediate environment is going to put some upward pressure on price.

Whatever we do in terms of generation, I think the new market is certainly going to require a rigorous and ruthless regulation by a public regulator, and I don't believe we've got that now. I was interested in the exchange today between the Minister of Energy and the leader of the third party. I can tell you that what the Minister of Energy said about what the energy board is capable of is largely a fairy tale. The energy board is besieged with too much work, much of it very complicated, and with a real difficulty in terms of meeting that current workload with the resources assigned to it. But let me be clear. We need a competitive marketplace, I believe, that is rigorously and ruthlessly regulated in the public interest by a public regulator, and we are a long way from having the kind of teeth and the kind of resources in that public regulator that the public interest requires.

Mr Speaker, it's not your voice that's the problem here.

Let me just say a couple of other things.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): There's a microphone.

Mr Conway: I know, and I'm over here. I don't mean to be rude, but it is difficult. I would hope if I were doing it, somebody would tell me to move elsewhere, as they often do.

The other point I want to make: the government received advice from the so-called Macdonald commission. The Macdonald commission reported five years ago on electricity and said there were some things that were absolutely important. First and foremost, the Macdonald group said you simply have to create a competitive marketplace for generation. If you don't do that, this panel of experts said, you're going to have a real problem. We haven't done that.

Interestingly, Macdonald said—and I didn't agree with everything they said—the first important step in this process was to break up the generating assets of the old Ontario Hydro and assign them to a number of publicly owned but competitive companies. We didn't do that either. The Harris government is now caught with a basically contradictory electricity policy. It says it wants competition but it essentially continues to have a monopoly environment.

1550

The other thing Macdonald said was, "For heaven's sake, do not let Ontario Hydro expand its retail business," and what have we got? We have got, in our faces, the monopolization of the retail sector by Ontario Hydro, and it is absurd. Nobody who has been around this debate for any length of time thinks that is a necessary or a sensible thing. Ontario Hydro One is out spending \$250 million to buy what? Brampton Hydro. There is absolutely no case for that, and independent experts like Macdonald said, "Don't do it." Well, this crown corporation called Hydro One is doing it in our faces with a middle finger salute to

this Legislature, at a huge cost to the ratepayers and the taxpayers. It is unbelievable.

We talk about accountability. We talk about doing what we said we were going to do. It is amazing, given what we've been through with Ontario Hydro, that we've got the spectacle of this crown corporation, this successor company called Hydro One, out spending money it does not have to buy local utilities like Brampton Hydro, to name but one—I could name Thorold and I could name dozens of others—and experts say they're paying premium prices, in the range of about a 30% or 35% premium, to buy these companies. To what end? For what purpose?

I submit that we ought to stop the remonopolization of the retail sector in electricity, just exactly the way Macdonald said it should not be happening.

Consumer protection: If there is going to be a change, if we're going to give the public a choice, they need to have some information as to what a person would do to exercise an informed opinion. There is virtually nothing being done by the government of Ontario to assist utilities and to assist consumers trying to sort out this miasma of complex and conflicting information, and that's just incredible. We were told in the committee a couple of years ago, "If you're going to move toward a competitive marketplace, you'd better take rigorous action to inform the consumers."

Today I'm told that about 20% of residential consumers have signed up with a couple—and there really are only a couple—of retailers, Direct Energy and Toronto Hydro Energy. I'm going to tell you, Mr Speaker and colleagues, when this market opens, hundreds of thousands of your constituents are going to be shocked to find out what it is they've signed up for. We have done precious little to help those people make an informed choice, and that's got to stop.

I have a couple of other final observations. Two years ago, Dr Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, came to the committee looking at this whole policy around a new electricity policy. Dr Cavoukian said that you should not exempt Ontario Hydro successor companies from the freedom-of-information legislation, for a whole series of reasons. Time doesn't permit me to enumerate those, but I believe she was right. We know much less about Hydro's successor companies today than we did two and three years ago about the old Ontario Hydro.

Make no mistake about it: on a daily basis, companies that we own—Ontario Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation are essentially today crown corporations with one shareholder, the Ontario government. They are acting with our blessing, indirect though it may be, with our sanction, spending the public's money in ways that we have very little understanding of. And what is the experience of the last 30 or 40 or 50 years with Hydro? You find out years and decades later that the costs and the commitments were fantastically greater than anybody ever knew at the time.

We have a fiduciary responsibility as honourable members of the Legislature, including those in government, to protect the public interest.

On this policy, I say again, if everything goes well with this electricity business over the next few years, there are going to be very difficult and painful times. This is not easy and I want to make it plain that anybody charged with the responsibility of government in this case has a very difficult situation with which to deal. But it is incredible to me that this Legislature, with all we went through in the last number of years and decades, does not seem to be at all interested in exacting a better standard of accountability for what's being done, particularly policy that is a flagrant contradiction of what was advised and what was advertised.

A final point I want to make before my colleagues join this debate: one of the deeply troubling aspects about the electricity game as it's now constituted is that we, the government, and we, the Legislature of Ontario, have a complete conflict of interest. We own the companies. To use the hockey analogy, we own the arena, we own the biggest team on the ice and we own the second- and third-biggest teams on the ice too. We pay the referee, we hire the referee, we wrote the rules and we have a vested financial interest in the outcome of the game. I'm not making that up. That is reality.

This electricity business is enormously important and it is shot through with all kinds of conflicts. Who is watching out for the consumer, for the taxpayer and ratepayer? I don't mean even this as a partisan criticism of the current government. The government of Ontario has a huge conflict of interest in this business. That's why I believe this Legislature should establish an all-party select committee that would have a mandate over the next couple of years to look at a number of the specific and important issues that arise from this change. Without that, and with an underfunded, overburdened energy board, quite frankly we are giving Mr Farlinger over at OPG and the people at Hydro One a *carte blanche*.

As I take my seat, I see all kinds of evidence that suggests that not days and months from now, but years from now another Legislature, another government is probably going to be standing up and announcing, "Oh, my goodness, prices have gone up, public indebtedness has skyrocketed, assets have gone out the front and back doors and we've got a shortage of electricity." I think we have an obligation that we have not been discharging to develop and implement an electricity policy that puts the interests of Ontario consumers first and foremost. That's why we, as the official opposition, have put this resolution before the Legislature today for your consideration and support.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I would like to ask unanimous consent to move an amendment to the Liberal motion. I know this is unusual, but in this case it's important to emphasize that the Liberal position on privatization and deregulation of hydro-electricity is virtually the same as the Harris govern-

ment's position. Therefore, I would like to move an amendment and I'm asking for unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Mr Conway: No.

Mr Hampton: Since the Liberals won't allow me unanimous consent, let me illustrate, point by point, how identical the Liberals' position is to the Conservatives' position. I say to the Conservative members, you should probably vote for this resolution because if you read the notes the government distributed when you introduced your own 1998 electricity deregulation bill, it's virtually identical to this motion.

Let me go through it point by point. So far we have seen that in their public comments and in their votes in this House, the Liberals have been very clear that they support the Harris government's dirty deal to sell off our electricity system. I heard a quote from the Liberal leader where he said that the Liberals are absolutely in favour of deregulation, privatization and, as they say, the competitive market.

They agree with selling off our electricity system. They voted against our motion a couple of weeks ago that said we should maintain a public system, that we should not go down the road California has gone down, where they sold off their electricity system to international energy companies and those international energy companies have only one interest: raise the price as high as you can and maximize your profits. If that means some people don't get electricity when they turn on the switch because they can't afford the higher price, they don't care. They're not interested in providing electrical service. They're interested in maximizing the price and the profit.

1600

What the Liberals are really trying to do today is that, after they have agreed in principle with your deregulation and privatization of hydroelectricity, they now want to muddy the waters a bit and try to create some room for themselves.

But the fundamental fact is this: when you sell off a lot of our existing generating capacity to private international energy corporations, and then you integrate our electricity market with the New England electricity market and the Midwestern electricity market in the United States, as this government is in the process of doing, you're going to drive up prices. Why? Because what happens when you integrate the market is that the price gets decided by whoever is willing to pay the most for the power.

Right now, in New York City the price of electricity is 123% higher than it is here; in Boston it's 85% higher; in Detroit it's 60% higher; in Chicago it's 50% higher. If somebody comes along and buys up four or five of Ontario Power Generation's electricity stations, they're not going to want to sell the power here in Ontario for the existing price. They'll want to get it to New York or Boston as fast as they can and sell it for two or two and a half times the price. Then they're going to say to Ontario

residents that if we want electricity, we pay the same price they're paying in New York or Boston.

If people really want a comparison, all they need to do is look at what's happened to natural gas prices over the last year. Natural gas operates in a deregulated, privatized environment. What we've seen was that the Midwestern United States was willing to pay a lot more for natural gas, and therefore those private energy companies said, "This is what we can get selling the natural gas in Chicago, so you people in Ontario are going to have to pay the same price." People are seeing their natural gas bills go up by 60%, 70% and 80%, and they're going to go up even higher.

There shouldn't be a lot of mystery here. If you sell off your system, as California did, to international energy companies, those international energy companies will want to maximize price and profit. If you put us in the context of the New England electricity market and the Midwestern United States electricity market, prices will go up and they'll go up substantially. This is what we've seen in California.

