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of Ontario**

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Jeudi 28 novembre 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 November 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 novembre 2002

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

EDUCATION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I move that in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should endorse a program based on Excellence for All, the Ontario Liberal plan for education, to reduce dropout rates and to assist the record numbers of struggling students that would include the following:

—Better support and better curriculum for the record numbers of students failing subjects in the new secondary curriculum.

—Special assistance for students who have not passed the Ontario secondary literacy test, with the goal of reducing failure rates by 50%.

—Raising the official school leaving age from 16 until 18, or until graduation from school or an equivalent learning program.

—Expanding co-op programs, vocational facilities, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.

—A meaningful high school diploma that combines academic achievement and workplace experience.

—Establish a standing committee on education for the Legislature to annually review the funding formula's ability to meet the needs of Ontario students.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Kennedy has moved private member's notice of motion number 20. The member for Parkdale-High Park has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Kennedy: It is my privilege to rise in the House today to draw attention to a little-understood problem in the education system. This is group of students, a significant body, who stand the risk, as we speak here today, of being left behind. The students we're talking about are, not exclusively but largely, those in the applied program, in other words, the program that is meant today to prepare students for college or for work experience after high school.

This is a group of students who in the past have always had some level of difficulty with the academic program but who were supposed to be considered and provided for very explicitly by the new program put forward by the government in 1999. All of the high

school was taken as a piece. The five-year program was made into a four-year program. Very explicitly this group of students, those who were struggling, were meant to do better, to benefit from this initiative.

So the provincial government and the provincial education authorities have created a new circumstance, and we stand here four years later to reckon with where that circumstance has taken these particular students. Unfortunately, we're not able to report an increased amount of success. The basis of the resolution today is asking for the House to recognize that in fact these particular groups of students have more difficulty now than they did under the old program, and they have for reasons we can understand, for measures we can actually respond to.

We are putting this forward in the spirit of recognition. It is a resolution calling on the Minister of Education to do some specific constructive things to recognize these particular groups of students. These are potentially 100,000 students who exist in applied programs currently today. We know from a report that was done, a substantial report commissioned by the government, delivered to the government in August—it only became leaked in October. It's by Professor Alan King at Queen's University. He speaks very explicitly about the increased risk, that students today who take applied courses are at a 50% higher risk of failing or dropping out than under the old program. What that means is that 64% of the students are not acquiring credits at a rate that would allow them to graduate. Under the old program, it was 43%.

I would say that this group of students, that represents about 21% of the kids in school today, should command our extra attention, and I have asked for the indulgence of the House to give them that attention this morning and to also support the endeavour on their behalf. We look at about 30,000 students who are taking applied courses in a single year, and about 122,000 from grades 9 to 12. If we take the approximately 30,000 in grade 9 today in total, 25% are going to drop out before they graduate.

Our objective here is twofold. As to the ones who are still struggling in school, we want to make sure they can be genuinely successful. Second, we want to make sure we can reduce the dropout rate. We have other indicators. We know that the literacy test that was put in place told us that 25% of the kids writing it weren't able to pass, weren't able to attain the standard put forward in that grade 10 literacy test. There currently are no special efforts underway to help those kids succeed. I would say to the people in this House who agree with the idea of a

literacy test or the idea of knowing where kids stand, what would possibly be the point of subjecting kids, young adults, to a test, some kind of measure of where they're at, unless we're going to do something about it? So the resolution today is about just that, is about the action that this Legislature needs to get behind in order for these kids not to simply spin off and be lost somewhere in the system.

We have in the House today one of 60 community co-sponsors of this bill. We went around the province and enlisted professional educators for their professional opinion: what do we need to do? Earlier this year in the House I talked about this Bailey bridges report, which a principal in Niagara did, and I'll quote from it a little bit later on. The title of that report is kind of the spirit of this resolution. We need to have what they called in the Second World War the Bailey bridge. When there weren't proper bridges in place, they built whatever there could be, and they called these Bailey bridges. That's the recommendation coming from educators. They're saying that where there aren't bridges standing, we need to put some in place. We need, I would propose to this House, to do that this year. These are kids who not only won't graduate; these are kids who could drop out, whose education and really their fundamental future could be compromised unless we act right now.

1010

Now, there are members across who can perhaps give us chapter and verse about efforts that are being made. What I'm saying to the members of the House is, we must do better. What Mr Richard Christie, who came here this morning all the way from Fenelon Falls to support this effort, says is that as an educator, he is tired of seeing these students being treated as second-class citizens in the classroom. I think that, members of the House, if we're being honest, we often attribute academic struggle as a personal failure. I think that's the inclination, that's the bias we have in society.

Yet there are educators from every part of this province, and I recommend to the members of this House if they'd like to obtain a copy of the 60 co-sponsors we have from about 25 different communities around the province, to contact them—their phone numbers are here—to find out. These 50 teachers have told us about more than 2,500 students that would benefit directly.

There are about 100,000 students struggling, most of them in the applied stream, but not exclusively. What we're asking is for this House to do what needs to be done. How did they get in this state? We're not here in private members' hour to point fingers exclusively at the government.

Let's look at two things. Certainly there is a curriculum that isn't working for these students. It's what the Bailey bridges report has said, it's what the Queen's University report has said, it's what the literacy test results are telling us, it's what the math results are telling us—where 55% of the kids taking applied math are failing grade 9.

I would say that there's also the fact that circumstances have changed. Yes, we want the government to be responsible for the curriculum that it brought in, but also we can't afford any more to have a circumstance where kids drop out, where they don't reach their academic potential. So much of their future, so much of our economy, depends on them doing the best they can do.

One of the things we're proposing is that we take these kids much more seriously; that the kids who are going on to college, or maybe not going on to college or university, have a viable third option, and that option be started and accelerated within the publicly funded school system; and that we look for an expansion in co-op programs, in apprenticeships, and so on, and that we tell the public school system that's a serious endeavour that they need to be just as good at as preparation for university. We need to be doing that if we're going to have the success that is available out there in the changed conditions.

Fifty years ago, it was OK perhaps to have a school leaving age of 16. The real graduation age, as Mr Christie and others will tell you, becomes about 14. We need to be more ambitious than that; we need to be more intentional than that. We need to see that age being increased to 18 to allow kids not to be in the same classrooms they're in today, but to be in a learning experience that will benefit them. That's what we're asking the members of this House to endorse, is that further ambition—that what was good 50 years ago isn't the standard that we can aspire to today. We need to send a very strong signal that the young adults of today need to have those kinds of competing programs.

What do we propose that to be? We believe that for most kids it still means doing as well as they can academically, but we want them to develop as citizens. We want them to have an opportunity, the same one they get in many other countries, to find out what they're good at. That kind of learning can be done at the school in conjunction with apprenticeships, with workplaces, with an expanded co-op program. Many other countries use apprenticeships across a range of professions, not just the trades. We have an economic need to expand trades, but we also have opportunities in a number of other professions which could benefit those professions by preparing students by getting them to be in touch with their competencies.

Our current strategy is to leave these kids as an afterthought. This is an opportunity, today, for this House to do much better than that: to join with the aspirations of parents all around the province, to do something that is not just to the benefit of those parents and their kids to see those kids do as well as they can do, but which will benefit all the rest of the kids in school because, I can tell you, especially as the double cohort year is underway, teachers, principals and administrators are trying to find the resources to help these kids. They're giving attention to them, and that struggle is affecting everyone in the school. Conversely, they may be giving up or there may be just not enough resources to do it.

I can tell you again that this is an issue for all of society. Who do we think is going to become eligible for the community college courses that we so badly need, for the technicians, for industry, and so on, if 55% of the applied students that are supposed to be qualifying for that are failing their math courses?

There has been a 300% increase in tutors. There has been a burden on the private interest. We here represent the public interest, and we need to say strongly today that we will let no students be left behind.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to leave the bulk of the time to Mr Marchese, our education critic on this issue—

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): And a good one he is.

Mr Bisson: —and a very good one he is. I want to put on the record a group of people who I think are forgotten altogether in this debate, and that is First Nations children. I represent, as my leader Howard Hampton represents, a large part of the province where First Nations communities are a very important part of our ridings.

I listen to this debate, and I can agree with the direction the member is trying to take on the motion. I don't want to go against what he's trying to say but I have to find some way to put on the record what is happening inside those communities. I just want to give you one example, and I want to bring to the attention of the members of the House the dismal state of education for many First Nations communities when it comes to kids in those communities.

I represent a community called Attawapiskat. The J.R. Nakogee school is a school that is situated in that community that has had to be abandoned because of diesel contamination underneath the school. The federal government has refused, for the last number of years, to address what to do with the school now that the school has been abandoned, and the children have been forced into portables, as you have never seen before. We have large overcrowding problems inside these portables.

We've got a situation where the federal government, who is responsible for education in the province of Ontario of First Nations' people because of the Indian Act, is basically not taking its responsibility seriously and, as a result, those kids are left to be out on their own, along with the rest of the members of that community when it comes to trying to find a way to provide education to those kids.

I received a letter by way of fax just recently from concerned citizens in the community of Attawapiskat with regard to this particular school. I don't have enough time in the debate to raise everything in this letter, but I can say that there is a hue and cry. There is a hue and cry from a number of First Nations communities like Attawapiskat that are saying, "The federal government has forgotten us altogether and they have made things worse by not giving our kids the opportunity to get good education by their lack of participation in trying to find

solutions to the problems in the education system in First Nations communities."

This particular school can't be allowed to be left like that. I just wonder, when we have a debate here in the Legislature, what role we can find as a province to try to respond to the many needs of the First Nations communities, in particular the one having to do with education.

I have had discussions with the Minister of Education for the province and she has told me that the province of Manitoba and the province of Saskatchewan are both at wits' end with the federal government when it comes to their lack of trying to find a solution to what are very serious problems in the domain of education for First Nations communities. So I just want to put on the record this morning, in a very quick way, that we need to find a way as a province to respond to the children of Ontario who happen to live on reserves.

It is not good enough for us as fellow citizens of these people to say, "Well, it's federal responsibility and there's nothing we can do as a province." They are teaching the curriculum of the province of Ontario in those schools and, as such, I believe we have a responsibility. I will be calling on the provincial government and the Minister of Education to work with the community and myself to try to find a solution to what is a very pressing, real problem in communities like Attawapiskat that quite frankly, if not addressed soon, could turn out to be quite disastrous.

I just want to put that on record in the House, because we'll be hearing about that a little bit later, but I know my good friend Mr Marchese is going speak at length on this particular motion itself.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to this issue this morning in private members' hour. I want to respond to the comments made by the member for Parkdale-High Park, who is critic for the Liberal Party in the area of education. He has chosen with his private member's opportunity to highlight some of the plans the Liberal Party is putting forward in the Legislature and in the province in the area of education.

The Liberal Party has put forward a number of suggestions, and it is our understanding from preliminary study that we have done as a government that it would cost approximately \$3 billion to implement all of the Liberal education plans. What we heard this morning has not indicated to us how you pay for that kind of spending. Maybe that's going to be forthcoming later on this morning.

The Liberal plan simply does not measure up to the high standards that we have set for education in the province of Ontario. I think it's important to point out that the Liberals, in their Excellence for All education plan, say that they will invest \$1.6 billion over four years. That averages about \$400 million per year. This year alone we have invested as a government over \$560 million into the education system in Ontario. Let me provide the House with some examples based on the des-

cription of the member for Parkdale-High Park's resolution.

1020

First of all, he has mentioned the issue of curriculum. The government has responded to parents' concerns by providing a more challenging curriculum with specific, clear, consistent standards to enable students to get the skills that they need for success. This government is committed to providing students and teachers with the support and direction they need to meet the challenges of this new rigorous and relevant curriculum. We have committed \$370 million over five years to give teachers and students the support they need to implement the new curriculum. Over the same period, we have dedicated another \$80 million to provide other professional support and resources.

Boards and schools have a wide range of strategies and program options to support students who are struggling. For example, there are programs to assist in upgrading—credit-based upgrading courses; learning strategies courses; and literacy courses. For the year 2002-03 we have allocated almost \$500 million to help students achieve these higher standards.

Funding for students who need extra help includes almost \$3 million through the learning opportunities grant for such things as remedial reading programs, early literacy programs, which are programs targeted toward grades JK to 3, literacy and math programs in grades 7 to 10, summer school programs, and reduced class size for students at risk.

In May to June 2002, the government announced \$30 million to expand the early reading strategy to grade 6 and introduce the early math strategy.

There are a number of members of our caucus who also wish to speak to this issue, so I'm going to leave my comments at that. We certainly look forward to the debate that will take place over the next 45 minutes and certainly look forward to hearing what other members have to say on this important issue.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to thank, first of all, and commend the member for Parkdale-High Park for bringing what I consider to be a very important resolution before this House identifying a specific group in the education system that is presented with a genuine challenge which, with some work by this Legislature, some work through the system, I think can be overcome, can be met. We can have some good degree of success following the recommendations the member has made.

I guess where I first saw the problem that existed—and we all knew it was in society and had been for some time—was when I was first elected. I was the critic for the field of correctional services. Gordon Walker was the minister of the day, and he brought the two opposition critics along. He was well ahead of his time for this government, of course. He was one of the real right-wingers in those days. Today, he would be a moderate. But I want to say that one of the things that I noted in touring some of the provincial correctional institutions

was, in fact, that so many of the people who were there obviously did not have the tools that an education system could provide for them to be successful in society. Many were completely illiterate; others had only the very basic skills available to be able to succeed.

Now, this is not to say that everyone who is in that circumstance is going to end up in a correctional institution, but I think it's safe to say that there's going to be a larger proportion of people in correctional institutions who are people who haven't had the advantages that an education system can provide or has the potential to provide.

We remember as well, some of us, that when you went to secondary school there were people who were in a stream called "10 terminal," and that meant that after grade 10 they were sent out the door into the world of work, often without the kind of education that would give them access to the good jobs in society. The member has identified many of the problems that are there.

The District School Board of Niagara is the school board which I am familiar with; it's in the Niagara Peninsula. The Bailey bridges Report was an excellent report that dealt with the study of the new curriculum, and the following finding was made in the report. I thought this was very telling. "What has become very apparent is that the new curriculum, while itself a necessary change, was hurriedly put together, poorly planned, implemented in an unworkable fashion and grossly underfunded. The results show ... that students are frustrated beyond belief, parents have disengaged, teachers are overworked and continue to feel unappreciated, books are scarce and resources are few." That was in April 2002.

That's obviously a frustration with the circumstance that confronts people who aren't necessarily going to either a community college or on to university but they're going to go into the workforce at some point in time.

The suggestions that are made in the resolution lend themselves to support by all of us in this House. Obviously we do need better support and curriculum for the record number of students who are failing subjects in the new secondary school curriculum. We have to be able to help those people out.

"Special assistance for students who have not passed the Ontario secondary literacy test, with the goal of reducing failure rates by 50%": literacy is so very, very important. It grows in importance as our society advances, as the years go on.

"Raising the official school leaving age from 16 until 18, or until graduation from school or an equivalent learning program": obviously the member is not talking about having all students in what you would call a regular classroom setting. There are special settings for students who work well outside of that traditional classroom setting and who can advance themselves and receive special assistance. It's a matter of allowing them that educational experience, either until they graduate from school or, as we say, an equivalent learning program or until they reach the age of 18. That will equip these

students far better than is the circumstance today as they head out into the world of work and out into society.

“Expanding co-op programs, vocational facilities, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs”: the people who will lecture us on this, I think with some validity, are people who come from some of the European experiences, where this is routine, where they recognize the importance of apprenticeships and getting people ready for the apprenticeship programs, where they understand the importance of vocational facilities and where co-op programs are routine. I must say I’m pleased to see those who will co-operate with the co-op programs; that is, those in business. Our business education council in the Niagara region, for instance, works with employers, works with the school systems and brings people together from all the boards of education so that these students have that kind of experience. We see it at the post-secondary level, but it’s going to be important at the secondary school level in an increasing manner in the years to come.

“A meaningful high school diploma that combines academic achievement and workplace experience”: I think people want to see that workplace experience given credit in terms of a diploma, that it isn’t only the academic experience but also the workplace experience which is often so very valuable to those students.

“Establish a standing committee on education for the Legislature to annually review the funding formula’s ability to meet the needs of Ontario students”: I like the idea of a specific committee—we often call them a select committee, but in this case a standing committee—that will look at that funding formula. Many, many years ago, in one of my roles in the House I was the education critic. I sat down with Dr Bette Stephenson, and she was kind enough to provide a briefing to us. After that briefing on the funding formula in education, I can’t say that I was still cognizant of all the intricacies of that formula. I don’t know any Minister of Education who understood the formula. There must have been someone in the Ministry of Education who understood it, but that might even be questionable. So I think it would be good for a standing committee of the Legislature to assess the funding formula to see how it might be modified, to see if there’s a need for an increase in funding or if there’s a need to shift funding from one area to another in terms of the emphasis.

I want to say today that I believe this resolution, if it is concurred in by this House, would go a substantial way to improving the lot of students who are often forgotten in our education system. They have the same right as anybody else. They have a disadvantage in many cases because they don’t have access to the top-paying jobs in our society. It is important that they be given a hand up, as people like to use that terminology, and I think the provisions of this resolution will do that.

What we need, of course, is a school system that has vibrancy, where you have teachers who are excited about going to work instead of being constantly criticized, almost tormented by criticism from this government.

I look forward to this resolution passing, hopefully getting some considerable support from all members of the House.

1030

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I’ve got to say I agree with pretty well everything the member for St Catharines has said and pretty well agree with much of what the critic from Parkdale-High Park has said.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I disagree with two basic things, and I’ll get to that, because I’ve got 11 minutes, mercifully, thank you. Two of the things I disagree with, Dominic Agostino, are, one, raising the official school-leaving age from 16 “to” 18, I’m assuming, and the other is funding.

The member for Waterloo-Wellington mentioned that. I disagree with 99% of everything else the member from Waterloo said, because he read the script. They wrote it for him and they told him, “This is what you’ve got to say.” They can’t leave those notes. They can’t just throw them away and say what they feel. They write him a speech saying, “Oh, we put more money into the education system.” It’s laughable. No one in the province believes what these people have done. Everyone knows \$2.2 billion has been taken out of the education system—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Is that what it is?

Mr Marchese: You’ve got my buddy, who I think is a buddy from time to time. Where are you from, my friend?

Mr Dunlop: Simcoe North.

Mr Marchese: Simcoe North. He was saying something about my facts.

Mr Dunlop: Your facts are way out of whack.

Mr Marchese: My facts are way out of whack. Some \$2.2 billion has been taken about of the education system. Everyone knows about it, but the member over there, including the rest of the caucus who are sleep-walking through this entire political process, says I’m out of whack with the numbers. We’ve been cutting education assistants, special ed, ESL, music teachers and librarians. We’re short \$1 billion in terms of teacher negotiations because the money’s not flowing through and he says my facts are out of whack. You’ve got to wake up. You and your other buddies have got to wake up to the problem.

I know you put up Rozanski, to come up with somebody to help you out so you could cherry-pick a couple of ideas and say, “Ernie’s got a couple of good ideas.” I know you’ve done that. You know it too. Stop the game. Everybody knows—

Mr Dunlop: What do you have to say today other than nothing?