The Liberals want to ignore that. They also want to ignore the fact that George Bush, the new President of the United States, has said very clearly that they know they're facing an electricity shortage in the United States. They want our electricity. In fact, George Bush said he would build the transmission lines to get it. Privatizing the electricity system, selling it off to international corporations, is just going to make it easier for George Bush to get it.

I know that Mike Harris and this government are willing accomplices to what George Bush and Dick Cheney, the US Vice-President, want. They want a continental electricity market. I know this government fundamentally believes in that. That's what you say you believe in: let the market decide. Let the market decide the price. Let the market decide who gets electricity and who doesn't get electricity.

I just point out that this is the Liberal position as well. The Liberals are also willing accomplices in this. But they want to now create a few wrinkles that make it look as if their position is really different.

I'll go through the Liberal motion in detail. For example, they say they want to "enact an 'Ontario First' electricity policy that guarantees that Ontario electricity will be used to provide Ontarians with a reliable, affordable supply of power." In fact, if you read this government's electricity deregulation act of 1998, that's what it says. This government says it wants Ontario-first as well, but the reality is that once you sell it off to international energy corporations and once you have NAFTA, you can't have an Ontario-first policy.

The only way you can consistently look after Ontario people, Ontario consumers and Ontario industry is to maintain public control, as Manitoba is doing, as Saskatchewan is doing, as British Columbia is doing, as Quebec is doing. They recognize that if we're not going to see our prices go up as they've gone up in California, if we're not going to follow the New York price or the

Boston price, they have to continue to have public control and operate their provincial hydroelectricity system as a public utility.

Liberals say they want an Ontario-first policy. I just say again that once you sell it off to international energy corporations, and under the auspices of NAFTA, you can't have that. You can't. Someone is going to say, "The National Energy Board will say that you have to look after Ontario needs first." The National Energy Board can't control price. All the National Energy Board can say is that whatever you're willing to sell for in the United States, if you can get this amount in the United States, then Ontario consumers, in order to be assured of some security of supply, have to pay the same price. So the National Energy Board would preside over this increase of price to the New York level or the Boston level, but the National Energy Board could not mandate that the electricity has to go here first.

This Ontario-first strategy is empty. The only way you can ensure that Ontario industries and Ontario consumers have an assured supply at a reasonable price is to maintain what we have now: a public utility system. I'll tell you, California right now is actually putting together the makings of re-establishing public ownership and public control over their electricity system. The government of which this Conservative government said, "We should copy California," is now saying, "Whoa. Don't go down this privatization and deregulation road that leads to incredible instability and much higher prices." Liberals agree with Conservatives on this: they want to sell off Hydro, they want to deregulate the market.

The Liberals then say they want to "create a strong regulatory and genuinely competitive power generation environment that will produce a mix of electricity providers—public and private, large and small, and those providing green power—to assure a sufficient supply and eventually lead to lower rates." It all sounds good. In fact, do you know what? If you go back and read the explanatory notes that the Conservatives put out when they passed their electricity deregulation bill, that's exactly what they said too. Liberals here are saying exactly the same thing that the Conservatives said three years ago in 1998. You guys should vote for this Liberal motion because they're agreeing with everything you've said over the last three years.

The reality, though, of what is happening out there: the fact is that the electricity industry is not devolving into smaller and smaller companies. In fact, it is integrating. The international giants, whether they be Detroit Edison or British Energy, are going around buying up the smaller utilities. When you deregulate and privatize, these huge international energy corporations that have been ripping people off in California are right there at the door to buy up the small guy. I can only assume that the Liberals approve of what has gone on in California, but there is no creation of smaller companies, if you look at what's happening out there where they have privatized and deregulated. The big monsters who are into nuclear

energy, who are into big coal, get bigger. That's what's happening, and we shouldn't be surprised by that.

If you look at what's happening in oil, the big oil companies are buying up the smaller independents. If you look at what's happening in natural gas, the big natural gas companies, most of them American, are buying up the small natural gas companies. If you deregulate and privatize electricity, the same thing is going to happen here.

1610

The Liberals say that they support the Macdonald report model. Just to know who Mr Macdonald is, Mr Macdonald is a former Liberal finance minister who said he was completely in favour of free trade. Liberals have now flip-flopped and say they're completely in favour of free trade. The Liberals say that the problem with the Conservative policy is that it does not adopt Macdonald's plan to break up Ontario Hydro's generation. In other words, you're not selling off enough. These guys want you to sell it all. Get out there and find more British Energy Corps and more Detroit Edisons and California Edisons. Sell all of our electricity generating capacity to those big international giants and then the Liberals will be happy.

What they don't say is that Mr Macdonald also supported privatization of most of Hydro's fossil plants and hydroelectric plants. He supported keeping Niagara Falls, but only for political reasons; otherwise he would have sold that too.

What Mr McGuinty's Liberals are really telling us when they say they support the further break-up of Ontario Power Generation, which used to be Ontario Hydro, à la Mr Macdonald is that they, like the private sector stakeholders, want a full-blooded sell-off of the public utility. Turn it all over to those private international energy corporations. That's why you guys should vote for this Liberal motion.

Once you go down this road that the Conservatives and the Liberals are on, you are under enormous pressure to privatize and to avoid the so-called market power problems. You're under enormous pressure to sell it off—all of it. The private sector will tell you that they won't really invest in new generation unless they have Ontario Power Generation, the old Ontario Hydro, tied up in the basement and the family jewels are looted and sold off.

On this issue the Liberals are trying to be a little bit pregnant, but it won't wash. If you sell off, if you move down that road where you're selling it all off to the private sector, you are then, the next step, integrated into the American market, your prices are going up and the same instability of supply that George Bush is warning people about then starts to visit Ontario.

I say again that what we as New Democrats want to do is retain the public power pool. When new generation is required after all the energy conservation opportunities have been implemented, you can then, as an instrument of government policy, reward green energy producers. You can, as an aspect of government policy, actually go

out there and promote wind power, solar power and small-scale hydroelectric development, all of which might be totally against the interests of those international energy corporations who don't want to see that small-scale community development.

In our view, what we've had in Ontario with the public system, what Quebec Hydro has had, what Manitoba Hydro has had, what BC Hydro has had, in all those situations, is a very reliable supply of power at very predictable prices and at very reasonable prices—in fact, some of the lowest prices in all of North America. Why do we want to give that away? Why do you want to sell that off? I think Conservatives and Liberals both have to answer that question.

The other thing the Liberals say is, "Stop the monopolization of the electricity retail sector by Hydro One." Energy Probe and others have sounded the alarm about this. The problem is that Hydro One is incurring new taxpayer debt to make their purchases and is paying inflated prices. While the increased purchase price goes to the municipalities, and therefore stays in the public sector, the debt interest does not. There does not appear to be a compelling reason for this extra public expenditure, except the next move by this government will be to then privatize Hydro One.

If you look at what's happening, what the government is doing, it is privatizing the assets which are going to be worth a lot of money and which will generate a lot of income and they're socializing the debt. So the debt falls on the taxpayers and the ratepayers of the province while these assets, which are going to become more valuable—George Bush tells us that, Dick Cheney tells us that—are being sold over to private sector companies at bargain basement prices.

That's the next step with Hydro One. The Liberals say, "Stop the monopolization of the electricity retail sector by Hydro One." I think the government's going to agree with you, Liberals. They're now going to sell it off to private sector people.

The way to do this is to preserve public power—public power—and to continue to sell power in Ontario at cost. Not at the cost of production, plus 25% return, plus 15% for the executive management team, who all want multimillion-dollar salaries. The Liberal motion and the Conservative direction all take us to the same place.

The Liberals then say they want to introduce consumer protection and information programs to educate Ontarians about the challenge to the province's electricity marketplace. That again is exactly what the Conservatives say in the speaking notes to the bill that they passed in 1998, the bill that the Liberals voted for and agreed with.

I presented a private member's bill here today which calls on the government to ban electricity marketers from approaching consumers directly unless the consumers have requested contact. Even Professor Don Dewees, an economist at the University of Toronto who advised the government on setting up the deregulated system, says that he couldn't personally make a reasonable buying

decision based on the information that energy marketers are making available.

I put that private member's bill forward, but that private member's bill is just to stop people from getting ripped off right now. If we want people to not be ripped off in the longer term, then don't privatize Ontario's hydroelectricity system. Don't turn it over to international energy corporations, as they did in California, and don't integrate us into an American New England and Midwestern electricity market, where the prices are already higher than ours.

Stop doing what you're doing. Kill the privatization of Ontario's hydroelectricity system. Continue to build a hydroelectricity system that is publicly owned and publicly responsible.

One of the other points: the Liberals say they want to establish an all-party select committee to oversee Ontario's electricity policy, including the transition to a private system. We don't need a select committee to oversee the privatization. We need a complete change in policy. We need the government to say and Liberals to say that selling off what is one of our most valuable assets, a publicly owned electricity system, is wrong, that selling it off, as California did, will lead in the same direction that it has in California: less stable energy supplies; higher energy prices; more and more rip-offs by international energy corporations who game the market to drive prices up.

I just want to say what I think we should be debating here today. We should be debating something that says as follows:

"Be it resolved that this House declares unequivocally that the government should abandon electricity deregulation and privatization in Ontario; that it should set up a new system of accountable public power; the Energy Competition Act should be repealed and replaced with a public power act; an Ontario Power Generation sale of 65% of its generation capacity must be permanently halted; the Ontario Energy Board should be given the power to set electricity rates and approve or veto major generation projects by the major power provider.

"There should also be a legislative requirement that affordable energy conservation initiatives be given priority over new generation projects, and that when new generation is built, the renewable green power be given priority."

1620

That's what we should be debating here today. That is a true forward-looking energy policy for Ontario. Selling off our hydroelectricity system, as Conservatives and Liberals both advocate, takes us down the same road that California is on: a less predictable supply of power, higher prices, more rip-offs by international energy corporations. Ontarians don't want to go there, and New Democrats are the only people who are saying loudly and clearly, "Let's not go there. Let's stop this insane sell-off of our hydroelectricity system now, before we're all paying double and triple the rates for our electricity and we lose a lot of jobs in the process."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Gill: It is a pleasure indeed to take part in this debate about opening the electricity market. I think it's an important topic and it is a fear, because a lot of times all kinds of rhetoric goes on in the House and I'm sure people out there are very, very confused, to say the least.

Right off the start, I must say that the members opposite talked about the rate increase: how much rates are going to be increased and this and that, and a little bit of fearmongering there. Let me just set the record straight. The rate has to be approved by the Ontario Energy Board. Mr Speaker, the chairperson of the Ontario Energy Board is a Mr Floyd Laughren, who, you may recall, was the Treasurer of the NDP government. So I'm sure he will be doing a super job in making sure that the rates, if they are going up, are going up in line with some kind of semblance where consumers are not being hurt.

I must point out that when our government, the Mike Harris government, came into office in 1995, Ontario's electricity sector had been heading in the wrong direction. From 1985 to 1995, Ontario went from having below-average electricity prices—and I'm sure consumers were very happy because the electricity prices were below average—to having the third-highest power prices in Canada. So actually prices did go up tremendously during that period. This represented a threat to the overall competitiveness of the Ontario economy, and clearly something had to be done.

At the start, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, "We accept there have to be changes," and these are some of the changes that we are bringing about to make sure consumers are benefiting from the open competition. It is important to understand that under the previous monopoly-based electricity system, Ontario had more than 300 distribution utilities, while the rest of Canada had only 25: 300 in Ontario alone, and the rest of Canada only had 25. Many of these utilities in Ontario had fewer than 1,000 customers, and five of them had fewer than 200 customers. When you stop and actually think about these numbers and what they are telling us, it really says a lot about the inefficiencies which had been built up in the Ontario electricity sector over the years.

At the same time, the old Ontario Hydro monopoly ran up debts and other liabilities totalling \$38 billion. The provincial government guaranteed Ontario Hydro bonds, so really the taxpayer was on the hook for that debt.

It was clear that Ontario's electricity sector had become out-of-date, inefficient and just too expensive. Hydro's debt load was a threat to the entire provincial economy. Some people have criticized our approach to electricity restructuring, and they say, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" What they don't realize is that it actually was broke: it was broke financially and it was broke functionally. Some \$38 billion in debt and other liabilities speak for themselves.

These are some of the key reasons why the government implemented the Energy Competition Act to

restructure Ontario's electricity sector. Through this initiative, the Ontario government will bring competition to our province's electricity industry. Competition forces electricity providers to control their costs—let me emphasize: to control their costs—while encouraging them to find new savings, new ideas and new technologies. This will benefit electricity customers and taxpayers throughout Ontario by providing a reliable supply of electricity at the lowest possible cost.

This is an approach which has already proven successful in many other jurisdictions around the world. It is unfortunate that a lot of times most of the media's attention has been focused on California and Alberta, the only two jurisdictions—the only two—which have encountered any real difficulties in their transition to a competitive market.

We cannot overlook the fact that competition has already resulted in significant benefits for consumers, especially price decreases. Contrary to what members opposite are trying to say, it actually resulted in price decreases and savings in places like Pennsylvania, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Australian state of Victoria.

As an example, Pennsylvania consumers got reductions of 5% to 15% in their electricity bills. In Sweden, the price of electricity has dropped about 40%. In the United Kingdom, consumers' savings are estimated at about \$1.7 billion—that's Canadian dollars. In the state of Victoria in Australia, market reforms brought about 24% lower power prices since 1981, and that includes inflation.

We want those savings for Ontarians. We want to reap the benefits of power competition for Ontario's taxpayers. Once again, the benefits are a safe and reliable supply of power at the lowest possible cost, and we'll learn from the mistakes that meddling legislators made in California and Alberta.

Ontario has more than enough generation capacity to meet current demand projections. This was not the case in either California or Alberta, where demand growth quickly outpaced in-place generation capacity. Investors in Ontario are willing to build new power plants. So far, more than \$3 billion in new generation projects have already been announced, with some projects already underway.

TransAlta, for example, is currently building a 440-megawatt co-generation plant in Sarnia. This and other projects are all based on more environmentally friendly forms of generation. In my own riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, the Canada has announced that they will be building an 800-megawatt plant at Goreway Station. That is going to be an investment of C\$1 billion, and this will be a modern, state-of-the-art natural gas plant, a so-called combined-cycle plant: cleaner, greener, and cheaper than old-style power plants.

There is no doubt that the introduction of competition to Ontario's electricity market will encourage further private sector investment in new generation projects.

With these new investments will come new jobs: permanent, well-paid, private sector jobs.

These proposed investments are votes of confidence in the direction Ontario is taking and the competitive market we are putting in place. All along, we have been consistent in saying that we would open the market to competition, but only when the circumstances were right for Ontario. A strong, healthy supply of electricity is essential to a strong, healthy economy.

I am encouraged, then, to see that electricity restructuring will allow us to meet increases in the future demand for electricity caused by economic growth without putting taxpayers further into debt. The private sector will invest and take on risk rather than taxpayers. Consumers, for the first time, will also be able to choose the type of power they use. This will promote the demand for cleaner, greener electricity and further protect our environment.

Our government's plan for opening the electricity market to competition is based on four key principles: protecting consumers and giving them more choice; ensuring a strong business climate with a reliable supply; protecting our environment; and encouraging both new ways of doing business and new sources of power.

1630

As Minister Wilson recently announced, the government believes that the principles guiding our vision will be fully met by May 2002, about a year from now. Clearly we must ensure that Ontario's electricity supply remains safe and reliable, that prices remain competitive and that consumers get the best deal possible. The competitive market, once the excesses of the past have been eliminated, will produce this result.

I would also like to point out that access to other markets, both to buy and sell power, is a key element of our competitive strategy. Ontario's new electricity market will allow for competitive pricing of both imports and exports. If electricity from Quebec, Manitoba or the US is available at prices below those of Ontario's supply, it will be imported to keep Ontario's prices down. Export capacity to the US is physically limited to less than 20% of Ontario's current generation capacity. The Independent Electricity Market Operator, or the independent body set up to manage Ontario's wholesale electricity market, ensures that Ontario maintains sufficient reserves for reliability. These measures will protect Ontario's consumers and help maintain a reliable, safe and affordable electricity supply in the future.

Additional measures are also in place to ensure a smooth transition to a competitive market for Ontario consumers. Ontario Power Generation, OPG, which owns the majority of generating capacity in Ontario, is required to provide rebates to customers for a significant portion of electricity sales whenever the average annual wholesale price exceeds 3.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This will provide significant price protection to all Ontario customers until such time as fully competitive conditions are in place in the Ontario generation sector. Mr Wilson

has issued a directive to the Ontario Energy Board that it put the interests of consumers first.

What I've just outlined will protect Ontario consumers. We have consulted widely in pursuing this course of action and the process has been both open and transparent. As I've already mentioned, an efficient regulatory framework has been put in place. Private sector investors are confident that they can proceed with new generation projects.

These additions to Ontario-based generation capacity are critical to maintaining our long-term security of supply. To go back and revisit the key decisions already taken and to look at areas for additional government involvement or intervention would be to increase the risk of another California happening here. It would only serve to undermine the confidence investors are showing in Ontario's electricity market. With the tremendous progress we're making toward market opening, we cannot have that.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I am very pleased that my colleague the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has put forward this resolution, setting out the commitment of the Ontario Liberal caucus to an Ontario-first electricity policy, and I welcome the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

I want to put that in the context of how strongly I feel about this. I know that members of the House are used to my saying how strongly I feel about the government's attacks, for example, on public education, about the government's attacks on public health care, about the government's neglect of the environment. Those are all very deeply held concerns which I've expressed in this place before. But there is one issue that terrifies me, and that is this government's policy on energy—specifically electricity—deregulation.

The leader of the third party was working very hard to find some justification to perhaps vote against an Ontario-first electricity policy which this resolution calls for. The leader of the third party missed what to me is absolutely the crux of this debate, and it focuses on the whole issue of a total deregulation of the electricity market. Everything the Harris government is putting forward has to be in the context of a deregulated market, which is why my colleague's resolution calls very clearly, first, for an Ontario-first electricity policy that guarantees that Ontario electricity will be used to provide Ontarians with a reliable, affordable supply of power and, secondly, that creates a strong regulatory environment in which that electricity market operates and which allows for the protection of the Ontario consumer.