Mr Marchese: I know the bright lights are coming on soon. The member from Simcoe will be speaking very shortly. I’m looking forward to those remarks.

This curriculum has been introduced in haste. Everyone knows it except them. This is why it’s so laughable. They don’t understand educational curriculum. That’s why they blah, blah throughout this whole process. Edu-

cation reform has been introduced at such a speed that every teacher in this province has criticized it, including the 25% to 30% of those teachers who voted for them, including those members.

Yes, the curriculum has been made tougher. No doubt about that. We agree with that. Yes, I've got some disagreement about how they did it, first in haste, and secondly, they started at the secondary level instead of starting at the primary grades, the earlier grades, as a way of logically building it up. They started it the other way around. How dumb these people are, and they don't even realize it.

They create two streams, the academic and the applied, and yes, the people in the academic stream will survive the rigour of the new curriculum, but the young people in the applied stream are not doing very well. What are they doing for them? Nothing. We know that, the teachers know that, the parents know that, and the Tories still blah, blah, blah about how much money they're putting into the education system and how much they're helping those poor kids.

I've got to tell you, Speaker, that those poor kids in the applied stream are not rich babies. They're not rich adolescents. They don't come from wealthy homes. They come from the working class. They come from poverty. They come from homes where there is a great deal of stress—financial, psychological and social problems that these people are doing nothing to help with.

Please, the next time you read your speech, throw it away and say what you feel. Don't read the garbage they give you, because it doesn't mean anything.

Mr Dunlop: The \$1-million-an-hour deficit you left us with. You don't want to talk about that, do you?

Mr Marchese: The \$1-million-an-hour deficit we left as a government. Here you have a government, with a good economy, throwing out \$10 billion every year for income tax cuts, and he doesn't speak about the deficit he's leaving in our health care system, the deficit he's leaving in our education system, the deficit he has caused to our water and the death that has happened as a result of the money they've taken out of the system. There's \$10 billion going out every year. You think nothing has suffered? They're blind to the problems. Everyone in Ontario knows the problems that have been caused by the deficit they have caused.

He laughs. He laughs at the Walkerton disaster. He laughs at the thousands and thousands of active parents involved in education who are not laughing about the cuts they're enduring. They're not laughing at that, but he laughs at it. In a good economy they have devastated all the things for which we, as a government, are responsible, including water, education, health and our senior citizens who are suffering from lack of funds in home care. And he laughs so heartily. I wouldn't laugh.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know you're not laughing. I know you know you are in trouble politically, and it's good; it feels good. I laugh at that. I take pleasure in that.

Mr Dunlop: You should worry about yourself.

Mr Marchese: No, I don't worry about myself. I worry for the people. I don't worry for me; I worry for the people you have attacked. I worry for the vulnerable you have attacked, in a good economy. Imagine what you would have done if you had been faced with our recession in 1990. If you could devastate services in a good economy, imagine what you would have done in a bad economy. He laughs so heartily, the member from—

Mr Dunlop: Simcoe North.

Mr Marchese:—Simcoe North, my good friend from Simcoe North, Mr Dunlop, God bless his little soul.

Coming back to the Liberal resolution: I agree with much of what is said there; no disagreement. If you look at our plan, much of what they're talking about is in here.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Have you guys released that yet?

Mr Marchese: We released it before the Liberal plan, for Dominic Agostino, in case he didn't know.

Mr Agostino: Did anybody notice? What if you release a platform and nobody comes?

Mr Marchese: Well, we're doing our best, Dominic.

I disagree profoundly with the Liberal position that says students should stay till age 18.

Mr Sorbara: You disagree?

Mr Marchese: Gregorio, it's a dumb idea, I've got to tell you. It's a dumb idea, boys. Keeping students till age 18 is not smart.

Mr Bradley: I'm telling Earl Manners.

Mr Marchese: Member for St Catharines, I know Earl Manners has taken that position, but it's not a smart one, I'm telling you.

Mr Sorbara: But 50 years ago they said that about high school: "Let them go after grade 8."

Mr Marchese: Gregory, let me explain. Give me a break. I've only got three minutes. Let me tell you the problem with this, all right? After age 16, if a student has a problem, a behavioural problem, a learning problem, other social problems he may have, intellectual or emotional, you're saying to him, "You're going to have to stay."

Mr Sorbara: No. Read the resolution. That's not what we're saying.

Mr Marchese: Oh. Oh? The resolution says yes.

Mr Sorbara: The resolution says there will be programs.

Mr Marchese: The resolution says, "Raising the official school leaving age from 16 until 18," although it should read "to 18," I'm assuming.

But your little Liberal book that you guys got says you're going to keep them there till age 18. I think it's wrong. If students have a problem and they need to leave or want to leave, you can't hold them back. I tell you, teachers are not going to be happy holding on to students who desperately want to leave or need to leave.

Mr Sorbara: You're misrepresenting the program.

Mr Marchese: No, siree. Maybe you need to refudge it somehow as you re-present your program. But I've got to tell you, if there is a problem, the way to deal with it is in the early years, not to try to hold them at age 16. The

expenditure of effort to hold them until age 16 is just a difficult thing to do. You are endangering the classroom when you're holding students who can't, ought not to be, do not want to be in that classroom.

In our plan, we propose—

Mr Agostino: You just want to give up on them.

Mr Marchese: No, Dominic Agostino, listen carefully. I have two minutes. The NDP guarantees “a training seat, academic upgrading opportunity, apprenticeship position or job placement assistance for every unemployed Ontarian, aged 16-18.” We say that in our plan. That's what you've got to do.

1040

We're not abandoning those kids. We're saying that you've got to give those opportunities. But to hold them in school, you're not doing students a favour—those who are leaving, those who are staying—and the teachers who need to teach them.

Here's my second problem with your plan. In your little Liberal book, you say you're going to spend 1.6 billion bucks. You say that you're not going to raise income taxes to get the money.

Mr Agostino: That's right.

Mr Marchese: Dominic Agostino says, “That's right.” He says they're going to get it from the \$2.2-billion corporate tax cuts you guys introduced last year. Here's the problem for the Liberals. The Tories have only cut \$700 million of that corporate tax; the rest has been deferred. So the Liberals are playing with 700 million bucks plus the tax credit that they say is \$500 million, and only a couple of million has been spent so far. They've got \$700 million for health, education, environment, social services, home care—whatever you can think of. They just don't have the money to keep their promises, I'm telling you.

Applause.

Mr Marchese: Please don't clap for me, member from Wellington, because I already disagreed with what you said.

I'm telling you, citizens out there, without reinvesting in education, we can't do what the Liberals are saying. It's a matter of trust. It's a matter of reinvesting. For that, you've got to say to the public, if you've got to reinvest, “We've got to go after somebody for the money.” Without that, you can't have the good programs the Liberals are talking about.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in this debate on this Liberal private member's resolution today. I'd like to start by talking—

Mr Marchese: Don't read the speech. Throw it out.

Mr Miller: Thank you very much, Rosario.

I'd like to begin by talking about the strike that's going on partly in my riding right now, the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board strike. We just this week passed legislation to end the secondary part of that strike. Although the third party did not on the first day, on Monday, give unanimous consent, I was happy to see that they did on Tuesday. It was really important that

those secondary students get back to school because they were looking at the possibility of losing their school year. So I was very pleased that all three parties agreed to the legislation and legislated an end to the strike as recommended by the Education Relations Commission, which had ruled that those kids' year might be in jeopardy.

There still is, though, the elementary strike which is going on in the riding. I'm hopeful that both parties will get together and bring an end to that strike. Whether they agree to mediation or agree to arbitration, I would certainly like to see an end to that strike for the benefit of all the students in my riding and the surrounding ridings that are covered by the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board. I certainly hope the parties get together and end that strike, because in a strike, really, nobody wins and certainly the students are the losers.

I would like to talk about some of the programs the government is doing in terms of expanding school/work opportunities. I would also like to mention that I do have four children in the education system: my son Winston in grade 8; Stuart in grade 10; our daughter Renée, who is in the double cohort year, grade 12; and our daughter Abigale, who is in her second year at McGill. So I am actively interested in what's going on in the education system. I have to say that they're getting a great education and are working hard at doing so.

This government has increased funding for the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, which I think is certainly a program that works. It provides very useful skills for those who try to get into a trade.

Ontario's tough new curriculum requires all school boards to provide co-op education, work experience and school/work transition programs. Through the Passport to Prosperity, a joint initiative of the Ministries of Education and Training, Colleges and Universities, and 26 business education councils, the government is seeking to expand opportunities for students to participate in programs such as co-op education, school/work transitions, job shadowing and the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, and increasing employer involvement in these programs. I think that's really important.

It's nice to hear that the Liberals would like to see a meaningful high school diploma that combines academic achievement and workplace experience. In fact, the new high school program does include both academic and workplace preparation.

Students currently earn credits toward the Ontario secondary school diploma through a combination of school and workplace-based learning experiences. Some choose co-op programs to test out specific career options, some choose school/work transitions to prepare for entry into workplace opportunities or specific college programs, and others choose the Ontario youth apprenticeship program to get a head start on their apprenticeship career.

The ministry provides two certificates for students who leave school before earning their Ontario secondary school diploma. I think that's important. The grade 10 literacy test is not a requirement for either of these certificates.

In addition, the ministry is piloting the Ontario Skills Passport, which provides clear descriptions of skill requirements for entry-level work in today's labour market. The skills students demonstrate in work placements are documented by employers using the Ontario Skills Passport. I think that's important, and we're working with employers to provide real jobs and find occupations that people enjoy and find fulfilling and worthwhile.

I'd also like to talk about our standing committee on education. Our government has listened to the concerns of Ontarians about the student-focused funding formula. We have worked consistently with our partners in education on working groups and committees to refine the funding formula. We have implemented many of the recommendations of these working groups and committees. For example, this year we implemented the recommendations of two working groups: the working group on the learning opportunities grant and the working group on declining enrolment.

This year, Dr Mordechai Rozanski, president of the University of Guelph, is leading the Education Equality Task Force in a review of the student-focused funding formula. Dr Rozanski's recommendations will ensure that student-focused funding continues to promote the principles of fairness, responsiveness to student needs, and accountability; that the stability of the education system improves; that the constitutional and statutory framework for education in Ontario is respected; and that the fiscal situation of the province is taken into account. I think that's an important point, because that's something the Liberals usually do not take into account as they promise more and more different programs that they don't really figure out how they're going to fund.

I think the funding formula makes sense in this province, and of course across the country many different areas use the funding formula. I speak coming from the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, where if you're in some of the rural areas they don't necessarily have a huge tax base. I think it's a wonderful thing that no matter whether you're from a poor area of the province, you still get a set amount of money going to you, the student, to provide equal opportunity in education. I think that's very important, that you don't have to live in a rich neighbourhood to get a rich education.

The Education Equality Task Force has listened carefully to our education partners to help us identify the best way to fund school boards. The task force has met with more than 900 presenters. There were 25 days of presentations and approximately 775 submissions.

I'm using up most of my time, and I know the member from Simcoe North would like to speak, so at this time I will allow time for him.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm certainly here in full support of the resolution by my colleague from Parkdale-High Park. He has a profound and deep interest in helping students in this province, who have been in a whirlwind of upheaval as a result of this government's reckless education policies, which were a formal part of their political agenda. We know they were

proud to say that they were going to put education into a crisis. The original minister was true to his word, and the ministers who have followed are still following that path of crisis. We've got this latest minister now who has torn the Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton schools into total upheaval with these appointed so-called supervisors.

Frankly, parents are totally fed up with this government's callous, reckless approach to education. They've gone through this not for one year, two years, three years; they've gone through this for almost eight years.

In my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence I've got some of the finest schools in Canada, I think. They've been made into these excellent educational institutions because of the hard work of the whole community, including the parents, the janitorial staff, the neighbourhood, the local elected trustees, all the volunteers. They've made these schools, like John Ross Robertson, Allenby school, John Wanless, Lawrence Park, Blessed Sacrament, Ledbury, Regina Mundi—these are superb schools, but they have had a heck of a time coping with the upheaval. This ludicrous funding formula, which from day one was not workable, this one-size-fits-all formula was something this government imposed without ever looking at the impact. It's taken three years to come up with some kind of task force that's basically going to finally say what everybody said three years ago, that the formula was a farce, that it didn't pay attention to the individual needs of schools in urban centres, rural areas or special-needs schools.

1050

I think it's time to support an attempt to get rid of the education deficit in this province, because our educational institutions, whether they be at the elementary or the high school level, are resources we should feed, not starve. We shouldn't be using them as political footballs, as they've been used for seven or eight years. They have kicked around the teachers, and now they're kicking around the elected trustees. Then they kick around the janitorial staff, and then it's the parents' fault, and then it's the students who are at fault.

Frankly, everybody's fed up with this confrontational conflict, this bulldozer approach to education. That's why I support this resolution that talks about the fact that parents, teachers and students have a lot to offer in making our education system work so that we produce good citizens, well-trained people for the workforce, people who contribute to society, whether they be doctors, artists, musicians. This is what people like Ryerson wanted to do with public education. This government has been almost hell-bent on destroying that.

I look at a perfect example of what we can achieve by supporting students in our schools. There's a school in the west end of Toronto where my brother teaches. It's called Archbishop Romero high school, in one of the most challenging areas in Canada. The parents of the children, the high school students in that school, come from every part of the world. They speak every language conceivable. Many of the parents of these students have two or three jobs. The students themselves have two or

three jobs, but they come to this high school in great harmony and with a great sort of vigour to learn.

I'll give you an example of one of the things they're doing in that school. Archbishop Romero is near a very polluted creek called Lavender Creek, which is adjacent to Black Creek. They've been in that creek. These are so-called teenagers we always like to beat up on. They're in there with their rubber boots pulling out shopping carts, steel drums and mounds of garbage. They're testing the water. They're writing letters to the Ministry of the Environment asking for the water to be tested. They're begging the Ministry of Transportation to clean up the garbage because a lot of the property adjacent to Lavender Creek belongs to the Ministry of Transportation. They have left garbage on the banks of Lavender Creek for the last 10 years and refuse to clean it up.

These students are using global positioning devices. They're mapping the area. They're bringing in heritage experts. Again, these are young boys and girls, 13 and 14 years of age. They're doing phenomenal things, trying to clean up a creek. They're totally engaged, totally involved. They feel strongly about this because it is in their backyard. They're making their community better. They're learning things. You should see them mapping on the computers. You should see them going through the analysis of the water pollution that's taking place. They've been marking the outlet areas for pollution.

Yet this government does nothing to help those students at all. In fact, do you know what it does? It imposes on those students that literacy test they all have to take in grade 10. Do you know what happens when they write that literacy test? There's a very high rate of failure in that school. Every time they get the results, the whole student body is demoralized because they do poorly on the literacy test. So this government is blaming them. Do you know why they do poorly on the literacy test? It's because 90% of them do not have English as their first language.

This government punishes these students, demoralizes them with this test that's a one-size-fits-all, that doesn't take into account that maybe the students who live in one part of the province or the city have a different cultural background, language background, linguistic background than students who may live in Leaside or Windsor.

This is the type of callous attitude this government has. Rather than giving students a pat on the back, rather than saying, "We're here to help you. We're here to appreciate you. We're here to get you through the rough spots"—no, they're there to be punitive. They're there to basically say, "Listen, kid. You didn't make it. You're going to have to drop out. You don't count." That's what the kids say: "The government doesn't think I count, and I think I'm going to drop out, sir."

Let's stop this recklessness. Let's start looking upon these students as human beings who deserve our help rather than our attacks.

Mr Dunlop: It's a pleasure to rise this morning to say a few words about the resolution of the member from Parkdale-High Park. I want to leave about a minute and a

half for Mr Barrett to put something on the record as well.

I guess the people in the province of Ontario are going to have some tough decisions to make in the future as we start talking about the platforms of these political parties. The first thing I'd like to say is that we've been following very closely the Liberal promises and the flip-flopping and the dodging of questions here, there and everywhere across the province. The fact of the matter is that right now people in the province of Ontario are looking at about \$14 billion in extra expenditures promised by the Leader of the Opposition. That works out to be about \$1,250 or \$1,300 for every man, woman and child in the province. I guess their explanation will have to be, "Where are we going to find \$1,300 for every man, woman and child in this province to make up for our promises? Do we go into huge deficits again?" We had our buddy over here who doesn't care about deficits. "Are we going to raise taxes?" We know you voted against every tax cut that was ever made here. Or are you going to cut programs? Or are you just not going to deliver on your promises? That's what I would expect to happen.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: The member over here from wherever he's from, chirping away as usual, has always made a few comments. But the fact is that I expect it'll be something like what we're probably going to hear this afternoon under the Romanow report. The Romanow report has come out—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It came out an hour ago.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, and I understand they're asking for \$7 billion. Everyone knew we were being shorted by the federal government, and already they're saying, "We'll phase it in" over how many years. That's what will happen, because we know that's the type of promise they carry on with.

Second of all, I want to say something about our school boards. Since I've been a member elected here in 1999, spending in the province of Ontario's education system, the money that has been transferred to the 72 school boards, has gone from \$13.16 billion to \$14.25 billion.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: You know that's not true. To stand there and say that, you have no idea what you're talking about. The fact is, education spending has increased. My two major school boards in the county of Simcoe have now passed half a billion dollars in spending for the first time in history by those two boards, the Simcoe-Muskoka board and the Simcoe Catholic board, and we're pleased with that.

As a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I've visited a number of schools throughout this province. What bothers me is the fearmongering I hear from the other side, both parties. If you've ever been in a school, you'd see the spirit that's in the school; you'd see the discipline that the teachers have; you'd see

how well the students coordinate and how well they perform. It's very, very disappointing to hear this fear-mongering continue.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to turn over the last little while—I know I'm getting under their skin because they can't stand the truth—to my colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I appreciate my neighbour making mention of the work we've been doing with respect to finding solutions to closing rural high schools. I've been fighting these high school closures with a number of communities for a number of years. Burford, for example: we lost that school. It did not open this spring. I worked with high schools in Port Dover, Valley Heights and more recently with Delhi. There have been very heated discussions of late in the community of Delhi. A citizens' group has established a petition to ask for a moratorium on school closures, and I have also created a petition to that effect, which members will recall I tabled several weeks ago, and most recently tabled both petitions yet again yesterday. Despite what people may hear or read in the media, I was the first one to call for a moratorium on high school closures. I did that on February 8, 2000, well before any member opposite—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Parkdale-High Park has two minutes to respond.

1100

Mr Kennedy: I appreciate the participation of all members of the House. I regret a little bit the limitations of this format. I hear from the government members and they want to say everything is OK. I appreciate that, except this is a little bit too important. We stand as members of this House, at a certain, particular point in time; these kids are trying to graduate this year. This House, whatever its strengths and weaknesses, was the source of a lot of their extra difficulty. We're not saying that the government of the day invented struggling kids. But it is obvious, on the evidence that this government itself pays a lot of money to collect through literacy tests and so on, that these kids are struggling. Why spend \$31 million to find that out if you're not going to do something about it?

We need a signal, a message from this House to those kids. Their parents do everything they can. There's been a 300% increase in private tutoring in this province in the last five years, and they're paying it out of pocket: people like Lee Franzak, who has two kids and pays \$300 a month to tutor them. Most families can't do that. Publicly funded education needs to pick up the slack. The students are there. I want to reference Richard Roy, who's in grade 11, and he had the courage to tell us his marks have dropped from 69% to 54%; the concepts are too complicated, the curriculum is moving too fast, he doesn't have a textbook and they're giving him photocopied stuff. Mr Roy has the courage to stand up. He needs our assistance here today.

We have dropout rates that we simply can't afford. We can't have, from this House, a message of condemnation for kids who need to go forward. There have to be corrections that occur this year. We've put forward a plan. The school moratorium was a different part of that plan. But to the members opposite who talk to us about cost, I say to them, can we afford not to act and make these kids fully part of society? Give them some success. See them get a message from this House that they belong and that we believe, despite the extra barriers we've put up for them, that they will finally succeed and not be left behind.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on this ballot item. I will place the questions needed to decide this at 12 o'clock noon.

ONTARIO ELECTION DATES

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ernie Eves government be directed to bring forward legislation to establish fixed election dates as outlined in the Ontario Liberal Democratic Charter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Sorbara has moved ballot item number 62, private member's notice of motion number 19. The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Sorbara: I'm pleased and delighted to be moving this resolution and to be speaking to it in this private members' hour, really for two reasons. First of all, under the circumstances that govern my daily life, I do not get as much opportunity as I would like to participate in the debates in this place. Secondly, and more importantly for me, this resolution is extremely important. As a democrat and a parliamentarian and as someone who believes in our responsibility to, in an ongoing way, reform our democratic process, it is something that is extremely important to me.

The essence of the resolution is simple, that is, that it is our responsibility as parliamentarians in Ontario to be constantly reforming our democratic system so it remains vibrant and strong. I was so pleased when our leader, Dalton McGuinty, the member for Ottawa South, put forward an entire package of democratic reforms, which we will be moving forward with after the next election. Anyone who wants to review those in detail can visit our Web site to do that.

The essence of what I hope to achieve here—our system is falling into significant disrepair in Ontario. Democracy is not strong in Ontario. If I had longer, I would make that same argument at the national level and right across Canada's 10 provinces. It's our responsibility to change that; that's the first point.

The second point is that in our system, the real problem, as it is in so many other systems, is that the power is being concentrated year by year, decade by decade, increasingly in one person. In Ontario it's the Premier; it's Ernie Eves. The power of this Parliament, the power of

other components of our democratic system, is wasting away, and government after government continues to vest more power in the Premier. I would venture to say that cabinet ministers in this government feel powerless to achieve their objectives. Certainly in this Parliament, the frustration of members of this Parliament is almost breathtaking in their inability to actually achieve and participate in democratic decision-making. I have the advantage of having sat here for 10 years beginning in 1985. On my return in 1999, frankly, I was shocked at how increasingly irrelevant what happens here has become to the life and times and democratic rights of the people of Ontario.

Now, we can't change all that with the reform that is the subject of this resolution, but we can go a long way. I say to my colleagues in this House, the only way to redress the balance of power that Ernie Eves, the Premier, vests in himself is to start to break up that power and put it elsewhere. This resolution is magnificent in its simplicity. Take away from the Premier the power to decide when the voters of Ontario shall have the right to be consulted and go to the polls. Take that power away from him and vest it in our constitution and have our constitution set fixed dates for elections—in our proposals, every four years. Think of the variety of ways in which things would change if that happened. We know that an election is coming up. Only Ernie Eves knows when that election is going to take place. The former Premier Bob Rae described it as the divine right of Premiers to decide when the people shall be consulted. That right belongs with the people, not with the Premier. If we break up that power in the Premier's office in this small way, then the abuses committed by this government and former governments in trying to manipulate the public will change as well.

For example, we know that an election is coming up when Ernie Eves decides that the time is right because, as we watch our televisions every night, suddenly there are millions and millions of dollars being spent by the Ontario government in advertising to tell the people of Ontario how great they've been and how great they are going to be—millions and millions of dollars to try to manipulate the electoral process. If you take that power away from the Premier, this Parliament will also have the opportunity to regulate and moderate the government's appetite to abuse taxpayer dollars taken for that kind of manipulative advertising.

In addition to that, if you take that power away from the Premier, you give everyone in Ontario a fair opportunity to prepare in an intelligent and informed way, to reconsider which party and which government they want to have in power in Ontario. As president of the party, I spend a lot of my time talking to potential candidates who are interested in running for us. One of the most difficult questions put to me in that capacity is—they always say the same thing: "When is the election going to be? Because I would like to do it. I think I've got something to contribute." When you say, "Well, it may be three months away or it may be a year away. The Tories will do polling. They'll start spending, and if they

feel like the time is right, they'll pull the plug and Parliament will be dissolved and we'll have an election," invariably, the response I get from potential candidates is, "How in the world can one regulate one's life by that system?"

1110

I invite members opposite to consider just this. Ask yourself, if we were to institute this reform, if we were actually to change our system so that elections occurred every four years in Ontario by virtue of our Constitution and not the divine right of Premiers, which of you would be standing up after that reform and saying to your constituents and to the people of Ontario, "This is horrible. What we should be doing is putting that power to call elections back in the hands of one person"?

In our municipal system, we're quite content every three years to allow municipal councils to go back to their voters to seek a new mandate. It would be horrific in the city of Toronto or in any municipality to suggest that a municipal election should occur when the mayor thinks the time is right. That would be totally unacceptable.

So think of it in this fashion, and I'm sure members opposite, when they consider it—imagine that in Ontario each of us knew at the time of an election when the next election would be. Which of you on the other side would be standing up and saying, "This is horrific. We should no longer have fixed dates for elections. It should be up to the Premier of the province to determine when that should happen"?

This reform and the other reforms that are contained in our party's democratic charter—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): We would be governors.

Mr Sorbara: My friend from Simcoe says we would be governors here. They're worried about the invasion of the American system. That is patent nonsense, I tell my friend. Our proposals protect all of the important parts of our democratic institutions as well as the possibility that a government would fall by losing the confidence of this House. These democratic reforms, when implemented, sir—and I tell you that they will be implemented—will put the democratic power in this province back in the hands of the people to whom it belongs, and that is the people of the province.

We're going to be putting severe restrictions on fundraising. We're going to put very severe restrictions on the government's ability to rob taxpayers of their funds with partisan political advertising.

But the one reform I am advocating here today and that I'm inviting my friends opposite to consider and support is that the power to manipulate and call election dates in Ontario must come to an end. That power belongs to the people. If we pass this resolution this morning we'll be taking a significant step to make our democracy stronger, and I commend it to my friends in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): As the member of our caucus responsible for the democratic

issues agenda that we have launched and that we will be talking more about later, I want to be able to respond to this, and I know my good friend Mr Christopherson from Hamilton wants to speak about this as well.

I want to say, first of all, we will support this resolution. We think quite frankly that it's not a bad idea. The member, Mr Sorbara, is right when he says there's far too much ability for Premiers of all stripes—I will not just argue the current Premier, but Premiers before and, I would argue, Premiers after—to have too much power in being able to manipulate things when it comes to elections. The idea of setting a term or date as far as when elections should be called is not a bad one.

I also want to say to the government members across the way, it's not a concept that's too far away from the province of Ontario. We have set terms for municipal mayors and municipal councillors and school board trustees. The lower level of governments that gets their authority through this Legislature already have set dates for when elections are called and how long the terms are going to be. This is not something that would be out of the ordinary. I would argue that you need to have at least four to five years as far as how long the term should be—that would probably be the fair thing to do—and set the election date for a spring or fall election, considering Ontario for both geographic or weather reasons. We should be trying to pull the election off at a time where the weather is conducive to door-knocking and doing the kinds of things that we do during election time.

I think, however, that the resolution stops short on a whole host of issues when it comes to democracy, and I want to talk about that in some detail here this morning. But I just want to say up front that the issue of setting when an election is going to be called is not what's going to curb the power of the Premier. I think there's a whole bunch of other issues you've got to deal with when it comes to how you rein in the power of the Premier from exercising too much authority over elected members in the Legislature.

We know now that the problem we have under the current system—and it doesn't matter whose Premier is there, which political party—the Premier gets to appoint cabinet, the Premier gets to decide when the election is, the Premier is the head of the executive council and, as such, is able to exercise a lot of power, especially over his own caucus, by right of being party leader and head of the caucus at the same time. What ends up happening far too often is that members of the government—in this case, this government—basically don't have an opportunity to vote as they might want to vote because they're held, by the power of the Premier, from voting against. For example, if a backbencher who is trying to get into cabinet is seen as being critical of his government, critical of his Premier, the chances of getting into cabinet are pretty slight. So the Premier holds a lot of power over individual members just in that right.

That's why we in the New Democratic Party propose a much different approach to how this Legislature should work. The issue to us, as New Democrats, is not just the

power that's in the hands of the Premier, because the argument could be made that the Premier has to have certain powers. To us, the issue is how this assembly doesn't work. Currently what you've got are rules in this assembly that say the government can introduce a bill for second reading on Monday and by Wednesday it's all over. All you need is a time allocation on Thursday and a bill gets passed into law, with no committee hearings, no opportunity for public input, no serious reconsideration of the points in the bill. The government just does as it pleases, and there is nothing anybody can do about it because of the rules of this House.

That's why we in the New Democratic caucus are proposing a different approach to this problem. We believe that, first of all, you have to change the way the Legislature itself operates. One of the ways to do that is to do what is done in most parliamentary democracies in the world. In fact, 99% of them have what's called a system of proportional representation. That is, simply said, on election day the parties that get elected end up with an amount of seats as per the percentage of vote they got in the election.

For example, in the provincial election where, let's say, the Conservatives got 43% of the vote, the idea would be that they would get no more than 43% of the seats in the House. The reason behind that is, clearly the people of Ontario have said they support the government to a position of 43%, but they don't want to give them all of the power. They want to be able to take the direction of the government, but not a majority of the people in Ontario support the direction of the Conservative government. So by a system of proportional representation, the rest of the seats in the House would be apportioned to a party based on their percentage of vote, which means, at the end of the day, that we'd all have to work together.

If you take a look at, for example, the German system, at both their levels of government, in both the lower house and the upper house of the German Parliament, what they have is a system where, when electors go to the polls, they have two ballots. They have one ballot where they vote for the party and the other ballot where they vote for the local member. They count up the local members first. They say, "Here's who is elected to represent you in your riding," and you would do that just as we do now and, at the end, they would tally the percentage of vote for the party. Then they would top up those parties based on what they got when it came to the preferential ballot of the party.

That works rather well. In the case of Germany, for example, Schroeder won yet another government, but he has to form a coalition with other parties in the legislature of Germany in order to govern. So what you've got is a social democratic labour party that doesn't have a clear majority, that has to work with other members of the assembly to pass whatever bills come through their House. I would argue that's not a bad idea, and I just want to revisit a couple of very specific votes that we've had in this House where that might have made a big difference.

Let's just take the amalgamations of the cities of Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa and Sudbury. We in this Legislature all know that every party in this Legislature had members on both sides of that issue. In our caucus we had a member who felt strongly that you should have moved toward the issue of amalgamation in his particular community. In other parties, such as was the case in the Conservative Party, there were members in their caucuses who disagreed, but because of party discipline members voted according to their own party lines. Because the government had a majority of the seats in the House, even though they didn't have a majority in the vote—they had 43% of the vote but over 60% of the seats—the government did what it wanted. To the chagrin of their own Conservative members, they ended up amalgamating cities, against the wishes of their own backbench members. I say, if we had a system of proportional representation in that vote, each member in the House would have had to stand up and vote accordingly, because then the onus becomes the onus of the member and no one party clearly has the majority. The government would have had to work with the opposition parties to be able to pass or have that legislation defeated.

1120

My basic point is this: I don't believe that vote would have passed, because almost all of the members, except for a few, were opposed to the amalgamation, and there were enough members in the government caucus who were opposed that, if we had been under a system of proportional representation, that would have never happened. The city of Toronto would have never been the big megacity it is today. I think probably we would have been a heck of a lot better off if that would have happened.

The same could be said for a lot of the other decisions that this government is making around the privatization of health care, of Ontario Hydro and of our school system by allowing charter schools to be introduced in the province. My argument is that under a system of proportional representation, the government could never have been able to pass legislation like that because clearly there were not a majority of members in this House who agreed with those basic principles. Therefore, if it can't pass here, then maybe it shouldn't pass at all. Maybe we are representatives of the people and maybe at the end of the day we can do our jobs better in representing what has to be done here in the Legislature.

I will support the member's motion because it is part of what I believe we need to do, but I think the bigger issue here is that if we want to curb the power of the executive and of the Premier, you really have to come at it from a set of rules. One of the basic ones is how we elect people in this province. We will be talking as New Democrats more about that as the winter goes on.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to have the chance to rise and respond to the resolution brought forward by the honourable member from Vaughan-King-Aurora and the Liberal Party this morning.

The resolution we are debating calls for fixed election terms of four years and is part of the Liberals' democratic charter. I could go on and on about how I feel about this democratic charter. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I can only address the part of the charter that the honourable member has chosen to focus our attention on today.

I can understand the honourable member's sensitivity, as he was a cabinet minister in the Peterson government that went to the polls early, after barely three years, in 1990, after being elected in 1987. I read very succinctly in a book written by Ian Scott—who was the Attorney General of the day—that the member wasn't happy about that particular decision, and we know the decision resulted in the public throwing out the Peterson Liberals in 1990. I would say that democracy is working well in this province today because democracy is the public holding the government to account in an election. That's what happened in 1990.

Also, the member comes forth and says, "There's manipulation." I don't know whether he was referring to the fact that the federal Liberal government called an early election in the year 2000, after barely three years. Our record is that when we were elected in 1995, we called an election after four years, in 1999, with respect to getting another mandate, which we received in 1999. If there's any manipulation, take a look at the federal Liberal government.

Our current system is based on the long-standing tradition of the Westminster parliamentary model imported from Britain. That's what our model is based on. It's not based on the US model of fixed dates for presidential, Senate and Congressional elections. Our system has been in place since Confederation and has been used successfully by governments of all stripes. This resolution would mark a real departure from this model and signal the beginning of a system that only two jurisdictions use worldwide. That's right: only two other jurisdictions use the fixed term system—only two. Those countries are the United States and New Zealand. Not one other province uses such a fixed term system at this time. Why would we want to put ourselves in a situation that separates Ontario from the nine other provinces and the territories, let alone the federal government?

In August 2001, the British Columbia Liberal government did pass a bill that calls for elections on the second Monday in May every four years, but it has not yet come into effect. This bill comes into effect by regulation. These regulations are set out under order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and as of November 21, 2002, these regulations did not exist in British Columbia.

I am not sure if it is a reluctance to actually make this legislation binding, but it wouldn't surprise me. It just reminds me of the flip-flopping that the Liberal Party is becoming famous for. The Liberals claim that fixed terms would simplify election planning. But is this enough to justify overturning centuries of parliamentary tradition? In the United States, fixed terms are the norm rather than the exception. In contrast, British and Canadian parlia-

mentary tradition has long agreed with the idea that responsible government requires flexible election terms. This not only enhances democracy but makes government more accountable to the electorate. In the United States, fixed electoral terms often lead to situations where the executive branch of government finds itself in the position of a lame duck. Too often political parties are so focused on the next fixed electoral date that they ignore the important issues of the day, and unfortunately those issues are pushed aside.

We, on this side of the House, believe this would be an affront to our democratic traditions. The best check on government power is to have a non-fixed election date so that government policies are not dictated by a calendar. Policies will be determined by a logical assessment of the issues of the day.

This government is by no means afraid of change. The members on this side of the House are open-minded members and are always willing to entertain new ideas and suggestions to better the parliamentary system. Adopting this resolution is not the way to do it. I must stress that this government is committed to making the democratic system in Ontario more efficient and effective. For example, we brought in the Fewer Politicians Act to reduce the number of MPPs in Ontario from 130 to the current 103. This was done not because politicians wanted to give up their jobs but because the people of Ontario demanded a more efficient government, and we delivered.

We also decreased the length of campaign time from five to four weeks. By doing this, the cost of elections was reduced significantly.

Moreover, our government changed the boundaries of numerous ridings so that the federal and provincial elections could use the same geographical areas. This has made the administration of elections more efficient and has cut back on red tape.

As I'm sure the people listening have figured out from the tone of my speech, I will not be supporting this resolution. As stated previously, we on this side of the House are always looking for ways to better our current electoral system. This resolution would not benefit the citizens of Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to commend the member for bringing forward this resolution for discussion by members of the House. I think there are a number of reforms that have to be made. This is one of them that will enhance the democratic process in Ontario. I agree entirely with the member, Mr Sorbara, who has noted the trend in all jurisdictions, but particularly here in Ontario, where we can speak about it, and to a certain extent the national level, of concentrating power in the Office of the Premier or the Prime Minister. The most powerful people, then, are not the people who are elected in the various constituencies but instead are the unelected political advisers, or whiz kids, as we like to call them, who advise the Premier and some of the ministers. So there's no question that we have to restore some significant autonomy for the elected members, and

I think this resolution is part of it. I think there is a package for it.

I've always noted as well that one of the really corrosive elements in the political system is money. We particularly see this south of the border, where members of Congress are virtually purchased by special-interest groups, particularly those which are well-financed.

I will start out by saying that I do not think governments should be able to spend taxpayers' dollars on government advertising. Anybody who turned on the Grey Cup game would see the government ads, which were clearly of a partisan nature to reflect favourably upon the government. Members can smirk about that if they want to smirk and be part of the government, but if they're looking at it in the democratic process, now and in the future, no matter which government is doing it and which jurisdiction, if you look at it, it is wrong for governments to use taxpayers' dollars for partisan advertising. That's what's happening in Ontario right now with the hydro policy that the government is attempting to share with the people of this province.

I happen to think there is legitimate advertising from time to time. Some safety things are reasonable, as long as it's not there saying, "and your government is doing a great job because it's bringing it in"—the flu vaccine, for instance. I used several instances where I thought there was reasonable government information provided. But so much of it that this government has been part of—it's a government that has cut so many departments and transfer payments to others and has hurt I think people in the lower income brackets but always has lots of money to spend on government advertising. I think that's wrong and that's part of the package we're looking at.

1130

As well as that, we allow individuals, corporations and unions to donate too much to political parties. We allow the political parties to spend too much money. I thought the last time this government changed the legislation, it allowed for more contributions to come in to individual candidates and parties, it allowed greater expenditures and it exempted some key parts of a campaign.

Also, of course, this government, which has millions upon millions of dollars in its war chest because it has catered its policies to the richest and most powerful people in the province, and has been rewarded by those rich and powerful people who have benefited from its policies, will before a campaign, as well as during a campaign, spend way beyond what would be legitimate. Those are the kinds of reforms that have to be made.

You can't exempt the leaders' tour. You cannot exempt polling, because there's a wide definition of that. If you want it to be fair for everybody, then you have to have strict controls on it. The United States is not a good example.

This resolution takes away from the Premier the right to make a decision on when an election shall be. People who are in the country, people who are in the province, individuals, organizations, municipalities and so on, will know when the election is going to be. There are

provisions, if the government falls in a non-confidence motion, where this would not apply. But generally speaking, there would be a situation where we would know when the election was going to be. I think most people in this province would support that instead of having it in the hands of one person and his personal advisers.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I found the resolution before us very interesting, particularly given some of the dynamics of where the different players are coming from on this.