I am terrified, as I said, by this government's approach to electricity that is premised on a belief in a free, unfettered market competition, because a truly unfettered market can only function effectively when the consumer has a choice about whether to buy. Let me take this down to the most simple, basic reason why this government's policy of deregulation and unfettered market competition, with no regulatory environment in which to operate, is a disaster for the consumer, whether that consumer is the

paper mill in my riding of Thunder Bay, which is totally energy dependent for its survival as a business, as is the steel mill in Sudbury or the steel mill in Hamilton—having reliable and affordable power is absolutely crucial to their operation; whether it is the economic industry with its focus on Bay Street, which is also, in its own way now, entirely energy dependent; or whether the consumer is a senior on a fixed income or a single parent struggling to provide for a family. That single parent or that senior may have to go without the food they might want, but they cannot go without light and they cannot go without heat. They cannot choose whether to buy the electricity they need. So this is a captive market.

I say to the members opposite who have this unquestioning belief in the benefits of free, unfettered market competition that you've got to look at what market competition is all about. It is dependent on the consumer's ability to say, "No, I'm sorry, you're charging me too much. I'm not going to buy." Nobody, whether it is the paper mill or the steel plant or the single parent or the senior, can say, when it comes to electricity, "No, I'm sorry, I can't afford to buy." That's why this policy is an unmitigated disaster.

The competition market is dependent on having enough supply to force competitive prices. It's dependent on two things, then: on the ability of the consumer to say, "No, I'm sorry, I choose not to buy because you are overpricing," which can't happen with electricity, and on having enough supply to bring about competitive pricing so that the consumer will choose to buy. In the case of the electricity consumer, as my colleague has said, since the consumer can't choose to buy or to not buy, there is a responsibility of government to protect the affordability of that electricity, to protect that electricity pricing through regulation.

One of the other ways in which to ensure we have lower prices for electricity is indeed to have competition in the marketplace, competition that is based on the generation of new supply so that there is enough supply to create the competition that would keep the prices low. That's the kind of internal competition that my colleague has described.

The kind of competition that is going to be unleashed by this Harris government with its policy of complete deregulation is competition in which we don't have a chance to compete as Ontario consumers, because electricity is not something which you can generate more of in order to meet the demand, the way you can generate more cars to meet demand or more widgets to meet the demand for widgets. There are some real limitations on our ability to produce more electricity supply. By the fact that there are limitations on our ability to produce supply, there are limitations on how well we can protect the pricing through simply a competitive pricing policy. It's why a regulatory environment is absolutely crucial if we're going to protect consumers.

What this government wants is simply to open the market to the highest bidder, a limited supply market open to the highest bidder with no controls and no

protection of the Ontario consumer at all, whether it be the big power consumer or the little individual power consumer. What happens when you open a limited supply market to unfettered competition is that the highest bidder wins. There should be no question in anybody's mind about who the highest bidder for electricity is going to be. It's going to be our very large, very wealthy, very electricity-desperate neighbours to the south of us.

Surely we see that in President Bush's anxiety to exploit every possible energy resource wherever he can get hold of it, regardless of its environmental impact and certainly regardless of its impact on security of supply for the future. That's the inevitable consequence of this government's deregulation, allowing free market competition to flourish in a totally deregulated, unprotected environment.

1640

There is no question that this policy of this government will lead to higher and higher prices and will price Ontario consumers right out of the market, but there is also no question in my mind, and it's one of the reasons I am particularly terrified, that this will lead to a shortage of supply. We will not be able to generate enough electricity in Ontario to meet our domestic needs and respond to the highest-bidder demands south of the border for our electricity.

I can tell you there is nothing more terrifying than to face a shortage of electricity. I've been Minister of Energy at a time when we were about to shut down our nuclear plants, not because we didn't have the capacity to produce enough electricity at that point—although I will continue to have grave doubts about the numbers that are produced by Ontario Hydro about how much electricity we do or do not have, having been Minister of Energy and having been very aware of how tight we have sometimes been to having brownouts and even blackouts—but in this particular case the problem we were facing was a problem of workers going on strike and we were going to have to shut down the nuclear plants. We tried to put in place an emergency plan to respond to that. We actually had reached the point where nuclear plants were being shut down at midnight and our emergency plan was to go into effect by 8 o'clock the next morning.

I have to tell you that there is no such thing as an emergency plan to deal with electricity blackouts that are sustained. You can't do it. We are too dependent on electricity, not just economically but for our very safety. I ask you to think of a scenario in the city of Toronto if you don't have enough electricity and you have a blackout and the traffic lights go out. I can tell you that it would not be 24 hours before you started to have a death toll because of shortages of electricity.

If that sounds alarmist, let it be alarmist. I've been there. I've been there on the eve of shutting down our electricity production and I know for a fact that no government can produce an emergency plan that will protect the safety of the residents of this province in the event of an electricity shortage that leads to sustained blackouts. So, yes, I am terrified because I think this government is

marching ahead with its unfettered approach to market competition and deregulation without having any awareness of what it is leading the people of this province into.

I have colleagues who want to join in this debate, so I'm going to touch just lightly on a couple of things that I do not think we should be doing.

I do not think, I say to the leader of the third party, that we should be selling off our valuable energy assets at a time when there is absolutely no regulation that protects them from selling off that energy to our neighbours to the south.

I don't, quite frankly, believe that any of the non-Ontarian, non-Canadian companies would be particularly interested in buying our assets if there were the regulatory environment my colleague has called for in this resolution. I believe this issue of regulation is absolutely the crux of the issue.

I am concerned—I don't have time to get into it and it's probably a sub-issue—that we need to have some regulation around individuals being besieged by individual electricity brokers without having any awareness of whether or not those brokers can guarantee supply, when in fact we know that nobody can provide that kind of guarantee unless they're a very large provider indeed.

I want to spend just one moment on what we should be doing. We should be exploring alternatives to produce additional supply, without any question. We should be looking as much as possible to water supply, although that has some very real limitations to it. We should be looking at wind supply. When I was Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy did not believe there was really any economic benefit to wind supply, that at least it was not economically beneficial to go that route. I disagree and I think we should be looking more at that.

What I don't think we should be doing is following our Premier's lead in suggesting the answer to the future is more nuclear production. When I was Minister of Energy, Darlington finally started producing electricity. This Harris government, the Premier himself was part of a government that took something like 10 years, I believe, and I ask my colleagues, from the start of deciding to go the route of a big nuclear plant to actually getting the plant underway. In that time, the price of electricity, which could not be charged to the consumer until the plant started producing electricity, built the deficit of Ontario Hydro bigger and bigger until now this Conservative government, back in power again, offloads those debts accumulated when it was in office before on to the backs of hydro ratepayers today.

Now the Premier thinks nuclear energy is the way to go. I'll tell you, they had Darlington 2 T-shirts prepared when I was Minister of Energy and I said, "You'll never use them." There are too many problems that have never been resolved with nuclear power to think the answer to our energy supply needs is to start building more nuclear plants.

Could there be some more nuclear energy in our future? Perhaps, but there will never be another Darlington and it will never be a mega-answer, even as

cogeneration is not going to be the magic solution either, because cogeneration from the very beginning has been premised on gas prices. Gas is also a non-renewable source of energy, and gas prices are predictably doing what we predicted 10 years ago they would do. They're going to escalate as they become the source of energy people are dependent on. There are no magic answers.

Energy conservation is something we should be pursuing. I agree with the New Democrats, the third party. We should be pursuing energy conservation. It's got to be a lot more sophisticated than giving people a refrigerator, which was the energy conservation policy of the previous government. But even that is not the panacea.

We have got to be sure that we look at this complex issue in a way that indeed brings an Ontario-first perspective and is prepared to manage our electricity future and protect Ontario consumers, both in terms of affordability and supply, through a strong regulatory environment. That is the focus of this resolution.

I can only hope that in bringing forward this resolution, the public becomes more aware of the danger of this unmitigated disaster of deregulation that the Harris government is proposing.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate today. It will be a pleasure to vote against this Liberal resolution, because if I were to vote in favour, I might as well vote in favour of the Conservative government's deregulation-privatization policy. You'll note, as I read through the resolution—I did it carefully—that the Liberals say nothing about terminating the government's plan to deregulate and privatize the electricity system in Ontario. They do not ask for the repeal of Bill 35, which is the bill that sends us down that long and awful road. I guess the Liberals actually couldn't put that in the resolution, because the unfortunate reality for the Liberals is that they are already on public record as supporting the government's scheme.

Early in February of this year, when the Liberal critic was asked about the government's scheme to privatize and deregulate hydro in the face of what was happening in California, he very clearly said in his local paper that we were too far down this road of deregulation and privatization to turn back now. That's the Liberal position. They support the government's scheme, which is well underway, to deregulate and privatize hydro.

What a horribly uncomfortable position they must be in. I almost feel sorry for the Liberals, because they are sitting in the middle of a picket fence, with both legs on either side of the fence, and they are going to be hoisted on their own petard because the public clearly sees what the Conservative agenda is. The Conservatives were upfront and out centre about that when they moved Bill 35. They want a free market with respect to the sale of energy, and they are quite prepared, and they did in their Bill 35, to sell off 65% of the generation assets that the people in this province bought and paid for, assets which should remain in public hands to ensure an affordable, stable supply of public power.

The Liberals have been caught, because they are clearly on record as saying, "Well, we're too far down the road the government has taken us down to turn back now." They're hoping that the consumers don't pick that up, by coming in here today with a policy that says, "Oh, no, no, we're going to have an Ontario-first policy. We're going to put some roadblocks in, and we won't make it hurt so much."

The fact of the matter is that when you sell off your generation assets, which is what Bill 35 does, and the Liberals agree with, and when you move to an open market with respect to the sale, which is where we are moving and have done so with natural gas, the Ontario government will have absolutely no control over the prices that Ontarians have to pay for power. They will have no say and no control over the supply of that same electricity to Ontario consumers. When your generation assets are held in the hands of private producers, and they will be under Bill 35, the Ontario government has no say, no control over what happens after that. Anyone who wants to see what happens need only look at what happened with natural gas, but I'll get to that in a moment.

1650

The Liberals are here today trying to camouflage their position, which is one that's in support of the government. As the Liberal critic has already said, we've gone down this road too far; we can't turn back now. They're trying to camouflage that by saying, "We can reduce some of the negative impacts. We can have an Ontario-first policy. We can guarantee that Ontario electricity will be used to provide Ontarians with a reliable, affordable supply of power." Don't be so dishonest with the public of Ontario. Don't promise something that you could never deliver on, because the fact is—and I think the Liberals know it well—once you sell off your generating assets, once those assets are in the hands of private producers who operate in continental markets, you have lost, you have given up, you have forfeited any control, any power that you might have to ensure that Ontarians get a stable supply of electricity at affordable rates. That power, that right, that control is gone, and the Liberals should be at least forthright in admitting that to the public today.

What's going to happen? You don't have to look very far. You just have to look at natural gas to see where we're going with this fiasco. We produce natural gas in this country. But the fact of the matter is, because that natural gas supply is owned and operated by private corporations, we sell into a continental market and they sell at the highest price they can get, and that price is set in the US. Anyone who uses natural gas to heat would have seen the impact of that especially this last winter when bills for natural gas increased so dramatically across this province, indeed across this country. It was so bad that your friends in Ottawa, your Liberal colleagues in Ottawa, had to give a rebate for those on fixed incomes and low incomes in this country to try and compensate for those higher prices.

The exact same thing is going to happen when the market opens in Ontario and where those private corporations who own our generating supply are selling into the US markets. Those prices are already higher now, and the leader of our party made it clear what those prices are—123% more expensive in New York, for example, and he gave some other examples that I won't repeat. Those prices are higher now, and once the market opens in Ontario, those private corporations that own our supply are going to be desperate to sell into that market to get a higher price. There will be no onus on them, no burden on them, no requirement on them to sell power at a reduced rate, an affordable rate to Ontarians first.

There's nothing in Bill 35, there's no provision in that bill to allow for Ontario consumers and farmers and manufacturers to be protected, to get a lower price, an affordable price, and a guaranteed supply. The independent market operator has no rules, no provision, nothing to provide that protection either. It is a myth, it is a fallacy, it is a joke for the Liberals to come here today and to somehow suggest to the Ontario public that in a deregulated, privatized electricity market, which is where we're going to, you can somehow have an Ontario-first policy, that you can somehow have some protection somewhere to make sure that Ontario consumers get an affordable price and an assured supply.

It doesn't happen with natural gas. There's nothing in Bill 35 to allow it to happen, there's nothing happening at the Independent Electricity Market Operator to allow that to happen, and it won't happen, especially under NAFTA rules, which do not allow double pricing in that way.

So let us at least be honest with Ontario consumers and tell them that once this market opens, they can surely expect what happened in California or surely expect what happened in Alberta. Look at the fiasco in Alberta. There was Ralph Klein on the eve of the election, a government that had privatized and deregulated its power because people were going to get competitive rates and lower rates, for goodness' sake; there he was, on the eve of an election, trying to buy the election, giving out rebates to Alberta consumers because they were getting kicked in the head with higher electricity prices. I think he spent over \$5 billion trying to compensate Albertans, who did not see lower prices and more competition with deregulation of hydro. They saw quite the opposite. They saw huge increases in their electricity bills and no surety of supply.

All of us have seen the articles that have been written in the last number of weeks focusing on manufacturing companies in Alberta. Those same groups that were so in favour of deregulation, who are now having to operate their plants through the night because that's when they can get their cheaper electricity prices, even some of them, God bless them, have finally admitted publicly that they were wrong, dead wrong, completely wrong to be supportive of the government's scheme to privatize and deregulate, because they don't have surety of supply and they certainly don't have lower costs for electricity when it comes to operations.

If you also want to see where we're going to be when the Liberal-Conservative scheme of privatization and deregulation of our energy market is fully implemented, you only have to look at what's happening now, as this government is allowing a rate increase as a precursor to the opening of the market. We know that in June of this year, consumers can expect about an 8% increase on their hydro bills and the manufacturing sector can anticipate a 12% to 15% increase on their hydro bills.

Here's the impact on my community: Falconbridge wouldn't normally be critical of this government. Their CEO, April 20, says that this hike in electricity will cost their company \$15 million a year. Calling the plan "backwards," the chief executive said that "the move will have a significant impact on the future of mining in the province." He said, "It's a bit of looking backwards rather than looking forward.... I hope we can do something to make them," the government, "change their mind, but we have nothing on the table today."

In Falconbridge, that rate hike will affect operations in my community and in Timmins. In my community, over 2,000 people directly depend on Falconbridge for their employment, and there are hundreds and hundreds of other contractors whose jobs would be at stake with this increase and certainly with the increase that's going to come when deregulation is fully implemented.

Here's his final quote: "That's a pretty significant hit. We're going to have to work on the political side to try and convince them that it's not really in the province's long-term interest to have so high power prices."

In conclusion, because my colleague from Timmins-James Bay wants to speak, I'll just say again that we're not supporting this motion; if I did, I might as well be supporting the government's scheme to privatize and deregulate. The Liberals are caught. They are on public record as saying they support the government's scheme, that the government's privatization plan is too far down the road now to do anything about it, so they come here today and try to bluff the public into believing that somehow under that deregulated scheme they might be able to protect Ontario consumers first. Guess what? They will not be able to. The only way you can protect Ontario consumers is to have power in public hands, and the New Democrats are the only party urging that to happen.

1700

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure this afternoon. Certainly I feel rather privileged to be allowed to speak to this important opposition day.

I do want to mention that John Hastings, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, sends his regrets, and I say hello to him in case he's recording this at home.

On a serious note, there have been some serious allegations raised here that I intend to challenge thoroughly today.

Ontario's electricity market will be opened to competition, as promised, by May 2002. As the Premier and the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology have stated many times before, Ontario is fully committed to

delivering on its promises, as it should be, even with all the criticism and demands from other parties in this Legislature, including most recently the NDP. At least we know where they stand on this issue: they've been critical of the government.

I have to clarify a few things. For those who warned that Ontario would become another California, I respectfully suggest that you've not done your homework. I suspect there are many third party individuals like Sir Graham Day, and the CIBC and the world fund, whose reports I regularly send to my constituents to help them understand this whole issue of what was Ontario Hydro now going to Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One.

I think, as in all things, it's important to strike the background appropriately. People say, "Well, rates could possibly go up." Here are the facts, Mr Speaker. We had the Macdonald commission. You probably remember that—maybe you don't, maybe you do. The Macdonald commission looked at it and said, "The current model of Ontario Hydro is unsustainable." What they had accumulated was discouraging. I was going to use another word, but it was actually discouraging. It was about \$38 billion of debt. A lot of people say, "They were paying off that debt in their rates." I want to be on the record as saying that they were not in compliance with the Power Corporation Act. In fact, there's a requirement in the rates themselves called the SDR, strategic debt retirement, where they're supposed to be paying off part of the debt, that is, the mortgage, through the rates. Well, they were asking for exemptions. In fact experts from Floyd Laughren on down—

Mrs McLeod: You froze them.

Mr O'Toole: No. I think the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan should remain still and keep her ear on the job for a few minutes, because I'm going to let her know what was really going on.

The wool was completely pulled over their eyes. The only guy who knew that anything was going on was Sean Conway. That's why we're debating this issue here today; he's brought it forward.

The government, through the Macdonald commission, went in and recognized that there was a certain part of that debt that was stranded. It couldn't be paid off with the current asset base.

If you want to look at how complicated this was, go back and look at some of Ontario Hydro's annual reports of the early 1990s. One of the little shell games they pulled—I couldn't believe it when I read it—is that they changed the life of a nuclear plant, on paper, from approximately 25 years to 40 years. Guess what that does to the mortgage?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): What?

Mr O'Toole: It diminishes the mortgage, because it's now spread over 40 years instead of 25 years. In other words, it makes your debt load look smaller as a part of the annual operating plan. Those little counting gyrations had to be arrested. I wish they were arrested—not in jail,

mind you. I mean stopped. So we've actually arrested that—

Mr Tascona: Ceased, John.

Mr O'Toole: Cease and desist. But I think it's important. There was, I think, between \$10 billion and \$15 billion of their total \$38-billion debt that was stranded. It couldn't be paid off. That's what we're really dealing with under this restructuring. It's important to understand that.

The main players, whether it's OPG or Hydro One, have part of that debt, as does the government, the province of Ontario. It's shown on our public accounts statement as a separate line of debt, over and above the \$110 billion. All of the revenue or profit that comes into the province of Ontario, as the principal shareholder of Hydro One and OPG, will go toward paying off that stranded debt. That's really a prudent plan to save the people of Ontario and sustain a safe, reliable and affordable source of power in the future.