Let me say right at the outset that I think it takes an awful lot of gall for the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford to be talking about defending the traditions of 100 years in this place, given the damage they've done to all kinds of traditions, especially as they relate to the rights of the opposition. Let's just temper some of those comments with the reality of what they've done in governance and how they've trampled on decades of tradition. I don't think that's a defensible point to start from at all.

There is actually a historical reference to this, and I'm surprised it hasn't been mentioned yet. It's pretty significant, given that today is the day Romanow brings down his report on the future of our cherished health care system. When Tommy Douglas was elected Premier in Saskatchewan, I believe in 1946, but certainly just after the Second World War—there's no need to remind people who understand the history of this country that the moneyed powerful people all across North America were recoiling in horror that this fellow named Tommy Douglas had gotten elected to a position of power in a democracy. "How could this possibly happen?" because of course Tommy Douglas was a social democrat, a CCFer, the forerunner to the NDP. For some people there were still memories of what had happened in Russia a couple of decades before. There were concerns about what had happened as a result of the Winnipeg general strike, and some were saying, "My goodness, the election of this social democrat in Canada means the beginning of the end. The Red forces are at the door." Of course, nothing could be further from the truth, but Tommy had to deal with that.

I mention Tommy because Tommy Douglas is now recognized universally as the founder, the father, the leader of bringing in our universal health care system. In fact he was just inducted into I think the first—I don't know the exact title—the Canadian national medical hall of fame. I'm torturing the real title, but that's what it is. Their first inductee was none other than the guy they had struck against, in a general strike by a lot of the doctors at the time in Saskatchewan. The very same group of people, the medical association of Canada, named him as the first inductee, recognizing that without Tommy Douglas we wouldn't have a universal health care system and we wouldn't have the Romanow report.

As I look across, the galleries are filled today with young people, students here, I would assume, on a class visit. It may be a number of years before they recognize the significance of the historic day they are here, because

Roy Romanow is releasing a report that is either going to provide a blueprint for them to have the same health care system I had when I was their age, or we're going to lose it. It's that significant.

I raise all that and talk about Tommy today, particularly on this historic day, also to point out that one of the things he did when he was elected, to sort of calm the Red scare fears, was to say, "I will have elections every four years no matter what." I believe it was June. I stand to be corrected, but I believe it was in June. Do you know what? Tommy Douglas was in power, the first social democrat and founder of our universal health care system, for 16 years as Premier, and every four years on the button he held an election. As long as he was in that election, he won.

I think it's worth mentioning too, parenthetically, that Tommy Douglas every year of those 16 years brought in a balanced budget. He didn't really bring in what was then the universal insurance program until about his 14th or 15th year. There are a whole host of reasons for that, but most of them were based on the fact that he wanted it to be fiscally viable and he wanted to deeply plant the roots of the notion of a universal health care system so that future right-wing governments couldn't come along and just wipe it out.

He took all those years to prepare and educate the public, bring them onside, let them know what the benefits of a universal health care system would be for them, and to ensure it could be afforded. Having been in an NDP government and sat in the cabinet, I know the kind of pressure you get from your own supporters to move, especially on those big items that, in large part, bring people to be a New Democrat as opposed to the other parties.

I've only got one minute left, but in terms of the BC legislation, the Institute for Research on Public Policy found that 54% of the population support fixed elections. They had one concern, and I thought it was legitimate. I just spoke to my friend Mr Sorbara to get a clarification from him. Their concern was that you don't want to remove the ability of this House to say, "We've lost confidence" in whatever the government is, whoever the Premier is, and force an election. They felt we lose something if we don't have that. I'm assured by Mr Sorbara that part of their legislation would guarantee that a majority vote of this House, regardless of party, would still constitute a lack of confidence in the government and that would trigger an election.

I think we end up with the best of both worlds. This is a valid idea. Things have to change. The people are demanding it. I think this is a good, positive step in that direction.

1140

Mr Dunlop: I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on Mr Sorbara's resolution.

First of all, I'd like to take this opportunity, because we've mentioned how many young people are in the audience today—I don't know the names of all the other schools, but I do know that Premier Eves has a school

here today from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, St John the Baptist Catholic school in Bolton. Mrs Bernardi, Mrs Visintine and a number of the parents and other teachers are here with them. Perhaps we could give them a warm welcome. It's so nice to see so many young people here on this very historic day.

Something I didn't know earlier: I didn't realize that Tommy Douglas actually delivered balanced budgets for 16 years in a row. That is amazing and I think that's a great tribute to his great life as a politician.

However, we're here today to talk a little bit about the resolution. I want to say up front that I will be opposing this legislation. Quite frankly, I'm against the Americanization of Canadian politics, and that's what this does. This is a very simple resolution. We might as well have a Congress. We might as well have governors. We might as well have a President.

We haven't seen any leadership in this particular area on behalf of the federal government. As recently as 2000, they pulled an election after three years. If the provinces are going to go in this direction, to a selected term of four years, I think we really have to see the leadership from the federal government. When they decide to call after four years, then we should look, as provinces, at maybe doing the same type of thing.

Mr Sorbara: Why?

Mr Dunlop: Because we need federal leadership. The federal government has to show leadership in some area. In some area of this country, we have to see the federal government showing some leadership.

We've seen some leadership today, I guess, with the Romanow report coming out, but as I said earlier today in my other comments, we don't know what's going to actually happen. Apparently there's \$7 billion, I understand now. Finally the federal government will probably have to ante up. We've been saying this for the last six or seven years. Already I read an article where Mr Manley is saying, "The money's not there. We won't be able to provide the money. We'll phase that money in" over God knows how many years.

I'm someone who believes very strongly in the traditions of our country, of our province. I do not want to see the legislation changed. I believe very strongly in the British parliamentary system and everything it stands for.

As I said earlier, I will be opposing this resolution. I want to leave some time for our other members as well today.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I commend the member from Vaughan-King-Aurora for bringing forth his resolution, because I think the resolution really is an attempt on his part to show that a lot of the democratic traditions in Ontario have been eroded dramatically by the Mike Harris-Eves government. When they stand up and say they're defenders of British parliamentary traditions, it is just laughable. If you look at Bill 26, it did more damage to democracy in this province than any other single bill has done in any western democracy.

What it comes down to is that, in this Legislature now and in this province, if an idea comes from outside the

inner sanctum of the government controlling interests, they reject it. I've got a perfect little example for the schoolchildren here today. As you know, there's a law in the province of Ontario now that requires schoolchildren to sing O Canada in school. As the opposition, we brought forth a simple resolution, on behalf of myself, to allow for the singing of O Canada in this building, even once a week. Do you know that the government has stopped that? They won't allow the singing of O Canada in this Legislature as part of our proceedings. Do you know why? Because it's not their idea; it came from the opposition.

That's why they oppose resolutions like this one from the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora. It's not their idea. It didn't come from the backroom group that controls this government. These are faceless, nameless people you never see. They run the province of Ontario. For instance, legislation now is divided and crammed into—they have two days in one. Nowhere in western democracies do they have two days in one. Do you know why they have two legislative days in one? So they can ram through bills that you the public, young and old, will never know anything about.

We have this bill before us now called Bill 198, where they're raiding pension plans. They tried to ram that through so nobody would notice. They've changed the rules to the point that things go through here so quickly we can't even question them. There are no hearings. In the past, we used to have hearings where there would be input, there would be amendments, there would be changes. That doesn't exist in Ontario any more. We go through a democratic façade totally controlled by backroom people who are not in this chamber, and we don't even know their names or faces.

My colleague from Vaughan-King-Aurora is saying, "When you're calling an election, perhaps there should be some kind of accountability or oversight. It shouldn't be the manipulation of the democratic process to call an election when the polls show you might win." This government spends millions of dollars polling all the time, trying to find out how they can take advantage of public opinion to manipulate it.

That's what they're doing right now. They're spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of your money this month, I'm sure, trying to find out when they should call the election. They're not going to call it when they think it's right for the people or right for the voters; they're going to call it when they think they can save their necks. That's what they'll do.

What this would do is bring in some sort of accountability whereby you would know when the elections were to be called so that it couldn't be manipulated by the government and the backroom people. Every four years, you would know when the election date would be, and it would be a fair process. What this government really likes to do is essentially make rules that benefit not you, the voters or the citizens, but benefit them and their friends. That's what they're all about in this place, and they don't want you to know what they're doing. They

want to try and change things so fast, and then if we ask for an improvement or a change, they say, "No, we can't do it, because it doesn't help us."

I commend this attempt to basically get some dialogue on getting democracy back in Ontario. This government does not believe in free votes; in this case, you'll see that all the government side will vote against this. They never vote according to their conscience. They always vote according to how they're told to vote. This is wrong, because democracy is supposed to be based on your beliefs and what's best for your voters, not on what's best for vested interests and special interests. In this case here, we've got a debating point, a good way of looking at how we can make democracy better and how we can maybe listen to new ideas. As I said, this government of Ernie Eves-Mike Harris doesn't believe in ideas coming forward and being debated, even—never mind being accepted; they don't think they should be debated. They just will all say that this is wrong.

To say this is about Americanization—this government copied the neo-con agenda word for word, right out of Newt Gingrich's dictionary, and they have the nerve to say they're against Americanization? They bought that hook, line and sinker and tried to sell it to everybody in Ontario.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to offer a few comments on the resolution we're debating here this hour. It will be a frosty Friday when I or anyone in our government agree with the Americanization of the election system in this country. It's not going to happen.

This is from a party and from a member who demonstrated precisely why the voters can be trusted by trying to pull the wool over their eyes and going out for an election after two years and nine months, thinking you could sneak something through, so excited that for the first time in 1987 the election results, under the current system, had actually favoured your party—the first time in over 45 years. You were sure it would happen a second time, that lightning would strike twice. So you said to yourselves, back there in the cabinet room, "The voters are incompetent. The voters are blind." You said, "We can pull the wool over their eyes."

You want to know something, Mr Sorbara? You were wrong. David Peterson was wrong; you were wrong; all the other cabinet ministers, including the members still here today, were wrong. The voters are smarter than that. The voters understand the issues. The voters understand that when they have the chance to cast that vote, there is an opportunity to reflect, and it doesn't matter whether it is exactly 48 months or 46 months or 50 months. They reflect on the package of initiatives that have been presented by the government and on the alternatives offered by the two, maybe more, would-be pretenders to the throne.

The reality is that in the last half-century, your party, under the current system, has only ever attracted the attention and the interest of the voters once—once. You're equalled by the socialists, for Pete's sake, in that regard. In every other election in the last half-century, the voters

have correctly concluded that there is one party that has their best interests at heart, one party that is not favouring special interests, that has the working families, that has small business, at the heart of all the policy decisions they make. As opposed to the member here, a member who personally was part of the charade of the 1990 election, who was certain—certain—that they were—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora has had his opportunity. He needs to respect the member for Scarborough East.

1150

Mr Gilchrist: I'm sorry if the truth hurts, Mr Sorbara, because the reality is that the status quo doesn't just work here in Ontario; it works all across Canada. It works all across the Commonwealth. This is a principle that goes back centuries, and the member opposite is suggesting that somehow the Liberal Party in Ontario has a better way of doing it than all the other parties in all those other jurisdictions. What arrogance. What conceit.

The reality is that this resolution, just like the entire Liberal democratic plan, is predicated on the proposition that you cannot trust the voters. Well, I for one do trust the voters. I suspect it's predicated on something else. If you knew the exact date of the next election, you would know how long you had to hide your leader, Dalton McGuinty. You'd know that. As it is right now, you're not quite sure when you can bring him out and when you have to keep him behind closed doors.

There's mention that out in British Columbia the Liberal government there has suggested that they want to go to fixed terms. What the member has not suggested, has not put on the record here today, is that the law says that that will take place only when a regulation is filed by the Lieutenant Governor. There is no regulation filed. So in the province of British Columbia, even today it would not be accurate to say that it is the law that the next election will take place on a certain day. It may be the government's intention to prepare that regulation, it's certainly their stated intention, but they haven't done it.

There is no precedent where you can stand in your place and say that someone else has made a formal commitment to have an election on a specific day on a specific cycle. So I'm prepared to continue on with the status quo. I'm prepared to continue to trust the voters in my riding. I don't understand why a member here wouldn't want to continue to trust the voters in his riding—but obviously you don't. You are here as a result of the current system.

On the other hand, if it is this ongoing frustration that there aren't enough of you that can attract the attention and the positive support of people in your riding, then I understand why you want to change the rules. But what I don't understand is how you of all people, of all the Liberals sitting opposite, could stand in your place and suggest that somehow an American-style political system is the way we should be going, when you yourself are the poster child for why the voters can be trusted under the current system.

While I have a second here, I was intrigued, as our good friend from St Catharines is so prone to do a rambling about the by-product of elections—it was fascinating watching another Liberal initiative just before coming up here: the tabling of the Romanow report, and the fact that Mr Romanow himself admitted that if the federal government agreed to all his recommendations, it would increase federal spending to 25%. I just want it on the record that last night on Michael Coren, Gerard Kennedy swore up and down that it isn't 14% that the feds paid today; it's 35%.

So I'm glad to see that he is just as inaccurate, and just as prepared to try and pull the wool over the TV viewers, the voters, as you're trying to do here today. It's a consistent pattern. It really is not becoming to a member to have that attitude toward the voters. I suggest to the member that this is not an appropriate resolution. I will not be supporting it. Nor, I suspect, will any of my colleagues.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'm so excited about the opportunity to speak following on the leader of the bitter former ministers' club. I just can't tell you how funny it is to hear a man froth about for six minutes and create the impression on the one hand that the manipulation by the leader of an election date is bad, and then to make an enormous pronouncement, with much pounding of the chest, to indicate that he stands firmly in favour of the status quo, because the status quo has meant that leaders of political parties, all of them in our province, have manipulated election dates in a way that is unhelpful to the quality of our democracy.

So while we on this side are able to stand and say, as Mr Sorbara did in his opening comments, that this isn't a practice that we think has been good for Ontario in the past or that we're proud of, this guy, the member from Scarborough East, stands and makes a speech that makes absolutely no sense, on the one hand criticizing the Peterson government for having called an early election and then on the other hand defending that practice and the status quo.

The thing that I found most incredible from that government, and the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford did it too, was talking about how it would be just terrible to see this kind of change to this parliamentary process, with its traditions deeply rooted in Westminster. He practically brought the Maple Leaf Forever and songs from Britain to my ear. Instead, we had speeches of denial from the members opposite, because they denied the very role that they have played in undermining our democracy to such a great extent here in the province of Ontario.

We seek, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to grab back from them and the way they have operated some connection to our democracy, by enhancing the role of oppositions and committees and giving power back to MPPs and, on this one singular issue, removing from the power of the Premier of Ontario the right to manipulate the date of the election.

These guys get it going, on this matter, on all different fronts. We have a piece of legislation in front of us that they're all going to vote for next week, Bill 198, that is flawed. It has been proven to be deeply flawed, and yet they will ram it through and hope in the quiet of their regulatory environment and the cabinet's basic right to do whatever the heck it pleases, that this issue will just go away, because even when they are caught red-handed, even when the smoking gun has been produced, there is no meaningful opportunity, in an environment where the government has a majority and the majority members are acting like seals, to restore a sense of vigour to our democracy by forcing change on badly flawed legislation.

I have a funny story to relate in my last minute, and it involves the member from London-Fanshawe, Mr Mazzilli. He and I were recently on Focus Ontario, about three or four weeks ago. Every once in a while, because of our capacity to jostle, they bring us on there. The host, Graham Richardson, said to Mr Mazzilli, "So, Frank, when's the election going to be? In the spring?" Frank said, "Yes, that looks very likely, Graham." I said, "Yes, in the spring of 2004." Because once the stink of desperation is on a government, like the stink is on this one, you start to see the kind of manipulation that is disgusting. It's disgusting.

On the weekend of their convention a little while ago, I arrived at 11 o'clock on Saturday. By noon, all of the talk was how the election, which was rumoured to be right now, had been put off. Then at 6:45 or 7 o'clock, the Premier had a press conference. He said, "No, the election is definitely going to be two months one way or the other of the four-year anniversary." On the Sunday he said, "No, no. Fall of 2003," and within a few days later it was the spring of 2004.

End the manipulation. Take back the power for the people.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Sorbara: I'd like to thank in particular my friend from Hamilton West for reminding us on this day in particular of the important work that Tommy Douglas, one of the great parliamentarians in Canadian history, brought to this debate on fixed terms for Parliaments.

I just have to summarize by pointing out that the incredible arrogance of my friend from Scarborough East is exactly the disease that has poisoned the Conservative Party and is going to end in their defeat when an election is finally called. I have rarely heard such arrogance, an epiphany of nonsense, in support of a resolution on a motion that really will change and improve our democracy.

This is quite simple. We need to improve our democracy. The Premier of this province, Ernie Eves, has far too much power, and this Parliament has far too little power. And the people have far too little power. No democracy is strong when power, wealth and income is concentrated in the few, let alone the one.

I want to talk as well about the remarks by my friend from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, because he gave a litany

of reforms that he suggests were brought forward to improve our democracy. There is no doubt in the mind of any serious commentator that as to the power of this Legislature, rule changes brought forward by the Progressive Conservative Party have reduced to a minimum the significance of this Legislature.

If parliamentarians on the Conservative side are not concerned about that so that future members of this Parliament can have a real and vibrant opportunity to participate in the lifeblood of their province, then they don't understand their responsibilities here. I invite them to reconsider and support this motion.

The Acting Speaker This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item number 72.

EDUCATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): I will now deal with ballot item number 71. Mr Kennedy has moved private member's notice of motion number 20.

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 "ayes" have it.

We will take the vote following my putting the question on ballot item number 72.

ONTARIO ELECTION DATES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Ballot item number 72: Mr Sorbara has moved private member's notice of motion number 19.

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 "ayes" have it.

EDUCATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Call in the members for a vote on ballot item number 71. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kennedy has moved ballot item number 71. All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Curling, Alvin	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Marchese, Rosario	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 30; the nays are 46.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ONTARIO ELECTION DATES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Sorbara has moved private member's notice of motion number 19. All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Levac, David	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Curling, Alvin	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Runciman, Robert W.
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sampson, Rob
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Spina, Joseph
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Stewart, R. Gary
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Flaherty, Jim	McDonald, AL	Tsubouchi, David H.
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Turnbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 42.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters related to private members' public business now being complete, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1214 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY 11 AND HIGHWAY 17

SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It's pretty sad when you see that it takes longer for the Harris-Eves Tories to deliver the Sudbury regional operational review than for Roy Romanow to complete a federal study about health care across Canada. It is pretty sad when the Sudbury Regional Hospital continues to wait for Tony Clement and Ernie Eves to release the report that our community wants released. That operational review will set the course of action for the construction of our new single-site hospital. It will set the course of action for our community with regard to health care, and yet the government sits on the report.

Why do they sit on the report? Well, it's very simple. They do not want to release the report because the report is clearly an indictment that they have short-changed our hospital and health care in the north by too many dollars—absolutely, no question.

In our community, we say that this government has abdicated its responsibility when it comes to health care. So today we ask Tony Clement, the Minister of Health, and Ernie Eves, the Premier of this province, to act immediately. Release the operational review of the Sudbury Regional Hospital so our hospital administrators can start planning for the future. We have a course of action. It's time you told us what yours is.