I think it's important to have that in the background, because it's exactly what you're recommending—more government interference—which has caused most of California's problems. In fact, if you want to follow the case of California, they are now moving to regulation in California, to competition, which there wasn't before. If you want to look into the problem, California had a serious supply and distribution problem, and being such a green state that it was, and maybe should be, you couldn't build a plant. In fact, the GDP of California had grown by 40% or 50% but the power supply hadn't. So there were some deficiencies growing that had not been addressed and the time had come to address them.

Having set the rules of the game, this government is choosing not to interfere in our electric market as we move forward to market opening. Instead, we will be a supporting player, because we know the investor certainly is the key to new investment proceeding and further enhancing Ontario's healthy supply situation.

I could relate to you that we even have a wind generation proposal in the Bruce area which is going to create sustainable, affordable wind power in that area. In fact, there is another \$2-billion or \$3-billion investment in southwestern Ontario, I believe near Sarnia or Lambton, in that area, where they're going to be generating power as well. I think that with some of the initiatives in taxes we have made, you will see further capital investments in the creation of energy.

It was the California government that turned out its own lights, and Ontario will not follow this example. It was the California government which required the utility to buy power on the spot market, did not allow them to sign long-term supply contracts, and put a cap on retail prices but not on wholesale prices. It's very important to understand that.

They could have bought long-term power with respect to natural gas, which is their baseload in California, by the way. Natural gas, we all know, was going through the roof in price, but they were not allowed to pass on that price because of government policy on the retail side of

the price formula. In other words, they racked up a stack of debt on the operations side and they couldn't discharge that debt through a freeze on rates. How long can you sustain that? These private companies basically went bankrupt.

Growing demand in California resulted in tight supply, shortages and huge increases in the wholesale cost of electricity. Unable to pass rising costs to consumers, the utilities ran up billions of dollars in debt. That's what happens when governments interfere and do not allow competitive forces and the market to work. We will not do that to the people of Ontario.

I might say that I've heard both the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, Minister Wilson, as well as our Premier, respond many times, saying that the first thing Ontario is committed to do is to supply our own market. That's the consumers and businesses of this province. That would be his first commitment in any supply-demand equation.

Adding to California's problem is the fact that their system does not have enough generation capacity, as I said before, and has a high reliance on natural gas. We were fortunate in that Ontario's situation is the exact opposite. In fact, many reports have been out—and I could cite those reports—indicating that Ontario indeed has excess supply. You can't store energy. If the supply isn't used, you're over-invested, you're over-capitalized. There's a balance between having excess capacity in the system—that is a plant that isn't being used, that is a plant that's turned off, that is a plant you've built that you don't really need. So it's a poor use of taxpayers' money.

The Independent Electricity Market Operator has said that Ontario has sufficient supply to meet current and future needs and we do not have to have a high reliance on natural gas to produce electricity. In fact, my partner from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, Mr Gill, who by the way is an engineer, a Master of Engineering—he's a masterful guy but he's also a Master of Engineering—just pointed out the most recent article in the May edition of the Economist, "New Demand for Nuclear Power," an extremely valuable argument to be looked at.

There will be a raging debate on the pros and cons of nuclear, as there was in the early 1970s. I would say we should pay close attention to that debate because all energy creates some form of waste. There's no question. I don't care if it's nuclear, it's just deferred waste. There is a new form, sustainable energy, which is wind energy, which we're encouraging, and I think we could do more on tax incentives to encourage that industry.

1710

In my riding there's the ITER project, which is the international thermonuclear experimental reactor project, a huge multi-million dollar megaproject in my riding of Durham. In fact, I'd like all-party support on this; maybe we could take a vote now. There will be hundreds of thousands of hi-tech scientific jobs. It's the largest project next to the space station, and it will mean a great boon for the province of Ontario. It is making energy

from fusion, which is really creating the temperatures of the sun. It's quite an interesting project and worth some attention. But the Ontario government has committed, I believe, in the budget \$10 million a year over a period of 30 years to help this experimental project, the creation of fusion. But they say fusion energy leaves no waste. The only thing it does use is tritium, which is a by-product of our current Candu reactor process. I wanted to get that on the record. I'm supportive of it inasmuch as it's a hi-tech, knowledge-based opportunity for the people of Ontario.

More than enough electricity could be generated, as I've said, and Ontario's future looks bright. In fact, there's a certain appreciation for the expertise in nuclear energy that resides right here in the province of Ontario. About 58% of our baseload, or 58% of Ontario's energy needs, is created by nuclear. As such, we have a certain base of expertise that could be more appropriately utilized or shared, and we could maybe even sell excess power across the North American economy.

Private sector investors have already shown strong confidence in Ontario's new electric market by announcing \$3 billion in new generation projects. I'm proud to say that few other jurisdictions can boast of this kind of faith being shown by investors at such an early stage in the market-opening cycle.

Some of these projects are already underway. Just to mention a couple of examples, TransAlta has started construction of a co-gen plant in Sarnia which will be one of the largest in Canada, providing 440 megawatts to Ontario's power market. Sithe has made a sizable investment in two proposed 800-megawatt combined-cycle natural gas plants in Mississauga and Brampton, in Mr Gill's riding. In fact, he's been working tirelessly with the energy minister to make this happen. I congratulate you today, as well as Mr Spina. Mr Spina has worked on it in partnership, as we all do, on the side of the team support.

Nuclear power, with its reliable, almost emissions-free energy, will continue to be a part of the future electricity supply. Ontario Power Generation plans to return to Pickering A. I was just with the site vice-president last weekend and went on a dry storage tour with respect to nuclear cells. The management team there is well focused and well prepared to be highly efficient, a lot more efficient than they were prior to the NAOP, the nuclear asset optimization plan.

I think Mr Conway can attest that they did get a shot across the bow, they did get a wake-up call when they went through and did that peer review on nuclear asset optimization. I think that the evidence is in the charts. The monthly reports now show those plants are up 86% of the time. In fact, they've moved from a design-build model to an operate-and-maintain-safety model. I'd like to commend not just Pickering A's nuclear station for its service. Beginning in the spring of 2002, it will add 2,000 megawatts to our supply. That's enough power to meet the electricity needs of a city the size of two million. You might say, the size of the 905. It's about 500,000 in

Durham. If you take York, Durham and Peel, probably those people could be supplied by that plant.

As well, Bruce Power, which has leased the Bruce nuclear generating station, plans to return to service another two units by the summer of 2003. This represents another 1,500 megawatts. That's in excess of the generating capacity of today, so we can clearly see an excellent indicator that the government's market-opening strategy is on the right track.

This is the party that delivers. I can tell you, you've got to pay attention. Some of the stuff we're doing, the newspapers get caught up in these kinds of flashpoints, but the reality is that we're putting together a province that had been neglected for a decade.

Mr Gill: Seizing the opportunity.

Mr O'Toole: Seizing the opportunity, exactly, of putting this province on a stable, firm, well-managed platform. That's what it's about, and I'm happy to think that our children will have a brighter future because of the decisions of our Premier, Mike Harris, and Energy Minister Jim Wilson, Municipal Affairs Minister Hodgson, Minister Flaherty and Minister Cam Jackson, who has worked tirelessly on behalf of the seniors of this province.

Whatever minister you talk about, there's a legacy that goes with that commitment to the people of Ontario. With more sources of generation of power to choose from, consumers will be able to ask for electricity that comes from clear, clean, greener generation. In fact I see the energy bill of the future as having a choice: "If you want wind power, check here; if you want coal power, check here; if you want nuclear, check here; if you want gas, check here; if you want hydro-generated"—that's water-generated—"check here."

There will be a different price for each of those, and who better than the consumer to decide what type of power, how clean a type of power, they want. If you check air or wind power, it's probably going to be more per kilowatt, but some people put the environment before everything, before going to the show on Tuesday night or whatever. They're prepared to pay those few extra cents per kilowatt. They're the people who are prepared to turn the lights off and conserve energy. I support those people. We have to put the power in the consumer's hands, and that's exactly what this government's doing.

It's absolutely thrilling to be involved and to have the opportunity to speak out, because it means a lot, and it's a lot of jobs in my riding as well. These are highly skilled, high-paying jobs and we want to maintain safe, reliable, affordable power well into the future.

This will provide for the development of wind, solar, biomass power, fuel cells and other technologies that come from more environmentally friendly sources, which in turn will make an important contribution to Ontario's reliable, sustainable energy supply. This government is going to invest in the research and development associated with these new technologies as part of our forward-looking strategy.

For example, we will fully support the Canadian effort to have Ontario host, as I said earlier, the international ITER fusion energy project, and we're confident that Canada can win this bid, which is awaiting formal submission by the federal government.

I might say on a more casual note that the federal government once again has been kind of waffling. The only thing they haven't waffled on is the pay raise. They're going to zip that through this week. Did you see that? Can you imagine it? I hate to digress, and I know I am digressing here, but they've been weaselling on this ITER thing for at least three years. Do you know that the federal member in my riding of Durham, Alex Shepherd, is in the paper? He has not supported this. He's been to Russia, he's been to England, he's seen all these experimental reactors, and basically there's no federal money in it. What's he travelling around the world for? Now he's getting a raise? For what, exactly?