ENTERPRISING WOMAN PROGRAM

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Ten months ago Corrine was a stay-at-home mom with a business idea but little knowledge of how to start a company. Today she owns a registered soap-making business and sells her product at craft sales and local stores. If Corrine had not signed up for the Enterprising Woman program, run by the women's centre of York region, she says she would not even have a business plan.

Corinne had a good product but she really didn't feel she knew how to start a business. The program showed her how to get her business organized. The program helped her to write a business plan and encouraged her to do market research. Corinne benefited the most from being able to network with other women and to know she wasn't alone in her challenge to get her business started. She began the program in February and graduated in June, launching her business a month before.

The program, facilitated by business professionals, starts with the basics: choosing a name, conducting market research, cash flow analysis, and legal issues. It then offers specialized sessions such as Web marketing, e-business, networking, commercial real estate, and balancing life and work. The program is available to 25 women who have a viable business idea.

All the best to you, Corinne. Congratulations on your entrepreneurial business endeavour.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Earlier this week a Ministry of Transportation spokesperson was quoted as saying that the four-laning of Highway 11-17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon would not go forward unless traffic volumes increased to a preset ministry-determined level. To say that this remark irritated me, as well as many of my constituents, would be a very polite understatement.

This four-laning project is one that was first announced 13 years ago by the provincial government of the day. It is a rare part of the Trans-Canada Highway, in northwestern Ontario, where no alternate route across the country is available. It is a section of the highway about which Premier Eves himself made reference to the need to four-lane during a fundraising speech in Thunder Bay this past spring.

To say that volume of traffic alone will determine the need is unseemly, and I, for one, will not accept that thinking. Besides, if numbers alone determined these projects, the section between Thunder Bay and Pass Lake should be fast-tracked, as its numbers frequently meet that cold criteria.

Regardless, the province should be further chastised for not signing on to the federal-provincial agreement on highway infrastructure that would add \$2 billion dollars to available highway funding. In that I have been told on numerous occasions by previous Ministers of Transportation that this four-laning project will not go forward without federal government financial participation, why, I ask, is Ontario the only province in the country that has not signed on to this funding agreement?

Minister, are you telling us that we need a rash of tragic fatalities before you'll move forward on this vital project? I certainly hope that that is not your position.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This government and this Ministry of Health have been playing games with Niagara region, games with some incredibly serious consequences. You see, back in 2001 the Ministry of Health announced funding for eight youth-adolescent mental health beds for Niagara region. Where did those beds end up being located but in the city of Hamilton?

I want to explain to this government: Hamilton is not Niagara. Hamilton has its own very special and extreme needs. Niagara, under-resourced and under-staffed in terms of mental health services for youth and adolescents, is crying out for those eight mental health beds for youths and adolescents.

Welland mayor Cindy Forster and her council passed a strong resolution demanding that those beds be in Niagara region. Dr Thoppil Abraham, who has been relentless, along with his colleagues, in the campaign for adequate mental health services for youth and adolescents in Niagara region, carries on in his struggle to ensure that

young people don't have to be put into adult psychiatric wards, that young people have access, notwithstanding this government's refusal to fund it and provide it, to mental health services.

I put to you that it is entirely inappropriate that Niagara not have those eight mental health beds. The government made a promise. It was a promise that wasn't kept. I put to you that we should be listening to Dr Thoppil Abraham and the likes of him. I put to you that this government has a responsibility to fulfill its commitment, to fulfill that commitment to the families of those children, those adolescents, in Niagara region so treatment can be made available to them there, when they need it and as they need it.

NIAGARA FALLS WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): This past weekend, I again with my family attended the exciting 20th annual Niagara Falls Winter Festival of Lights kickoff, with my colleagues tourism minister Frank Klees and Erie-Lincoln MPP Tim Hudak.

Minister Klees attended the event to announce a provincial contribution of \$50,000 for the festival to help support the marketing efforts of the festival. Minister Klees also helped in welcoming Mickey, Minnie and the rest of the Disney characters who attend the festival each and every year. The minister was granted the privilege of turning the switch to help illuminate the hundreds of park and street displays decorated with tens of thousands of lights. The switch also kicked off a dazzling fireworks display.

In previous years, the festival of lights has received more than two million visitors. The event has earned the honour of being named a top event by the American Bus Association. The annual New Year's Eve party attracts over 30,000 people and receives live North American television coverage.

The \$50,000 announced this weekend for the festival will help cover the cost of print and radio advertising in Toronto, London, Ohio and New York.

The Niagara festival of lights is a great way to enjoy the four-season beauty of Niagara. I hope that many families will have the opportunity to come down to the falls to experience and enjoy the fun activities that the festival has to offer.

PENSION PLANS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The Minister of Finance just can't seem to get it right. First she tried to sneak in a \$10-million tax break for pro sports teams, but when they were caught, they took their hand out of the cookie jar. Now she is trying to sneak through legislation that would allow employers to steal a pension surplus from their employees, and that's exactly what the bill does.

Now the government says, "Well, we got it wrong. We'll think about it. Let's pass it. It's wrong; we know that. Let's pass it. It's reckless; we know that. Let's just make it the law and we won't proclaim it." Well, no one trusts this government on that file as no one trusts them on many other files.

The trouble is that no one in this province will believe the government on it. The legislation is wrong. It's time to do the right thing and withdraw the section of the bill. The Minister of Finance, a former government House leader herself, tried to suggest yesterday that it's too complicated to remove that section from the bill—wrong. We did something very similar in the Legislature just last week with Bill 177, and it took all of 10 minutes. We could do it again today. We could stand up and protect the rights of employees. We could do the responsible thing. We could take the offensive sections out of the bill. All it takes is for this government to agree to go to committee of the whole to remove the offensive sections. Why don't you agree to do it and put this miserable issue to rest once and for all?

1340

WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise today to highlight a very special event held in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. On Monday, November 18, more than 200 people gathered at a resort just outside of Bracebridge to celebrate the first Women of Distinction Awards benefit and gala. The community YWCA of Muskoka presented this grand event.

As a testament to the honour of receiving one of these awards, I would like to point out that there were more than 30 accomplished women from Muskoka nominated for these inaugural awards. An independent panel of judges selected the winners in six outstanding achievement categories, with each winner receiving a beautiful platter designed by Muskoka artist Gina Denne.

I would like to recognize the six women who received the first Women of Distinction Awards: Ms Ruth Bell-Towns of Bracebridge received the community voluntarism award; Ms Hilary Clark Cole of Gravenhurst received the arts and culture award; Ms Jan Lucy of Baysville received the award for education, training and development; Ms Enid Powell of Port Carling received the award for health, wellness and well-being; Ms Dorothy Slocum of Bracebridge was honoured with the award for entrepreneurship; Caitlin Veitch of Huntsville was the recipient of the Young Woman of Distinction award.

I would ask that all members of the House join me in congratulating all these women of distinction for the dedication and hard work they provide their communities.

ROMANIA

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): In the history of mankind, an important event took place 84 years ago, in 1918: the unification of Romania. With us today to help us celebrate this important event are a number of distinguished visitors. I start with the Consul General of Romania, Mr Teculescu; General Mihai Floca; Ionel Marin; Petre Nicapetre; Eugen Roventa; Magdalena Popa; Cornel Chis; Marcel Ban; Dumitru Popescu; and Cristina Parvu.

This great Romania of 1918 proved its vitality in its achievements: the universal franchise was granted; the most important agrarian reforms took place in the history of the country; and the new Constitution was adapted a few years later. We take great pride in these accomplishments.

Above all else, I want the former Minister of Finance to know that our Prime Minister made some glowing remarks just the day before yesterday when he referred to Romania joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. What an event. The Prime Minister was saying, "We want to embrace this Romania and these Romanian people because, for the first time, they have moved toward the western hemisphere, toward democracy, toward freedom and establishing their own Constitution, free democracy and state."

We want to celebrate this event, but we are also mindful of the great sacrifices they made when they threw off their dictatorship. They came to my office with a case of champagne and they said, "For the first time, we're free; we're for democracy." That's why we say to them today, forever a free Romania in the future.

[Remarks in Romanian].

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our honoured guests.

AIDS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to note that November 25 to November 30 has been declared AIDS Awareness Week by each of the municipalities in my riding of Durham. I commend the mayors and councillors of Oshawa, Clarington and Scugog for their leadership in raising AIDS awareness.

I believe that all Durham region municipalities have similar proclamations. The AIDS Committee of Durham Region is working this week, speaking with youth in our schools. On Saturday, November 30, there will be an AIDS watch interfaith service at 2 pm at St George's Anglican Church in Oshawa. December 1 is World AIDS Day. The focus of AIDS Awareness Week is on prevention against the stigmatization and discrimination against persons with AIDS, their families and friends.

The declaration of AIDS Awareness Week is a reminder that HIV/AIDS is not confined to one group. It is a worldwide epidemic. The United Nations estimates that 40 million are infected worldwide. Sadly, it is estimated that every day of the year there are more people

who die from aids than who died in the World Trade Center tragedy of September 11 last year.

We are reminded that anyone can get AIDS and be infected. In fact, over half of the victims are women. Recent statistics from Health Canada indicated that for the first time since 1995 there was an increase in the number of positive HIV test reports last year. However, by supporting such events as AIDS Awareness Week, we are fostering the knowledge and understanding that is needed to stop the epidemic and save lives.

The AIDS Committee of Durham works with others, including the AIDS executive director, Peter Richtig, the dedicated staff and caring volunteers. I urge all members to be involved in AIDS awareness in their own riding, to advocate for education and understanding.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On September 25, 2002, I presented a petition to the Legislature dealing with kidney and pancreatic transplants. According to section 38(i) of the standing orders, the minister should be responding within 24 sitting days. It's well past those 24 sitting days and I would appreciate your efforts in obtaining a response to that petition.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That is a valid point of order and hopefully the Minister of Health, who I believe it's for, will be responding to that petition in the timelines required under our standing orders.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on public accounts and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 5, An Act to amend the Audit Act to insure greater accountability of hospitals, universities and colleges, municipalities and other organizations which receive grants or other transfer payments from the government or agencies of the Crown / *Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics afin d'assurer une responsabilité accrue de la part des hôpitaux, des universités et collèges, des municipalités et d'autres organisations qui reçoivent des subventions ou d'autres paiements de transfert du gouvernement ou d'organismes de la Couronne.*

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

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday I indicated public-

ly that I really didn't think I was a moron and I thought I could prove it, I am able to show it. This is my grade 1 report card. This is what Miss Russell says—this is in 1947—“Excellent grade 1 year.” This is my grade 2 report card: “Gerald did well in his spring tests.” This is my grade 3: “Promoted with honours standing.” This is particularly for you, Mr Speaker. This is what Miss Russell said in grade 1, “Self-control—E for Excellent.” My case rests.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Mr Phillips has ably defended himself with respect to the slur that was directed at him yesterday. Is the other recipient of another slur equally able to defend himself?

The Speaker: I thank the member for the report card and the update.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EXPENSES ACT (CABINET MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADERS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE COMPTE DES DÉPENSES (MINISTRES ET CHEFS D'UN PARTI DE L'OPPOSITION)

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 216, An Act respecting access to information, the review of expenses and the accountability of Cabinet ministers, Opposition leaders and certain other persons / Projet de loi 216, Loi concernant l'accès à l'information ainsi que l'examen des dépenses et l'obligation de rendre compte des ministres, des chefs d'un parti de l'opposition et de certaines autres personnes.

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

The Chair of Management Board for a short statement?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I'll make a minister's statement.

1350

TENANT PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (HYDRO EXCEPTION), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES (EXCEPTION CONCERNANT L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 217, An Act to amend the Tenant Protection Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 217, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection des locataires.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): This bill would help a situation which is not in the current hydro bill. As it is now, tenants who do not pay hydro directly but pay it as part of their rent don't really have any protection or any opportunity for rebates. The landlord could then apply for an increase in their base as a result of hydro expenses and the tenants would have no opportunity to get any of this back.

This bill, in a sense, would protect tenants—and the government can either introduce it as part of their bill or pass this—to ensure that tenants who pay rent with their hydro included are not going to be subject to any rent increase as a result of the hydro situation between May 1 and December 1, 2002.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MEMBERS' EXPENSES

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): Today I'm pleased to introduce the latest measure in this government's ongoing commitment to improve accountability in the way taxpayers' dollars are spent. The legislation I am introducing today will, if passed, put into place a clear and transparent means to govern the expenses of ministers, parliamentary assistants, the leaders of the opposition parties and their staff. It would protect Ontario's taxpayers from unnecessary expense by bringing a consistent and high level of oversight to expenses paid out of the public purse. It will bring more openness, accountability and fairness than there ever has been in Ontario or in fact in Canada before.

The rules governing expenses have long been vague and inconsistently applied; I think we all know that. This situation needs to be fixed. Our proposed legislation will provide a transparent set of standards and rules. These rules will apply to ministers, parliamentary assistants, leaders of the opposition parties and their staff, and would govern expenses relating to travel, hotels, meals and hospitality.

As well as introducing greater accountability and transparency, we are for the first time taking steps to ensure that these expenses are reviewed by an impartial third party who has the unqualified support of all members of the Legislature. Therefore, I am pleased to inform the House that the Integrity Commissioner has agreed to review records related to expense claims. As an independent officer of the Legislature, and well respected, the Integrity Commissioner is a non-partisan person and

well suited to independently review, report on and bring clarity to this type of information.

I am pleased to report that consultations with the Integrity Commissioner are currently underway to finalize the new rules, which will be effective January 1, 2003.

We're putting into place an accountable and impartial review for the future. This legislation will require all cabinet ministers, their parliamentary assistants and staff, as well as the leaders of the opposition parties and their staff, to table all expenses incurred since 1995 with the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner will issue a report by the end of January 2003 detailing all records received, his recommendations and actions.

This legislation provides for new annual reporting requirements. This will now bring more openness and fairness than there ever has been before.

Each of us has an obligation to the people of Ontario to spend taxpayers' dollars responsibly. For years, the system has not brought accountability to the leaders of the opposition parties with standing in the Legislature. Therefore, the amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act included in this bill will provide for public access to records of payments made out of the Legislative Assembly fund for travel, hotels, meals and hospitality-related expenses of each leader whose party has standing in the Legislature and their staff.

These legislative changes will greatly improve the accountability, consistency, and fairness of the way in which expenses are incurred. They will be a major improvement to the way in which standards are developed, applied and challenged, and I encourage this House to give the proposed legislation speedy passage.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this bill. We will look closely at it. Once again we see a government responding to a situation after a problem has emerged, after they get caught. It's a sad statement that that's when they do it.

We welcome changes that bring accountability and transparency to the process. We trust the Integrity Commissioner on these matters.

But we want to talk about a few things. I notice, in reading this very carefully, that the Legislative Assembly funds for the opposition parties are subject to greater scrutiny than the government side. I wonder why that might be. We'll be looking at that closely.

I'd also like to remind the government of my colleague Rick Bartolucci's bill too, the Ministerial Travel Accountability Act, which is more expansive than this, and we will be putting a reasoned amendment to get you to include that in the bill.

Let me say something else. We look at the government ministers' and parliamentary assistants' expenses since they took office in 1995-96. It's gone up from just over \$100,000 to well over \$500,000—500% more. What happened with welfare recipients? Did they get a 500%

increase? No, they didn't. What happened to our schools? Did they get a 500% increase? What happened to our hospitals? None of the above.

I should point out that the official opposition has already released the expenses of its leader with pride, and what did we find? We found that he came in—what was it?—37th. He came in behind Ted Chudleigh, came in behind Mr Spina in expenses. That's because he does a good job with his money and will manage the affairs of this province better than that gang ever could.

They can applaud all they want about this. It's good to see it done. We're going to have a chance to look closely at the legislation, and we will table reasoned amendments to strengthen the ministerial travel accountability sections of the bill. It doesn't go far enough where ministers are concerned, and we want to talk about some definitions.

This is a government on the ropes. We'd like to have an election sooner rather than later. We'd like to go to the people and talk about that pension legislation that they refuse to withdraw. We'd like to go to the people and talk about the situation in our schools from the north to the south, from Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor—you name it. We want to talk about our hospitals and we want to talk about accessibility to MRIs, and we want to focus on this government's record of cutting the people who are most vulnerable while they've padded their own pockets over the last seven years. We want to talk about why the Premier's staff budget has gone up so much and Cabinet Office has gone up so much when supports for the disabled, people on welfare, the most vulnerable children in our society have gone down. We want to talk about why fewer and fewer students in this province have access to student loans and we want to talk about why they haven't dealt with the double cohort issue in a meaningful way.

1400

We will debate this legislation. We welcome accountability. We welcome transparency in all of what we do. But the best accountability, the best transparency is an election, an election that will replace the most mean-spirited, right-wing, out-of-touch government in the history of this province with a compassionate government with a solid plan, led by Dalton McGuinty, for the purposes of rebuilding our public services, our health care, our education.

Make no mistake: we will defend our record on transparency and accountability in a way that you never could or never will be able to, because Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are the only party putting out a plan for the future, whether it's in health care, the environment or education. That's where it will be decided, not on the foolish pounding of desks in this House but on the pounding of pavements in a general election when the people can talk about accountability, when we can reflect on what's right for Ontario. A new government, led by Dalton McGuinty, will undo the shameful record and mess that you've left behind.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let me speak to the bill before I launch into my broader rhetorical

polemic about the government. The bill is an interesting one. Because I had an opportunity to read the largest chunks of it, I'm ready already to point out to the government some of the obvious deficiencies. Reviewable expenses, defined in section 3, refers to travel—fair enough—hotels, meals or hospitality. I suggest the government may be generating its own loophole by omitting beverages, because that seems to have been the source of considerable grief, although I expect we can all agree that the issue around meals encompasses the broader range of meals and accompanying beverages.

Howard Hampton has been leader since 1996. I've had occasion to do a fair amount of travelling with him, mostly recently of course on the public power bus—www.publicpower.ca. I hope Howard has saved the receipts because I've been a witness to what I consider a relatively unhealthy diet of Mr Sub and similar chain foods along the highway, and inordinate amounts of Tim Hortons coffee—no disrespect to Tim Horton. If the Integrity Commissioner wants to review Howard's coffee-stained and sugar-stained little slips and receipts from any number of highway, roadside chain-food purveyors, I suppose the Integrity Commissioner can.

I do note that the retroactivity section, section 11, makes this retroactive, according to my brief reading of it, back to 1995. I'm ready to stand with Howard, being somewhat familiar and even downright intimate with his regrettable eating habits while on the road. As to his predecessor, who seems to be covered by the bill as well, he's on his own, quite frankly. I didn't spend a whole lot of time travelling with him.

But let's get down to perhaps somewhat more crucial and critical issues that are of concern, or should be of concern to us, and certainly are of concern to the public. The reviewable expenses are somewhat limited—fair enough. Obviously, were they to be broader, they might be more revealing.

I'm particularly interested, as are New Democrats, in the amount of money spent on US-based consultants by any number of party leaders' offices, so they can design US-style campaigns based on quick blurbs and Tide-style advertising, dishwasher detergent-style advertising. I'd be particularly interested, and I would hope that the public would be too, in seeing how much money was spent on US political consultants in a feckless effort by ambitious political parties to think they can hoodwink the public.

I'd be more interested in this bill, quite frankly, if it incorporated my recent bill, the Man Who Wasn't There Act, which would also—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Wait a minute. When you consider the public interest in public expenditure and expenditure of public funds, you will recall that my Man Who Wasn't There Act—colloquially, the Dalton, We Hardly Knew Ye Act—was one which was designed to not compel but require some modest levels of attendance, not just by the Premier but by opposition leaders as well. Surely if the opposition leader of a caucus of but nine can be here 70%

of the time, another opposition leader could improve his record of being here but 30% of the time.

In view of the fact that the opposition leader who appears here 30% of the time for question period seems to support his backbencher initiative to dock salaries of a government party leader for absence, one would expect that this same party leader would expect the sauce for the goose to be sauce for the gander, Dalton.

We're not intimidated by the bill. We welcome the opportunity. I question why people would want to obstruct or be dilatory around it. Quite frankly, New Democrats are interested in amendments to the legislation that would provide a more revealing exposure of particularly those out-of-country expenditures on high-priced American political consultants who seem to have become the passion and the rage and about which I'm confident taxpayers would be clearly indignant.

As well, we should contemplate the broader spending, the literally billions and billions of dollars that this government, especially as it enters a pre-election period, persists in spending on its glossy ads and propaganda. Why don't we turn this into a real bit of revelation and exposure?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion that following question period the House move into committee of the whole so that we can sever section 25, the pension portions, from Bill 198.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In view of the Romanow report today and in view of what I am sure is the confidence of all of us in the report by Roy Romanow and his support for public health care, I'm seeking unanimous consent to wear the "RomaNOW" buttons that are available to all members of this Legislature.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I will pass to you a press release which was put out by the Ministry of Finance earlier today. It deals with the pension amendments in Bill 98. The headline of the press release reads, "Pension Amendments in Bill 198 Will Never Be Proclaimed." I ask you, Mr Speaker, to look at this in two contexts: first, does this presuppose that the bill will be passed? They have time-allocated the legislation. They have not provided for third reading debate. They have not provided for committee hearings.

The other thing I would ask you to look at is whether or not this bill is in order if in fact the government says it will never be proclaimed. Why would we be debating such legislation if it will never be proclaimed, if it will never become law? Why would this House be called

upon to pass a law that the government itself is saying will never be proclaimed?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Not to belabour the point too long, I think there is some confusion with respect to presupposing what this House will do through advertising and public advertising and having an opinion. The government is able and willing to have opinions that they can express through press releases and in this Legislature. They may offer those opinions at any time, at any point they like.

I think the confusion for the opposition House leader is that that doesn't impinge on the fact of our having an opinion, but if we go forward and start advertising certain things about this Legislature, we can't be in contempt of the House and presuppose what the Legislature will do. Every day in this House this government offers opinions on bills before this House. If that is found to be in contempt, it would become very difficult to be able to offer up any opinion or answer any question.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know that proclamation is done by order in council; the cabinet doesn't have anything to do with the House. That has happened in other circumstances.

The government House leader is quite right with regard to the advertising. It is an opinion about what may happen. They didn't go out and spend money in that regard. So it is not a point of order, but I thank all the members for their input.

1410

MEMBER'S WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Before we get to question period, I think it's important for this House to know that there is a member in this House who is celebrating a particular milestone. She's celebrating her 45th wedding anniversary. I know her husband, Ken, is watching her at home today. I think that she's making a huge sacrifice in the public interest and I think we should all recognize and congratulate the member for Mississauga South, Mrs Marland.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for that and wish Ken and Margaret all the best. Might I quickly add that it's all of our spouses who give up a tremendous amount so that we can be here. To all of them, we appreciate all the hard work they do on our behalf when we're down here. They all deserve credit.

Congratulations to Margaret and Ken.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question today is for the Minister of Finance. We learn from a press release issued just a few moments ago with the headline "Pension Amendments in Bill 198 Will Never Be Proclaimed" that the government has relented on the opposition position and the position of most knowledgeable people that the bill they have before the House strips pension rights dramatically from pensioners.

I would like to ask the minister, however, why the unanimous consent that we just sought to meaningfully strip away these provisions from the risk of future proclamation—why you voted against that, and why, if a press release and an expression about proclamations is only an opinion, as your government House leader just said, we can trust you not to proclaim these at a later date?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The answer to that question is very simple: the Premier has given an unequivocal commitment.

Mr Smitherman: Well, we know from our vast experience in this House that the Premier of Ontario has never changed his mind.

Madam Minister, I will in this supplementary provide you with an opportunity to use just a little bit more of your time to expand on this issue of trust. Let's just review the record. When we raised this issue last week in the Legislature, we highlighted the fact that your consultation process, which you were so proud in defending at that time, was fatally flawed in that several of the things that were contained in the legislation were not contemplated in the consultation document. So I ask you to stand in your place today and tell us what it is, beyond pride, that allows you to take the position to say on the one hand that your legislation will never be proclaimed but on the other hand that you insist on its passage with flawed portions intact. Explain that away, and use the word "never" to give us some confidence that your intentions are honourable.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, if the honourable member would like to explain to this House the Liberals' policy on a whole range of issues—one day they were for a hotel tax; today they're not for a hotel tax. One day they're for giving school boards taxing authority; the next day they're not for giving school boards taxing authority. One day they support hydro deregulation; the next day they don't.

What's important here is this government's clear commitment that we are not proceeding with these amendments. We are going to be having a group of experts representing with consultation with the stakeholders to ensure that further consultation will take place. Only after such consultations occur and only if it's necessary to make legislative amendments will any changes be introduced in a new bill, which would be fully debated in the

House. I think, in order to ensure that pensioners have been heard, in order to ensure that they know their—

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

Mr Smitherman: We're left with the curious situation where the minister of the crown says, "We're not proceeding with them; we're only going to ask the Legislature to pass them next week." If it's lost on members on that side, then perhaps that speaks a lot about their comprehension.

Madam Minister, I would like to ask you just one more time to stand in your place and explain why, on the one hand, you're admitting that the sections require review and will therefore never be proclaimed, but that you insist that they continue to be part of your budget bill and that they be passed. Explain that away.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I can understand why the Liberal Party doesn't want to support Bill 198: because it outlines further tax cuts for individuals and small business; it outlines protections for investors, those with mutual funds, for example, in this province; it outlines protections for those who pay for auto insurance. All of those are in the legislation.

But what is important here is that the pensioners who have been concerned that those issues are adequately dealt with are heard and that we can then, if legislation is required based on the expert opinion we get—if there needs to be legislation, there will be a fully debatable bill in the House. You have a clear commitment on that. We're going to be writing to all of the stakeholders to make sure they understand that so that they are clear that they will have an opportunity to ensure that inappropriate steps are not being taken by any member of this House.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Today the Ontario Liberal Party was very pleased to be recipients of the Romanow report on the future of health care. Two weeks ago, you went ahead with the Alberta model of two-tier health care, the "Pay your way to the front of the line" model, when you released the request for proposals for private MRIs and CTs. This morning Roy Romanow clearly identified this as a clear violation of the Canada Health Act because people will buy their way to the front of the line.

Minister, based on the Romanow report today, will you now withdraw your request for proposals for private MRIs and CTs?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, we have put in a lot of safeguards to ensure that there is no queue-jumping. This is a universally accessible, publicly funded, "Use your OHIP card, not your Visa card, for medically necessary services" kind of service that is going to do wonders to increase the accessibility that Ontarians want for their diagnostic services. We're for accessibility. We're for the patient. We're for

making sure that patients have earlier access to diagnostic tools and tests, either at the hospital or through stand-alone clinics. A piece of legislation, the Independent Health Facilities Act, which was in fact proposed by a previous Liberal government, now has in place over 1,000 independent health facilities. This is part of our accessibility, it is part of a health care system that can work, and we are fully supportive of it.

Mrs Pupatello: That's exactly what they said in Alberta, and what the Romanow report said today is that they are in clear violation of the Canada Health Act. That is a violation.

This report has an unprecedented level of citizen participation, and it's solidly built on Canadian values. The Canadians are the ones who told the commission they value a universal health care system where access is based on need, not the ability to pay.

Two weeks ago, you went ahead with that same Alberta model for your two-tier private MRIs and CTs. You admitted publicly that people would be able to pay cash. People will be able to jump the queue and get to the front of the line because of their ability to pay.

Minister, you are not to be believed today in the House based on what you have already said and what you are on record as having said. I ask you again, based on the Romanow report today, will you withdraw the request for proposals for private MRIs and CTs in Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: No, I will not. We, in this government, are for greater accessibility to universally accessible, publicly funded health care. We will not be drawn into the member's accusations and her party's accusations, which in fact are not true. The fact of the matter is that we are perfectly within the Canada Health Act. We ensure that medically necessary services are found universally accessible, without further pay, within the stand-alone clinics in the same fashion as they are found in our publicly funded hospitals.

I'd like to quote another Albertan for the honourable member. This is what another Albertan said today:

"I think" these facilities "play an important role in terms of providing advanced diagnostic services. My view has been that if clinics are providing medically necessary services, they should be covered by the Canada Health Act." Who said that? The Liberal federal health minister, Anne McLellan. I agree with her. I don't agree with Dalton McGuinty.

1420

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, I'll tell you what the Ontario Liberal Party believes. It's what Ontarians believe and it's what Canadians believe. We are opposed to your scheme for two-tier private MRIs and CTs in Ontario.

Based on Romanow's report released today, the Alberta model is in clear violation of the Canada Health Act. We are telling you today that here too in Ontario, based on your scheme—and you're not called Two-Tier Tony for nothing. The point is, people will be able to move to the front of the line based on your model. We ask you again, based on what the Romanow report said today, as a violation of the Canada Health Act, will you

withdraw your request for proposals for private MRIs and CTs in Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: If sticks and stones can break my bones, at least I'll have accessibility to an MRI under our plan.

I want to know from the representative of the Liberal Party of Ontario, what have you got against greater accessibility to diagnostic services? What have you got against earlier accessibility to diagnostic services, perfectly accessible, universally accessible within the Canada Health Act? Use your OHIP card. That's what this party stands for on this side of the House. That's what this government stands for. We are proud to be part of a government that is going to increase accessibility using the creativity of Ontarians to do so. We are on the side of accessibility. What side are you on?

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. I would say, yes, the Minister of Health has a fair salary and he probably can, under his system, buy access. We're worried about all the other people across Ontario who don't have that salary.

Today Roy Romanow provided us with a blueprint to improve and sustain medicare for our children and our children's children. Will your government immediately endorse the Romanow report and begin implementing that report, Deputy Premier?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll refer that to the Minister of Health.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm sorry, Mr Speaker. I was a bit distracted. Could he repeat the question?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): What we'll do is maybe stop the clock for that question.

Mr Hampton: To repeat again, Mr Romanow has provided us with a blueprint not only to improve medicare but to sustain medicare for our children and our children's children. Does the Conservative government of Ontario commit today to endorsing that report and to begin implementing that report immediately?

Hon Mr Clement: I can certainly congratulate those aspects of the report, and in fact all reports that have been submitted to Canadians over the previous months and years, that encourage innovation to enhance a universally accessible and sustainable health care system. The Premier and I and the rest of this caucus endorse those aspects of the report that encourage innovation because there is a need to innovate.

We are also encouraged by Commissioner Romanow's identification of the fact that this is a partnership between provincial and territorial governments and the federal government. Commissioner Romanow has made it absolutely clear that the federal government has to step up to the plate. They are part of the solution. We cannot have innovation and successful sustainability and accessibility in our health care system without the federal govern-

ment's participation. We look forward to working with the federal government in that regard.

Mr Hampton: Mr Romanow is very clear that his vision for medicare is a public vision for medicare, a not-for-profit vision for medicare. He invited those people who promote private-public partnerships, who promote private delivery, who promote profit-driven health care, to present their arguments. He says in the report that he rejects them, that there is no evidence. Do you accept the conclusions of the Romanow commission and are you prepared to commit to a publicly funded, publicly administered, not-for-profit system of medicare?

Hon Mr Clement: I think the honourable member, with the greatest of respect, is going to a conclusion that is not what Commissioner Romanow does. He says that any conclusions based on the appropriate delivery of publicly funded health care have to be evidence based.

On this side of the House we're not afraid of that. We in fact think it's important to have evidence-based conclusions and accountability in our publicly funded health care system. There is absolutely a case to be made that there are publicly funded services that should be publicly funded, and there obviously should be publicly delivered services that are publicly delivered, as well as privately delivered services that are publicly funded and universally accessible. That has been part of our health care system since there has been a health care system.

Your doctor is a private deliverer of publicly funded services. The nursing home operator as often as not is a private-sector deliverer of publicly funded services. We are not afraid of that on this side of the House. We want to make sure that whatever is delivered is accessible and sustainable, not only now but for future generations. That's what this side of the House is all about and we will continue along that path.

Mr Hampton: Minister, Mr Romanow cannot be clearer, he cannot be any more conclusive when he says that the future of medicare is publicly funded, publicly administered and not for profit. Already, the first day, you're looking for a way out.

New Democrats are clear. It is now time for the Romanow report: Roma-now, not Roma-maybe, as the Liberals would have it, or Roma-find-an-excuse. Are you prepared to reverse the private deliveries you've already instituted? Are you prepared to reverse the private cancer clinics? Are you prepared to sign on to the Romanow commission and support a publicly funded, publicly administered, not-for-profit health care system for the people of Ontario and the people of Canada—yes or no?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm holding in my hands right now a list of every single independent health facility that has been approved as part of the publicly funded system in Ontario since Liberal governments, NDP governments and under PC governments—the list goes on for page and page and page—delivering services, universally accessible through your OHIP card to patients across Ontario for diagnostics, for blood tests, for ultrasounds, for lab work. I ask the honourable member, is he prepared to close these down and ruin accessibility for Ontarians

because of his ideological point of view? I certainly am not.

The Speaker: New question? The leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Mr Romanow went out of his way: he said to all those people who promote private-public partnerships that you and the Liberals like so much, he said to all those people who promote profit-driven delivery, he said to all those people who promote private, profit-driven clinics, "Bring the evidence," and at the end of it, and you heard him very clearly today, he said, "It is not cost-effective, it is not efficient and it is less equitable, less fair than a publicly funded, publicly administered system of non-profit medicare."

That's the question, Minister. You can duck, you can dodge and you can look for the weasel words. He rejects for-profit, private health care. Are you prepared to do the same thing?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer to his question is no. I'd like him to answer my question. I have in my hands X-ray, ultrasound, cardiac, radiology, in St Thomas, Scarborough, Elliot Lake, Richmond Hill, Hamilton, Mississauga, Newmarket, Kanata, Agincourt, Pembroke, Hamilton, Kitchener. Are you prepared to close these integral parts of a universally accessible, publicly funded health care system that delivers quality health care to our citizens?

If you are true to your words, you are condemning over 1,000 independent health facilities that are part of accessibility in the province of Ontario because of your ideological agenda. I say to you, shame to you. That is not what this side of the House is all about. We are for accessibility. We are for quality. We are for better health care for Ontarians and we will fight for that as long as we have the will to fight.

1430

Mr Hampton: Minister, the Provincial Auditor looked at your private health care clinic at Sunnybrook hospital, and his conclusion was that it costs \$500 more per patient in terms of private delivery. Your brethren Conservative government in Manitoba set up a private eye clinic. The NDP government in Manitoba brought it back under public, not-for-profit delivery, reduced the costs by \$300 per patient, and they were able to accommodate more patients.

This is about taking the profit out of health care. This is about ensuring that we have the most cost-effective, most efficient, and the fairest delivery of and the fairest access to health care. That is what Mr Romanow and his commission are calling for. Are you prepared to endorse that, or are you still going to go about there promoting private, for-profit delivery? Whose side are you on: the private companies that want to make money off our health care system and then make large financial contributions to the Conservative Party—the Dynacares, the Comcares, the Extencicare—or are you in favour of not-for-profit, publicly funded, publicly administered medicare?

Hon Mr Clement: One of the most poignant things that Commissioner Romanow said today is that a properly functioning and successful health care system has to go beyond ideology, has to go beyond the right-wing and the left-wing shibboleths that have marred the ability of governments to find the solutions. He said that this is not about left-wing ideology, this is not about right-wing ideology; this is about what works for the betterment of health care for Canadians from coast to coast.

In that sense, we are for what works. We are for better health care. We are for better accessibility. We are for a system that has the courage to be creative within a universally accessible, publicly funded system. We have the courage. The honourable member should get beyond his left-wing politics and have the courage as well.

PENSION PLANS

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I want to return to the Minister of Finance and I want to give her two more opportunities to explain the unexplainable. Explain to members of this House why it is necessary to come and vote in favour of a piece of legislation when you have admitted that one very significant section of it is flawed to the point where you make a promise, on paper, that you will not proclaim it.

You've operated under the cover of darkness before. You did it with your consultation paper and you certainly did it when you were one of the four happy adherents to the \$10-million payoff to sports teams in Ontario. I want to give you an opportunity to stand in your place today and tell us whether it's embarrassment or your wounded pride that prevents you from doing the right thing, which is to sever the pension portions from Bill 198. Do it today.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Only the honourable member would think that a public consultation document, released publicly, is secret, but we'll leave that for the viewers to decide.

Again, Bill 198 contains significant measures for tax cuts for individuals, for protection for auto insurance consumers, for investors, for new powers for municipalities to have tax incentive zones and opportunity bonds, so it's very important legislation. But what is very clear, as we've said in this House on more than one occasion—as the Premier has said, as I have said—for all intents and purposes these particular amendments dealing with the pension issues are null and void. What we are doing is going to ensure, through an expert committee in consultation with all stakeholders, that pensioners are assured that their pensions are safe, that there is nothing untoward that they need to be concerned about.

Mr Smitherman: They do have something to be concerned about when you use the phrase "for all intents and purposes," because it makes my point rather well. Yes, Bill 198 is a significant bill even without the pensions. So take them out and we'll have an opportunity to vote up or down on it. But you're presenting before this Legislature a piece of legislation that includes significant sections

that, if proclaimed—and there is no protection against proclamation except your word and the word of your government expressed in a press release that the government House leader just referred to as an opinion. And then you use the phrase “for all intents and purposes.”

Madam Minister, explain to this Legislature why you think it’s such a difficult task—it would take about 10 minutes—to sever the pension sections of Bill 198 from this legislation so that when we vote in favour or against it we know exactly what we’re voting for.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The Liberals are quite happy to vote against tax cuts for individuals. They’re quite happy to vote against tax breaks for people who are modest-income Ontarians. So their concern about what they’re voting for is not something I think taxpayers would take seriously.

But what is important here—he can argue procedural issues all he wants today, but for those who have pensions, for those who are concerned about their pensions, what is important is that the Premier has indicated unequivocally, in the Legislature on Tuesday, in a written statement today, that the pension provisions in the budget bill will not be proclaimed. They are not going forward, and that, I think, is an important statement. I can read it again. If he’d like to ask me, I’d be very pleased to do it again for him, but I think we’ve been very clear about our commitment.

MEMBERS’ EXPENSES

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. You’re quite aware that each member, on an annual basis, publishes their global budget and it’s reviewed by the media and others. You raised a very important issue today and I applaud you for the action you’ve taken today.