In case some of the viewers are watching from Durham, if you need more details on that, please give me a call at the office. It's quite honestly amazing. Then he comes out contradicting, that the provincial government's interfering. There isn't five cents in the ITER project from the federal government. In fact the Prime Minister hasn't even signed off approval on that, and since it's an international project—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): How do you know?

Mr O'Toole: Because I follow it. It's in my riding. I ask. I'm the minister of my riding. If there's something going on, I want to know about it, and if I don't, I'll be ticked.

For the first time consumers will make the clear choice and that's exactly what they should be doing. It's well documented. Other jurisdictions have successfully introduced competition in their electricity sector and consumers and the economy have benefited. We've just failed to see it. It doesn't make very exciting press, so they don't print it.

In Pennsylvania, competition has saved consumers about US\$3 billion and is expected to create 36,000 new jobs by the end of 2004. That's the record that needs to be addressed. In the United Kingdom, consumers are saving about C\$1.7 billion per year, and in Australia market reforms have resulted in an average price decline of 24%.

We've been studying these success stories and this is the pathway we expect our competitive market to follow. I can certainly say that as an elected representative, I'll be holding them to those commitments myself. We have some tremendous expertise in the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity Market Operator to help us do the right thing. We will keep that promise for the people of Ontario. It is in our best interests to keep Ontario's economy strong.

Going back to the three fundamentals—a strong economy, strong fiscal management, delivering on your promises—that's how you have a sustainable quality of life. Without the revenue and that strong economy, none

of it works. What's important to that strong economy argument is having safe, reliable, affordable power. If you roll the clock back, that's what the Macdonald commission was all about. It had become inefficient and expensive, so expensive that Ontario Hydro's debt ballooned, as I said before, to \$38 billion. To put things in perspective, the debt works out to about \$10,000 for each of Ontario's 4.1 million electricity consumers, and a good part of that was unfunded, stranded.

This is unacceptable. Electricity is just too important to our daily lives and to our economy to leave an outdated, inefficient and costly electricity system in place.

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That's why we've taken the time to put all the rules and conditions in place for a successful competitive market. We're fixing the problems of the past so we can move confidently into the future. We plan to do the right thing. But I'd like to point out that we haven't done it all alone. We've consulted. Stakeholders and interested parties have been given an opportunity to have their say at every step along the way over the last four or five years.

We've made a pledge for Ontario's competitive electricity market: to protect consumers and offer more choice; to create a strong business climate with a reliable supply of energy; to protect our environment; to encourage new and innovative ways of doing business; and to support the search for alternative sources of power. These are the principles guiding our vision of the new electricity market, and I fully support the vision and the commitment our government has made to achieving this goal.

I conclude by saying that this government intends to bring in a competitive electricity market. We will do it right, and we'll do it right the first time for the people of Ontario.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Today we are debating a very important motion, one of the most important motions we have ever debated in this House, because electricity is a must for every home, every industry and every business in Ontario, and also the rest of the country.

We've read a lot about what happened in California. By deregulating electricity at the present time without any guarantee that we will have a fair and reasonable rate for businesses and also for the people of this province, we could be in a similar situation, where businesses and residences would be limited in the number of kilowatt hours they would be able to use during the day.

If I look at the economy side, this could definitely affect the economy in any part of this province. I look at Ivaco in my area, L'Original, Ontario. At the present time, the cost of electricity for that company is in the area of \$25 million a year. With deregulation, and also the fact that the government will not make sure we have a guarantee of a fair and reasonable rate, the general manager of that industry, Mr Goldsmith, told me he is expecting the cost of electricity will be going up by approximately 20%. A former member of this govern-

ment, who is working at the present time for a consulting firm, confirmed to me just lately, "Yes, you could look at the possibility of a 20% increase as soon as this deregulation is passed." When I look at this possibility, \$25 million plus 20%, that is an addition of \$5 million a year that it would cost, with no guarantee we will have electricity 24 hours a day, 365 or 360 days a year.

Also, every single person in this province depends on electricity. We have no guarantee this government will not permit whoever buys the power at the present time—that we will have sufficient electricity for our own businesses, our own industries and our own residential areas. We have no guarantee.

In looking at the province of Quebec, Hydro-Québec, which was selling megawatt-hours at \$30, today is selling them at \$1,500 per megawatt, versus \$30 in the past. Why? Because in the state of Ohio and two other states they ran out of electricity. They had to go and buy electricity from the province of Quebec—and this might happen right here in Ontario.

Whoever controls electricity will definitely be looking at making as much money as they can, without having any guarantee from this government that the service of electricity has to be given to Ontarians first. We could be in a very, very bad situation. We know the auto industry at the present time is talking about moving to Mexico. If we see our industries like Ivaco, which employs at the present time over 700 people, moving out of Ontario, we have to be concerned. I, as the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, am very concerned about the position that this government has taken.

I will give the rest of my time to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I looked forward today to coming to the Legislature to debate this opposition day motion that was put forward by the Liberal Party of Ontario. I was expecting the Liberals to have finally seen the light and have come to this Legislature to see a change in position where they finally agree with us, the New Democrats, that deregulation is going to be an utter disaster to the economy of Ontario when it comes to hydro prices.

Unfortunately, what I see in this motion is them trying to have it a little bit both ways. They're not happy with this version of deregulation, but they want to have some form of deregulation. The thing they know as an opposition party is they have to oppose this form of deregulation. When you read their motion, it says they want to, "Stop the monopolization of the electricity retail sector by Hydro One," and they go on to talk about creating "a strong regulatory and genuinely competitive power generation environment that will produce a mix of electricity providers—public and private, large and small." It's just so typical of what I've become used to seeing from the Liberal Party. I would hope that they would have finally come to this Legislature and taken a position. Either you is with 'em or you is against 'em; either you support the Conservative move toward deregulation

and you accept that you go to an open market and you do that, or you move to our position and say, "No, we oppose deregulation." What the Liberals are doing is trying to fall somewhere in between. They don't like this form of deregulation that the government is doing, but nonetheless, "We must deregulate."

The way I see it, it's quite simple. At the end of the day, if somebody calls for deregulation, that means a complete opening up to the market of the control of electricity prices and the distribution of electricity across this province by market forces. That's what deregulation is and that's where the Liberals are at. But at the same time they're saying they have to have some form of regulatory powers to make that happen. Well, that's not deregulation; that's regulation.

So I say first of all to the Liberals, you can't have it both ways. You either is with 'em or you is against 'em, and the way I see it, you is with the Tories and you is against us.

I am quite frankly going to vote against this motion on the basis that it doesn't do what I believe it should do, which is to say, "We clearly reject the agenda of the Conservative government when it comes to deregulation."

Let me give you a bit of what we are expecting to see in our communities across Timmins-James Bay as a result of deregulation. We have, in our community of Timmins, the largest hydro consumer in the province of Ontario. They are the single largest customer in the province of Ontario to Hydro One, which used to be Ontario Hydro. It's called Falconbridge. Falconbridge operates a metallurgical site in the city of Timmins, where they have become huge utilizers of Ontario hydro.

I've had meetings with the heads of that particular company who are really concerned about what's happening with hydro prices. In meetings that I had with them a couple of weeks ago, and follow-up phone meetings that I had with them again last week, they're saying to me, "Gilles, we're scared. We are somewhat worried about what's going to happen to hydro prices once deregulation happens and the market opens completely to the private sector and is out of control, going into a decontrolled state." They're expecting that the peak power cost for hydro by the summer of next year will almost double. This is not just what Falconbridge is saying; this is what industry analysts are saying when it comes to the peak power prices in the province of Ontario.

1730

Just so that people understand, an industrial user buys hydro on the basis of around seven cents a kilowatt that we're paying now, and they do that when hydro is normally readily available. Once hydro starts to be utilized in big numbers, industrial users go to what's called "peak power" prices. What they're worried about is that the peak power price will double next year, by the summer of 2002, as a result of deregulation.

This is not just Falconbridge saying this; these are the industry analysts who are looking at what is happening with hydro prices after deregulation. They're saying that

if that happens, and if it happens for any length of time and it happens regularly enough, it's going to force the shutdown of the zinc operation of the Falconbridge property in Timmins. That's 500 jobs. I say to the government across the way, we've already seen what happened in Fort Frances. The Abitibi-Consolidated mill has had to lay off 140 workers on a permanent basis, with another 300 workers who have gone off on a temporary basis, as a result of power prices that have gone up this year, when your government increased power prices by 14% in order to get people ready for deregulation. That's what it's done to Abitibi-Consolidated in Fort Frances.

Now Falconbridge is saying, "Not only do we have to accept a 14% increase this year, we are being told by 2002, in the summer, peak power prices could be double. If they do so for any length of time, we're going to be in a position that we're not going to be able to compete with our competitors and we will have to move refinement of our zinc off to either Manitoba or the province of Quebec." Why would they go there? Because hydro prices are cheaper. By the way, yes, they are a regulated market and they are a monopoly corporation controlled by the province in both Quebec and Manitoba.

I'm saying to you now I will not stand idly by and watch you put over 500 jobs in the community of Timmins at risk as a result of your blind ideological belief that you have to move toward deregulation for the sake of moving to deregulation. It hasn't worked anywhere in the United States, it hasn't worked in Alberta and it seems at this point that it's not going to work here. So why is the government so intent on killing jobs in the province of Ontario when it comes to hydro industrial users? I don't understand. It makes no sense to me.