This action, in my view, has been of interest over the past several months, indeed over the last number of years, and has been taken on rather aggressively. I know one of the media outlets captioned Mrs Papatello’s action as being the Liberal attack dog. I wouldn’t go that far, of course. During that same period of time, one reporter went on to say that she was more of a man than Dalton McGuinty. I think that’s a bit aggressive. However, when asked on October 4, Dalton McGuinty said that what’s good for the goose is good for the gander. When referring to our ministers, clearly it would indicate by that—

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

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I got the gist of what the member was getting at.

It might be advisable for us to review a few things here. First of all, in a media scrum on October 4, 2002, Dalton McGuinty said, “Under the rules we play by today, we get three and a half million dollars, it says here, folks; there’s your three and a half million dollars. Put it all into supper if you want, all into salary if you want, put it all into polls, put it all into expensive

luggage.” I believe the public needs to know how much of this is going to expensive luggage. Dalton McGuinty said that.

In the same media scrum on October 4, Dalton McGuinty said, “The issue is, who’s setting the standards and what might those standards be? I think the ball is clearly in the court of Premier Ernie Eves and he’s gonna have to tell us where he stands in respect to the standards to which he holds his ministers.”

Speaker, we’ve lobbed the ball back over the net into their court; it’s up to them. I expect them to support it at second and third reading without debate.

Mr O’Toole: Thank you very much for that, Minister. In fact, on reflection, this may explain why Dalton hasn’t been here for the last couple of weeks. Maybe he’s putting together some notes to explain, as I understand—

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat. Don’t start that. Don’t start that stuff, please. You know you don’t need to get up and do those crazy things like that. There’s no need for it.

Mr O’Toole: Well, I only knew that by referring to Hansard.

I read one of the reports that indicated the ministers are responsible and accountable, and I agree with that. I don’t think there’s a person here who would disagree with that. On a closer question, quite honestly, Mr McGuinty was trying to explain his generalized expenses, including such things as travelling, meeting with people and, in a general sense, politicking. In fact, he said it wasn’t a vacation, so in that declaration it’s clear it wasn’t a vacation.

What I’m trying to find out through the minister here is—

The Speaker: I’m afraid your time is up.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Speaker, I can anticipate that question as well.

I’ll refer again to the same media scrum. The question to Mr McGuinty was, “Would you also release the expenses of all your staff members?” McGuinty said, “Why would I do that?” The next question was, “Why not your staff?” He then said, “Because it’s not up to my staff to, uh...” And then they said, “We’re talking tax dollars.” He said, “Yeah, but again, you know, what we’ve got is a set of rules here that says the Liberal caucus is entitled to about three and a half million dollars and it’s up to us to decide how we’re going to spend those three and a half million dollars.”

There needs to be clarity and accountability. This is what this bill is all about.

1440

MINISTER’S EXPENSES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is to the Deputy Premier. I’m going to continue along the same lines as my honourable colleague across and talk about accountability.

Deputy Premier, almost two months ago, my colleague Sandra Papatello revealed the rich lifestyle the

member from Burlington was leading at taxpayers' expense. He spent over \$100,000 of taxpayers' money on expensive steakhouses, expensive hotels, in-room movies, valet parking and liquor. When we revealed Cam Jackson's willingness to spend taxpayers' money like it grew on trees, he paid some back. But, at least as of November 13, not all of the inappropriate expenses were paid back.

Ernie Eves promised a full investigation and review of these expenses. He promised that Cam Jackson would have to pay Ontario taxpayers back. It has been two months. Can you tell me when this review was completed, who did it and how much Cam Jackson was ordered to pay back?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to refer that to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): The honourable member points out the reason why we've tabled this bill today. The reason is because we need accountability right across the House. The problem has been that for years, in fact any time before this period of time, the members of the opposition have not been accountable in terms of what they spend. Clearly, they think they can spend on all kinds of very strange things. So what we're trying to do right now is bring accountability.

Our rules within this bill, if it's passed, are such that all expenses from 1995 to present are going to be forwarded to the Integrity Commissioner. That's all expenses: ours and your leader's. I don't know how much more accountability you want than that. We want to be clear and accountable to the public.

It's about time you guys were brought to the table; you haven't been. It's so easy to be holier than thou when you don't think that somehow you're accountable. I have news for you: you're going to be.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Minister, maybe the reason you refuse to answer my question about the honourable member from Burlington is because there is no review. I have here a copy of the Burlington Post, dated November 13. I'll tell you what Cam Jackson said to the Burlington Post: "There is no investigation. The Premier's office indicated there is no investigation."

So who are we to believe, Honourable Minister, Cam Jackson or Ernie Eves? The way things are going, the public doesn't trust either one of them.

Deputy Premier, I've written a letter to the Premier. I've asked the government to provide the names of the people doing the investigation, their terms of reference, the guidelines they are using to determine which expenses are appropriate and which are not and the date by which their investigation is to be completed. Your government has not responded.

Tell the House right now, is there a review or not? If there is, who's doing it, when is it due and when will you finally stand up for the taxpayers of Burlington and the

rest of Ontario and demand that Cam Jackson pay those bills back?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, I will tell you this: the member whom she's referring to has always been an honourable member. He has been so in this House for many, many years. I'm very pleased to say that.

We have a mammoth review we're going to be doing, if you've been listening at all. That's from 1995 to the present, and that's everybody. I don't know how much less you want than everybody. You have to listen to this and read what's there.

The only problem you folks have right now is that you've never been accountable at all. This is going to change.

It's interesting enough that Dalton McGuinty, on October 4—again, it's an infamous day in Dalton McGuinty's life, I guess—was saying he's prepared to release his personal expenses, and he gives a summary. We want to know the details. We want the details given to the Integrity Commissioner—all of them, not his perception of what should be released.

With all due respect, I trust the Integrity Commissioner. He has a huge amount of integrity. I'd rather trust his opinion of what's relevant than Dalton McGuinty's.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. As you well know, sports and recreation are important contributors to our economy and our way of life, accounting for 1.1% and 1.3% of Ontario's economic development and contributing immeasurably to the health and social well-being of our population.

A study by the Canadian Medical Association reports that sport and recreation promotion leads directly to financial savings in the cost of health care. They estimate that for every 10% increase in physical activity in our population, health expenditures would go down by \$51 million. This is clearly something we want to encourage and support. We want to ensure that all Ontarians are encouraged to increase their level of physical activity.

Will the minister inform the House what he is doing, as the minister overseeing recreation, to see that low-income children and youth across Ontario have opportunities to participate in sports and recreation?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I want to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for his question. Our government is indeed committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of income level, but particularly those from lower-income families, as well as, I might add, children with disabilities, have access to sports activities and other physical activities.

Earlier today, I was pleased to be in Richmond Hill, at the YMCA Early Years Centre, to announce a new initiative of my ministry called the community sport opportunity fund. Through that fund, we are committing an additional \$1.25 million to provide more opportunities

for children from lower-income families as well as children with disabilities to participate in sports activities and other physical activities.

We believe that everyone in this province, regardless of economic status, should have the opportunity for a good, healthy start in life. We encourage people to take advantage of this program.

Mr Arnott: It's reassuring to know that the government is committed to making physical activity opportunities more accessible to low-income children and young families.

My supplementary question to the minister is this: what is the minister doing to develop new recreation projects aimed at increasing broad-based participation in recreation, sports and physical activity in a safe environment?

Hon Mr Klees: I'm pleased to add to this. I was also at the same time pleased to announce our ongoing investment in my ministry's recreational development fund. The amount of \$2.1 million has been added to that program. The recreational development fund is designed to invest in initiatives that promote involvement in recreation and sport and physical activities by all Ontarians, regardless of age or ability, including children, youth and older citizens of the province. This fund also supports opportunities for sport and recreation safety initiatives at the community level, such as those that facilitate training and recruitment of community coaches, leaders and volunteers.

We believe that this program will do a great deal toward advancing physical education and physical activities within the province. We encourage municipalities and community groups to take advantage and make their applications to participate in this program.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Today Roy Romanow said this of for-profit health funding approaches: "There is no evidence their adoption would produce a more efficient, affordable or effective system."

You yourself promised that private MRI clinics would only be allowed here if private firms could show that they could provide better, cheaper, faster and safer treatment. Not one shred of evidence has been presented to prove this, yet you're marching forward with your scheme of for-profit MRI clinics here in Ontario.

Minister, will you do the right thing? Cancel your scheme of for-profit MRI clinics and fund these services in the public system.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member is mixing apples and oranges, with the greatest of respect.

Roy Romanow today was very passionate about the need to protect a universally accessible, publicly funded system for health services and medical services. We on this side of the House could only agree with him in that regard. We treasure our health care system in this prov-

ince, in this country. We are working with him and with the federal government and with anyone else—providers and stakeholders and citizens in Ontario—who wishes to ensure its accessibility and sustainability in the future. That is about a universally accessible, publicly funded system. Within that system, there is a variety of means available to us to deliver universally accessible, publicly funded services. There always has been, and there always will be.

Beware the politician who says it has to be 100% one way or 100% the other way. That is what the honourable member is suggesting. On this side of the House we want what works, and that is a judicious mix of public and private delivery to ensure the most accessible and best-quality care.

1450

Ms Martel: Minister, I know you don't like to hear this, but Mr Romanow was very clear. There was no evidence presented to him over 18 months that for-profit health care produces a more efficient, effective or better system—no evidence presented at all. You yourself have failed completely to provide a single shred of evidence to show that your for-profit MRI clinics are going to be better, safer, faster or more effective. Instead of driving forward with for-profit MRI clinics, you should be funding these important health care services in the public system.

Minister, will you do the right thing: stop your for-profit scheme for private MRIs and fund these services in the public system?

Hon Mr Clement: It's clear that we want to be evidence-based. That is what Commissioner Romanow has urged provinces and territories and the federal government. He made an impassioned plea for a single-payer system, which is the system of medicare in the province of Ontario and the Dominion of Canada. We support maintaining the single payer. But when it comes to the delivery of those services, he is correct when he says it has to be evidence-based.

I encourage the honourable member, her caucus and her party not to jump to conclusions, also to be evidence-based, also to look at the facts, also to make sure we are ensuring better delivery of services universally accessible to the people of Ontario. That's what we are doing on this side of the House, and we will continue to do so.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. More than a month ago, with much fanfare, you announced \$64 million province-wide to help developmentally disabled adults. The southwest region was allocated \$1.2 million for direct care.

Minister, the southwest region has 10 counties. The waiting lists for care are staggering. Our local CSCN only serves five of those counties. There are 318 people on their waiting list. There are 74 who have the highest

and most severe needs, and they're on what's called the "Oh, my God" list. The \$1.2 million does not even scratch the surface. CSCN tells me that the 74 neediest individuals require \$6.2 million for care, and that is for only half of the southwest region.

Chelsea Hache and her family have been pleading with your ministry for help. Twice, I've sent you a proposal for funding and it collects dust on your desk. Her family is burnt out and exhausted from years of futile advocacy. Minister, how do you justify leaving people like the Haches to fend for themselves?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): To my colleague across the way, the whole reason he's bringing this up is because our government has been so diligent in finding ways to invest money and to assist those who are developmentally disabled and their families. We made a multi-year announcement in the budget year 2002. It included \$104 million, growing to \$197 million annually, to enhance services in multi-pronged services. We did foundation service funding for those who are leaving high school for a more independent lifestyle. We've provided, in the \$67 million I announced just a few weeks ago, money for revitalizing services so that they can retain staff who will provide services to those who are in homes, and renewed funding and brand new funding for new capitals, for new homes—three different areas of funding in a very large piece of \$67 million to serve just the kind of people this gentleman is referring to.

Mr Peters: Minister, I truly believe you don't have any clue of the magnitude of this problem, and I would urge you to come and visit the southwest CSCN to find out exactly and hear first hand how troubling this situation really is. I believe that the way this government and your ministry brushes aside and fails to meet the needs of those with the most severe physical and developmental disabilities is one of this province's worst-kept and dirtiest secrets.

I specifically asked your office for the following information, and I am asking you to please table this information for this Legislature. What are the allocations for every region across this province? How are the allocations divided for capital, support services and agency revitalization? How many people are on each region's waiting list for service, and what are those regions' populations?

If you're so confident that you are caring for the needs of society's most vulnerable, then I challenge you to table that information today. Will you do that? Will you let this Legislature know exactly how many families in this province are waiting for care? Please table that information, Minister.

Hon Mrs Elliott: Let's be very clear. The investment that this government makes to serve the families of the disabled in this province is substantial: over \$1 billion. We just kept a promise to the families and to those who are developmentally disabled in the province of Ontario by announcing the second stage—67 million additional new dollars for services for new homes. Our commitment

to serve those who are developmentally disabled in Ontario is unequivocal.

How do we decide how that money is going to be distributed? We decide according to the needs that are presented to us from all across the province, based on our best abilities to respond. We do it based on the response that is needed and requested by each individual community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question today is for the hard-working Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. The minister works very hard for his constituents and all Ontarians.

It is my understanding that exports of goods and services bring over \$190 billion into this province's economy. Exports account for over 50% of Ontario's economy and support more than 1.6 million jobs.

That said, Asia is Ontario's third-largest trading partner. Minister, I understand that you have recently returned from a very important trade mission to China. Can you please advise this House about some details of what you did on this trip?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I thank the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for the question.

Ontario is an exporting jurisdiction, and we've come a long way since the dark days of 1985 to 1995. Ontario's economy is strong. We're leading the Canadian economy, and we are an exporter. In fact, more than 50% of Ontario's economy is exported, creating 1.6 million jobs here.

One of our major trading partners, and a great future trading partner of course, is China. There's huge interest and activity by Ontario companies in China; in fact, there are more than 400 Canadian companies with established offices in China to do business. Ontario exports to China were valued at \$659 million in 2001 and are growing. So is investment by China in Ontario, and we have increasing evidence of that as we go forward.

What we have done now is we have established the Ontario Marketing Centre in Shanghai, which has been up and running since February 2002.

Mr Gill: Excellent. There's more to be done. Thank you, Minister.

It is clear that our government is committed to promoting Ontario's strengths around the world. Our government is engaged in many initiatives to grow Ontario's economy through enhanced trading relationships with countries and regions all over the world.

I also understand that on your way back from China, you went to San Diego, USA, for a conference called CoreNet. Can you please tell this House what this conference was all about and why you attended?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank the member. CoreNet is the premier conference in North America for corporate real estate and site location. More than 2,500 decision-makers were in San Diego. I'm pleased to inform the

House that they're going to be in Toronto in May; from May 3 to May 7, I believe. We expect to have even more—3,000 or more of these folks who make decisions about where corporations are going to locate, where plants are going to be located, where jobs are going to be created in North America.

I had the privilege of hosting two Ontario events, both very successful, on November 18 and 19 in San Diego, with these decision-makers. I'm proud to tell you that they're all looking forward to coming to Toronto, Ontario, Canada, next May.

1500

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. He seems to be up there with the media, Speaker. Could we stop the clock until he comes down?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Maybe we could stop the clock and the minister could—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: My question is to the Chair of Management Board, and it relates once again to the OHIP building. Minister, as I know you believe, this is not in any way, shape or form a partisan issue. It deals with the health and welfare of the employees we have in that building and it deals with the people who utilize the building and have over the last number of years.

Minister, there is a deep concern that even though you have agreed to some air quality testing, that process has happened before on a number of different occasions. What the workers are looking for inside the building and what the GeoCor report has clearly indicated is that what's necessary is that a consulting firm be given access to the building so that drill wells, in effect, can be set up both inside the building and inside the foundation of the building to find out once and for all whether or not the coal tar that is closely associated with the building, and may indeed be under the building, is allowing toxins to enter and have some effect on the people who work there and the people who utilize the building.

Minister, you know that there's a much higher incidence of cancer rates, higher incidence of pulmonary diseases, higher incidences of immune system deficiencies that people suffer from etc.

Everybody wants to get to the bottom of this. Why don't you agree to have—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): The member will note, because we had a brief conversation the other day exactly on this point, that my concern is just like his: for the employees of the province of Ontario.

What I did say to him was this: the union is working with us right now; in fact, they met yesterday. I think it's

important for them to be satisfied in terms of the process going forward and the consultant being chosen. We've agreed, certainly, to work with them, and the solution has to be one that the union and the employees agree to; otherwise it makes no sense.

The actual issue: part of what they're trying to do right now is some more air testing. If there's any indication at all that it's something in the soil, we have to do what we can do to protect these employees. I am not ruling out anything. Whether it's soil testing or air testing, it's important for both the union and our group to work together, the ministries as well, to make sure they're comfortable in what they're doing.

At the end of the day, I want our employees happy with the solution, and for us to come up with that solution so they'll be safe. I don't think there's any other answer here.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, I appreciate what's been done and I think more should be done. The GeoCor report clearly indicates that what has to happen are some more monitoring wells set up both inside and outside the building to deal with the coal tar situation.

What you've agreed to is air quality testing. That's already been done before. We need to take that next step, as this independent engineering report clearly indicates. I just hope that you will work toward that end so that the people who utilize that building and work in the building can have much greater assurances as to their health and safety. Will you give them that commitment here today?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I recall that when that report was released, the particular company indicated not to take too much out of context here because it's very preliminary.

Having said that, it won't matter to me what we need to do, whether it's air testing or drilling. At the end of the day it's important that the committee, which is made up of the union and ourselves, pick the right consultants. We'll follow the consultants' recommendations. Whether it's soil-testing and the remediation of that, we'll do what we can. We'll do what we have to do to make sure our employees are safe. That's our commitment.

I think they're going to go through the consultant to have some recommendation. I'm not an expert on this and I know you're not as well, so we have to abide by whatever the consultant's recommendation is, and that consultant, as I said, is being chosen in co-operation with the union and also the ministries. I think at the end of the day we'll have a reasoned recommendation that will protect our employees, and we'll do what we can to protect them, obviously.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I direct my question to the Minister of Citizenship, the Honourable Carl DeFaria, the dynamo from Mississauga East. I want to take the opportunity to ask you about some of the most recent outstanding appointments you've made to the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario, created as part of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

The appointment of Brampton Paralympian Jeff Adams as the new chair of the council, Barry McMahon as the vice-chair, as well as the eight additional members will make a significant contribution to our government's commitment to create a barrier-free Ontario.

There are many people with disabilities in my riding who are watching the development of the ODA with great interest. Minister, could you tell me about the council and how it will help improve the lives of Ontario's 1.9 million people with disabilities?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I welcome the opportunity to tell the Legislature about the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario.

The council's role is to provide me with advice related to the implementation of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The council advises and reports to me on issues such as the accessibility of government services, as well as those services funded by government, the accessibility for people with disabilities to employment opportunities and other accessibility-related issues as they arise.

Because accessibility is a shared responsibility, the council will assist the government in engaging the private sector in partnership to develop initiatives and inclusive programs and services for people with disabilities.

Mr Johnson: I thank the minister for the response. One of the reasons I'm interested is that earlier this week a member of the opposition talked about a form that he said would make it very difficult for ODSP recipients. I just wanted to make sure this council will debunk that kind of information.

Minister, as you mentioned, this council will provide advice on issues that affect people with disabilities. In fact, I was pleased to hear that Kathryn Bremner, who's been a long-time community leader and advocate for people with disabilities in both my riding and our colleague's riding of Whitby-Ajax, has been appointed as one of the eight new members of the council. Further, Duncan Read, an existing council member, is also active in disability issues in the Ajax area as a judge and former president of the Ontario March of Dimes.