I say to the government across the way, we created Ontario Hydro many years ago for a reason. We decided to pull from the private sector hydro production, transmission and sales. We put it under a crown corporation for the very reasons that we needed to make sure that Ontario was able to (a) give a constant supply of power, (b) make it affordable and (c) make it sustainable. That's what we did under a crown corporation called Ontario Hydro, and that's what we did under regulation.

Moving to the new system that you have now, we've already had 14% increases for hydro for industrial users that now are creating job losses. People are losing their jobs because of it. Now we're looking at when you open the market, not only will the regular power price go up, but the peak power prices are expected to rise. If they rise to the levels that industry analysts say they will probably go to, there's a real, definite possibility that the people who work in the zinc operation and metallurgical site in Timmins will be without a job as a result of this government's policy.

So I say to the government across the way, don't do this. We're having a tough enough time in northern Ontario trying to hold on to the jobs that we've got without any kind of interference from the provincial government, ie, through the deregulation of Ontario Hydro. I would hope that we would have at least looked at the

experience of Alberta, we would have looked at the experiences of California and others to realize that this plan doesn't work. Deregulation in itself has not been the answer to being able to provide cheaper power prices to people. The way we do that is by our taking a responsibility as legislators, by making sure that Ontario Hydro is held to task, something that our government started under Bob Rae, something that you, frankly, continued when you came to power, and by making sure that we set up a proper regulatory forum to make sure we're able to control hydro prices so that (a) we make it affordable and (b) we make sure there's enough supply on the market so that industries don't have to go without.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm certainly pleased to be able to respond to this resolution being put forth in this Liberal opposition day.

I see this as all about choice. We've talked a lot about choice. Maybe I could just share with you a quote: "What man wants is simply independent choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead"—Fyodor Dostoevsky.

I think this really sums up what our government is doing. We're looking at one that's in the news currently, that has to do with education, the tax rebate; and also in the field of energy. This is what we're doing: giving them the opportunity to choose. For some 90 years we had a monopoly in this country for the production of electricity. It's about competition versus monopoly; it's really not about public service versus private.

We're going to see a change by May 2002. What this really means is keeping the costs as low as possible, encouraging innovation and also giving benefit to the consumer. We're really talking about a reliable, affordable supply of power and protecting the electricity policy of this country. It's about choice; it's about competition and the best price possible. We're indeed going to be offering choice to the consumers in this province.

There are four very good reasons why we should be moving in this direction. One is protecting the consumer in offering that kind of choice, which of course will lead to lower prices. Deregulation will create an environment that will encourage future investment. Right now we have excess supply, but it's also going to stimulate more generation out there. I think it's interesting to note that already there are private investors who are proposing some \$3 billion more to create almost 3,000 megawatts of power: TransAlta is in there with some 440 megawatts; Bruce Power is restarting two units of Bruce A with some 1,500 megawatts of power. We now are at something like 41 retailers, and up until 1998 95% of the wholesale power in the province of Ontario was produced by Ontario Hydro.

It's also going to provide the protection of our environment. Very specific tough rules with caps are going to be in place. We are also going to be providing the opportunity to choose from various types of environmentally friendly power, whether it be wind power, fuel cell or solar. As a matter of fact, Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative is already committed to putting up a

wind turbine and Ontario Power Generation is committed to some 10 megawatts of power from wind turbines. Also, people are going to see on their electricity bills how much pollution is being created as a result of their consumption, encouraging them to move and choose in the direction of less pollution.

Opening this electricity market can only create success here in the province of Ontario. The opposition likes to talk an awful lot about California and claim privatization just doesn't work. Well, California is a good example of what to avoid. Pennsylvania is a good example of being effective and where deregulation really works.

We're in a very, very different position here than California. California had a problem that is being misidentified by the opposition. They were short on energy, an ever-increasing demand, and also the government was very interventionist. I can assure you that here in Ontario there will not be any intervention from the Harris government.

They talk in this resolution about an all-party select committee. We've had one of the most open, transparent initiatives. We had in 1995 the committee on competition in the Ontario electric system, by the Honourable Donald Macdonald; we had the Hydro select committee in 1997; we had the Market Design Committee. There's absolutely no question that we are in a position to go out and bring competition into this market and to open it up. I have no question that we're not in the position that California was in. We have a tremendous supply here, with more coming on stream. The planning is in place. The government is committed and we're not going to be there interfering as was going on in California.

I certainly am unable to support this opposition day motion that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is putting forward.

1740

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Let me start by saying that our focus has always been on doing what's right for consumers when it comes to electricity restructuring. The government's plan for opening Ontario's electricity market to competition is based on four key principles: protecting consumers and giving them more choice; ensuring a strong business climate with a reliable supply; protecting our environment; and encouraging new ways of doing business and new sources of power.

Consumer protection is paramount. The overall market design and regulatory framework for introducing competition puts customers first. Over the long term, a competitive market will lead to the lowest possible cost and better serve all consumers. As Minister Wilson has repeatedly said to the members here and publicly, the government believes the principles guiding our vision will be fully met by May 2002. We have said all along that we are committed to ensuring that Ontarians continue to be provided with a safe, reliable energy supply at a competitive cost. This has not changed.

Energy prices, including electricity prices, are under upward pressure globally and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future. Ontario cannot isolate itself from

these broader global trends. Therefore, we must act to position ourselves to meet these challenges and maintain a healthy economy. This does not mean choosing to ignore these trends or trying to relive the past. This is the 21st century and electricity markets worldwide are going through a profound transformation.

In order to maintain our competitive edge and our quality of life, our government is willing to make those tough decisions that other leading jurisdictions are also making. In fact our plan will strengthen Ontario's electricity sector and overall economic competitiveness, while at the same time providing an attractive, level playing field for all competitors.

The Independent Electricity Market Operator, known as the IMO, was established by this government as an independent organization to operate the power market and dispatch electricity. The IMO's responsibility under our legislation is clear. It must "protect the interests of consumers with respect to the reliability and quality of electricity service." Those words are from the Electricity Act of 1998.

The Ontario Energy Board is subject to the same requirement to protect consumers under the Ontario Energy Board Act. This is the board that licenses transmission companies, transmission operators and generation companies, and determines the conditions of those licences. As you can see from this, there are these safeguards put in place to make sure there are those safeguards to ensure Ontario's electricity system continues to maintain sufficient reserves to ensure reliable operations.

Mr Conway: I'd like to make some summary observations. A moment ago the government member from Northumberland said, "Count on the Harris government not to intervene." Well, the government has intervened in a couple of ways recently that are quite telling. For example, the government intervened to ensure that the big power users continue to get the sweetheart deals they've been getting under the old system—a very political intervention by the Harris government to do precisely what the member for Northumberland said it wouldn't do. God knows how many other interventions have been done after dark, behind closed doors.

People talk about deregulation. I'm not interested in deregulation. What I'm interested in is a situation where we have a reasonably competitive market for the generation of electricity, a market where there are a substantial number of generators, many of them public, some of them private, hopefully generators that are large and small, regionally dispersed.

The leader of the third party goes on ad nauseam about privatization. Let me tell this House, as we speak today, what we've got in terms of generation: 44% of the active generation today is nuclear and 31% of it is fossil, so 75% of your 24,000 megawatts today comes from nuclear and fossil. I say to the leader of the third party and the Legislature, how do you propose to replace that 15,000- or 16,000-megawatt capacity? That's what you're going to have to do over the next number of years, and you're going to have to do it in a way that meets a

better environmental standard than we've got today for a number of these plants. There are no easy answers. I wish I had some. It's going to be tough as hell.

Yes, there will be renewables. We just blithely talk about building small hydroelectric. I think we should. But if those little creeks and rivers are in your backyard, I know that the member from Kenora would probably be the first one, and maybe the rest of us too, saying, "No, not in my backyard."

One of the things the government has undertaken that's a good thing is the improved interconnect at Ottawa with Hydro-Québec to give us access to another 1,250 megawatts of power across the Ontario-Quebec border. That's a good idea. It's not moving very far or very fast, and there are a bunch of interesting reasons why it's not moving. This thing had better start moving one of these days, because I'm not interested in a sale of assets.

We've agreed—and the leader of the third party has forgotten what the New Democrats on our select committee three or four years ago endorsed with respect to an arrangement with a third party to operate the much troubled Bruce nuclear stations. We had our day with that—20 years—and we couldn't do a very good job. We agreed, as three parties, that we should look at options, not as a first or a second choice, admittedly. We had our chance and we blew it.

Let me just repeat: 75% of the electricity that's keeping the lights on today comes from nuclear and fossil. What are we going to do, over time, to replace that 15,000 or 16,000 megawatts? You'd better have some answers. The Ontario Liberals believe in an Ontario-first policy that contemplates a competitive market for the generation of electricity, a marketplace in which there are hopefully a goodly number of generators, many of them public, some of them private, some of them big, some of them small, a marketplace that is rigorously and ruthlessly regulated by a strong, powerful public regulator in the public interest. It is because we don't see those ingredients in an Ontario electricity policy that we bring this resolution today for your consideration and support.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Conway has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Colle, Mike	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Marland, Margaret	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martin, Tony	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Tsubouchi, David H.
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Guzzo, Garry J.	Murdoch, Bill	Wood, Bob
Hampton, Howard	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David
Hardeman, Ernie		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 26; the nays are 52.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1803.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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