Can you please tell us more about other accessibility advisory council members and of course any upcoming meetings?

Hon Mr DeFaria: With respect to our government's commitment to achieving an accessible Ontario, I have appointed a group of exceptional individuals to supplement our existing high-calibre members of the council, bringing the full complement to 12 members.

Along with our existing members, Jeff Adams, our newly appointed chair, and Barry McMahon, our newly appointed vice-chair, we have Duncan Read and Dean La Bute. Last month's appointments also include Kathryn Bremner of Whitby, Valerie Baker of Waterloo, Barbara Fowke of Kitchener, Uzma Khan of Mississauga, Tracy MacCharles of Pickering and Kristin Snoddon, Karen Liberman and André Bélanger of Toronto.

I'm also pleased to report that we are having our first full meeting today and tomorrow. I know their advice

will be important to moving forward our government's commitment to achieving an accessible Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Finance. You announced today that never are you going to proclaim the legislation that gives employers the right to strip surpluses out of pensions. Aside from that issue is a bigger issue. As you know, in 1991 the NDP government passed a regulation that basically sets up the regime we've got today that prevents employers from being able to strip surpluses from pensions and gives employees access to those surpluses.

My question to you is very simply this: that regulation comes due December 31 this year. Are you going to re-proclaim the NDP regulation that was put in place in 1991 and leave the system as status quo?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): We will continue to extend that regulation, as has been the practice.

Mr Bisson: You are agreeing you are going to be extending the regulation. We take that as good news.

The second part of my question is simply this: if you're taking the step today to issue this press release that basically says measures in Bill 198 dealing with pension issues will never be proclaimed even if the bill is passed by legislation, why don't you take the next step, which is to take this completely out of the legislation itself?

The precedent for doing that has already occurred on two occasions in this Legislature, in Bill 47 and Bill 72. Your government moved finance bills into committee of the whole to do exactly that. I'm putting to you that we can do that lickety-split. We will give you unanimous consent and time-allocate the time in committee of the whole to remove this out of legislation. Will you do so?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the suggestion from the honourable member, but we've been very clear. We think this will be an appropriate way to move forward to make sure there's the expert committee and the consultation. We're not proceeding with these amendments.

1510

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, will you stop the untreated, highly toxic sludge from the Domtar tank in Sydney, Nova Scotia, from being land-filled here in Ontario?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. The situation is very difficult. It's a very difficult situation. There are three such particular places in this country that can receive that kind of material: one is in Quebec, one is in Ontario and one is in Alberta. We have set guidelines, very strict, to ensure

that in fact it's going to be pretreated in future, plus it's encased in cement and dealt with in a very environmentally sensitive way.

I say to the member opposite, this is not a new situation. You're the member; you've lived there all your life. You know that this has been operating for a number of years. But with three operations in Canada—we ship ours to Alberta; we ship some to Quebec; we receive some—it would be virtually impossible for me to put a stop order on all of it coming in. But what I can do, and what I have done, is make it environmentally sensitive, harmonize our rules, and you've seen a reduction of 31%.

Ms Di Cocco: Unfortunately, Minister, the experts in Nova Scotia, as well as the people in Nova Scotia I have spoken to, have said that waste should not even leave there, that they should treat it and deal with it there because it makes it even more dangerous to take it out and ship it here to Ontario.

Toxic hazardous waste importation has quadrupled in this province since 1995; it has. The landfill that we have near Brigden, in St Clair township—you know the full-time inspector that you stated was on that site? He's not on that site. He just shows up whenever he feels like it. So we don't even have an on-site inspector. The legacy that we have, because of the expansion that was done in 1997, is incredibly detrimental to that area, long-term.

Minister, I'm asking you again: please stop that waste from coming into Ontario. It does no one any good.

Hon Mr Stockwell: If I could unilaterally stop it—I don't have that power, regardless. It goes through an environmental process that you know about and I know about. I can only say this to you: the Sarnia Observer on November 13, 2002, quoted Phil Whiting, a University of Western Ontario professor of chemical and biochemical engineering. He said that if we deal with this process the way we're dealing with it, "If this is done right this is a pretty darn good solution."

We're seeking a solution. I understand the member opposite has this in her riding. I appreciate your concern and the concern of your residents. I can only go about handling it in the most environmentally sensitive way, considering there are only three sites in this country. We ship our stuff out sometimes; we take some in. I can only tell you what the experts have told me: if it's properly handled, environmentally encased, dealt with and transported properly, it is a safe and effective process that they're using.

PETITIONS

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO SAVINGS OFFICE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I want to introduce five people from the gallery who have been involved in collecting this petition. They hail from Oxford county. They're Brian Brown, Laura Row-

botham, Richard Brown, Dorothy Brown and the ever-incredible Howard Clynick. They've done a lot of work in presenting 1,500 names on this petition, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the following names in petition, request the government of Ontario to review their decision to sell the Province of Ontario Savings banks and halt their intention to sell;

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

"To cancel the decision to sell the Province of Ontario Savings branches, as many account holders are seniors and long-time account holders, among many other very satisfied customers. These banks and staff are a credit to their province."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Could we stop the clock while the government House leader does the orders of business for next week.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, can I also seek consent?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I want to get the attention of the NDP. I'm seeking consent. I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes must be made to ballot lists for private members' public business: Mr Bisson and Mr Prue exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr Bisson assumes ballot item 76 and Mr Prue assumes ballot item 73; and that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 73.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I have a statement of business for the House next week.

Monday afternoon we will resume debate on Bill 213. Monday evening we'll continue debate on Bill 210.

Tuesday afternoon we'll debate Bill 209. Tuesday evening we'll debate Bill 213 again.

Wednesday afternoon we will debate Bill 210. Wednesday evening's business is to be determined.

Thursday morning's private members' business will discuss ballot items 73 standing in the name of Mr Prue and 74 standing in the name of Mr Patten. Thursday

afternoon's debate is still to be determined. Thursday evening's debate is still to be determined.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Continuing on petitions.

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to clean up the abandoned aluminum smelter in Georgina. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads to the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

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

"The Ministry of the Environment should immediately conduct a full environmental assessment and cleanup of the site."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in the petition.

HYDRO RATES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and deals with the Hydro situation.

"Whereas electricity bills have skyrocketed under the Harris-Eves government's flawed electricity plan; and

"Whereas some consumers have signed higher fixed-rate contracts with retailers, without adequate consumer protection; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has failed to address electricity supply shortages in Ontario, forcing the purchase of American power at premium prices, driving up prices still further; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government appointed a board of directors for Hydro One that has been paying themselves extravagant salaries, compensation packages and severances for senior executives; and

"Whereas Hydro One bought 90 municipal utilities, serving about 240,000 people across Ontario, at premium prices and with borrowed funds. These purchases with borrowed funds have increased Ontario's debt burden; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has added additional fees and taxes to local electricity distribution companies. These charges have also been passed along to consumers;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris-Eves government take immediate action to ensure that Ontarians have fair and reasonable prices for the necessary commodity of electricity in Ontario and that the Harris-Eves government and its leader Ernie Eves call a general election on the instability of the energy market so that Ontarians may have a voice on this issue."

HOMELESSNESS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a petition which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario provincial government has totally withdrawn support for the construction of the new social housing project in this province, therefore endangering the lives of the less fortunate and residents who cannot afford paying the high cost of rent; and

"Whereas the Ontario government should recognize that there is a serious shortage of affordable housing in this province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government should recognize that the homeless situation in this province has reached a crisis proportion and that some measures will have to be taken to remedy this situation; and

"Whereas the Ontario government should recognize that the hostel system was not meant to be for permanent housing but is for temporary shelters; and

"Whereas the Ontario government should implement the 1% solution promoted by the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee and restore the Rent Control Act which was taken away by the current government;

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

"All members of the Legislature take actions to end the homeless situation in Ontario with any means that are at the Harris-Eves government's disposition."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

1520

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% over three years, or \$3.02 per diem in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year, effective September 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month after three years; and....

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario will still rank last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan" back "in 1999; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

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

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and that the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least at the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government’s own study.”

I affix my signature. I’m in complete agreement with this petition.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition is about Bill 77. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 77 passed second reading on June 28, 2001;

“Whereas Bill 77, the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act, received committee hearings in November 2001;

“Whereas Bill 77 addresses privacy concerns for those who wish to avoid or delay contact;

“Whereas adoptees are dying from genetic diseases in the absence of their family medical history; and

“Whereas birth mothers were never promised confidentiality;

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

“Immediately call Bill 77, the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act, for third reading and final vote.”

I, of course, will affix my signature to this petition, because I am in full agreement with it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have another petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

“Whereas the daily increase of \$7.02 starting August 1, 2002, for residents in long-term-care facilities is not in keeping with the increases of prior years. This large increase in rates is a severe financial burden to residents and to family caregivers to maintain a loved one in a long-term-care facility and maintain themselves in order not to ask the government for financial assistance;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to repeal this large increase and reduce the rates to a nominal increase as in prior years.”

It’s signed by approximately 400 people from the greater Toronto area. I agree with it and I’ve signed it accordingly. I’m handing it over to Olaniyi.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition reads:

“To the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas the Conservative government’s plan to privatize and deregulate Ontario’s electricity system will lead to higher rates because private owners will sell more power to US customers whose rates are typically 50% higher than Ontario’s; and

“Whereas selling coal plants like Nanticoke to the private sector will lead to more pollution because the private owners will run the plants at full capacity to earn a profit; and

“Whereas electricity deregulation in California has led to sky-high rates and blackouts; and

“Whereas Ontario needs a system of public power that will ensure rate stability, environmental protection and secure access to power;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned call on the government to scrap electricity deregulation and privatization and bring in a system of accountable public power. The first priority for such a public power system must be incentives for energy conservation and green power. Electricity rates and major energy projects must be subject to full public hearings and binding rulings by a public regulator instead of leaving energy rates to private profit.”

I will affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

CHILDREN’S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is shutting down the heart surgery unit at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the closure of this program will restrict the accessibility to life-saving surgery for children in eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas every year CHEO treats 140 cases of seriously ill children close to home; and

“Whereas centralizing children’s heart surgery in Toronto will force patients and their families to travel 400 to 600 kilometres away from home at a traumatic time; and

“Whereas there is a waiting list for cardiac surgery in Toronto but not at CHEO; and

“Whereas the people of eastern Ontario demand accessible, quality health care for their children;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately override the government’s decision to close this life-saving program and ensure that top-quality, accessible health care remains available to every child in eastern Ontario.”

I affix my signature. I’m in complete agreement.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have another petition on adoption disclosure, a little different from the last one, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas in Ontario, adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees, that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

“Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

“Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information; permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person’s amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18; permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children; allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling.”

I will affix my signature to this petition because I support it.

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It’s designed to clean up the abandoned aluminum smelter in Georgina. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

“Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads to the Maskinonge River, feeding into Lake Simcoe;...

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

“The Ministry of the Environment should immediately conduct a full environmental assessment and cleanup of the site.”

I affix my signature. I’m in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

1530

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have another petition which refers to the long-term-care fee increase. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$213 a month, instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care; and

“Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the cost of long-term care on to the backs of the frail elderly and their families; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident; and

“Whereas the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government’s own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse (less than half the time given to residents in Saskatchewan); and

“Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

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

“Join the Ontario New Democratic Party in demanding the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents of long-term-care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of 3.5 hours per day, and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents of long-term-care facilities.”

I will affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTRICITY PRICING, CONSERVATION
AND SUPPLY ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT
DU PRIX DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ,
LA CONSERVATION DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
ET L'APPROVISIONNEMENT
EN ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2002, on the motion for second reading of Bill 210, An

Act to amend various acts in respect of the pricing, conservation and supply of electricity and in respect of other matters related to electricity / *Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'établissement du prix de l'électricité, la conservation de l'électricité et l'approvisionnement en électricité et traitant d'autres questions liées à l'électricité.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): It's my understanding that in the rotation it is now the government's turn, and therefore I will look for a speaker, and will recognize the member for Nipissing.

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I rise today to speak in strong support of Bill 210, the government's proposed Electricity Pricing, Conservation and Supply Act.

This bill reflects the government's commitment to the energy policy that encourages new electricity generation, promotes green energy and energy conservation, and helps to keep electricity prices as low as possible. To that end, this government is taking a number of measures to generate new resources of electricity.

Although we have enough electricity to meet our immediate demand, we need more generation to keep prices down and to meet the long-term needs of families, small businesses and farmers across this province.

We are committed to ensuring that Ontario has an efficient, competitive and reliable supply of energy now and into the future. As my esteemed colleagues the Honourable John Baird and the hard-working member from Niagara Falls, Bart Maves, announced on November 12, we are taking steps toward increasing electricity output at Niagara Falls.

First, we are directing, as a private-public partnership, Ontario Power Generation to proceed with the Beck tunnel project. This will involve building a 10-kilometre tunnel, which will increase output at the existing Sir Adam Beck generating station by some 10%.

Second, the Ministry of Energy is proceeding with an independent study on the feasibility of moving forward with Beck 3. This would involve building another approximately 10.5-kilometre tunnel and two 350-megawatt generating stations.

We are directing OPG, Ontario Power Generation, to speed up assessment of the new 500-megawatt generating project on Toronto's port lands on the site of the old Hearn generating station. This public-private partnership would generate sufficient electricity for approximately half a million homes.

Not only are we, as the government, making sure to develop new sources of electric power, we are also taking steps through this proposed legislation and other measures to ensure that a growing portion of Ontario's energy supply is derived from green sources.

I think that's a good point. When I think of my nieces and nephews, Bailey, Charlie, and Joey Puddister, I want to make sure that they, as they get older—because they're quite young right now—have an environment that's clean and safe. So I think this is the right initiative, where we're going to go toward green power to generate the power and electricity that we need for future gener-

ations of Ontarians, and protecting the environment at the same time. So this is a key part of the legislation that speaks to not only green power but conserving power as it stands right now.

The TransAlta natural gas plant at Sarnia is undergoing trial tests and will come on-line early in the new year with a capacity of 490 megawatts. ATCO, Coral Energy, and Ontario Power Generation's natural gas facility at Brighton Beach is scheduled to start generating in 2004. It has a 578-megawatt capacity.

A number of small water power, wind, and landfill-gas-emission projects are also under construction or at the final stages of approval, with a combined output of over 100 megawatts. We are supporting a centre for excellence for electricity established jointly between McMaster University and the University of Waterloo, which I happened to be at yesterday and I can tell you it's quite a university, down in Waterloo. The centre will research, develop, and demonstrate electricity generation technologies. It will also explore the application of new technologies to improve the efficiencies and, just as important, to reduce emissions in the generation and distribution of electricity.

Mr Speaker, as you know, currently, projects as small as two megawatts can be subject to review under the Environmental Assessment Act. I see you nodding your head, so I know that you know that. This is a barrier to the development of new supplies of clean energy. We are proposing to raise the threshold for the environmental approvals exemption for clean generation. I think that speaks very well to this party's desire to see green power come on-line to protect our environment.

Mr Speaker, I know you would agree with me that we have to look after our next generation, our grandchildren and their children, to ensure that they have a sustainable environment, a reliable source of electricity, not only so that they can heat their homes and turn the lights on but to provide opportunities for them and their children in job creation and in creating a reliable source of this power so that our province can grow and bring prosperity.

Together, I believe these measures would ensure consumer stability to allow us to focus on the many necessary developments that need to take place in the areas of generation, including alternative and renewable forms of generation, and conservation.

I think you can see the theme here: we're talking about conservation and green. I think that's key to this piece of legislation, it's key to this bill, and it's key to where I stand on the fact that we have to protect our environment and at the same time provide a reliable source of electricity, of power to the families and small businesses of the province of Ontario, if we're going to move forward and create the opportunities for our youth to be employed in the future.

Bill 210 proposes a number of incentives for investing in and producing clean energy. My colleague the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Janet Ecker, spoke about many of these initiatives last night. I actually watched it on TV last night from my apartment and I thought she

spoke very well and very clearly on this subject. I congratulate her on that. I'm sure all the members opposite listened as well. I remember hearing a lot of them agreeing with what she said, I believe. They were nodding their heads.

1540

The government believes these initiatives are necessary in order to jumpstart investment in the new generation facilities in Ontario. In face of the overall slowdown in new electricity investments across North America, we need power, and we need it soon, and these measures will help ensure that Ontario has the investment it requires to generate the power it needs.

I also believe strongly that our government has the obligation to carry out as many recommendations outlined in the select committee on alternative fuels' final report as possible. I am a firm believer in the role that such energy sources can play in creating a strong and sustainable economy in Ontario. I was impressed by the Premier's recognition of the importance of this subject, and I am encouraged that he has appointed my colleague Steve Gilchrist to be Ontario's first commissioner of alternative energy.

I can tell you that I've had the opportunity to sit on many committees with Mr Gilchrist, and I was very impressed with his knowledge of power generation. He seemed to have a good understanding of the whole subject. From when I sat down with him and he was going over the different aspects of this legislation and what Ontario needs, I think the Premier made an excellent choice in this individual, Mr Gilchrist.

I'm looking forward to hearing about the new recommendations and helping to build on his excellent work on the select committee. In fact, at this time, I'd like to publicly acknowledge the excellent support and involvement of every one of my colleagues.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Oh, yeah.

Mr McDonald: Mr Dunlop is here tonight. I want to support the involvement of everyone who sat on this committee, especially the hard-working member for Northumberland, Dr Doug Galt, who is here today as well. I must say to the constituents of Mr Galt that they are very lucky to have this individual. I can tell you, I think he has perfect attendance, and he's here day in and day out. He's here until 9:30 just about every night. I know he's here tonight, and he's smiling. Mr Galt, we appreciate how hard-working you are.

I believe that shows, regardless of political stripe, that all Ontario legislators have a firm commitment to making a better Ontario. I say that very openly. We all sit here because we all want what's best for Ontario. I would encourage all members of the Legislature to support this legislation, which really encourages green energy and conservation. I think those are two key things that, when I read the legislation, come back to me, living in northern Ontario. We're very fortunate, in that part of the province, that it's beautiful and clean. We support these initiatives. I can tell you that, being in northern Ontario, we understand how important it is to keep our environ-

ment safe, clean and viable for our grandchildren in the future.

There are some things that individuals can do as well. For example, this proposed legislation will provide individuals with a sales tax rebate for the purchase of solar panels. This goes back to clean energy, obviously, Mr Speaker. I see you nodding your head, and I know that you like the idea of clean energy. We all like the idea of clean, green energy. This is really free energy, coming from the sun, that will be able to power our homes and businesses. I like the idea of providing the sales tax rebate to the average citizen who wants to protect the environment. It provides incentive for him to go out and buy solar panels. Really, it cuts down his heating costs. I think that's good for all of us, and it's great that we go back to the fact that we want to protect our environment. Any time I see anybody with a solar screen on their roof and they happen to be out mowing their lawn or whatever the case is, I always stop to thank them for providing that service for all Ontarians, because what they have to understand by providing that is that it takes some of the demand off the grid. That enables the peak times to come down a bit. It really promotes conservation and protects our environment.

We recognize the high capital cost of these panels, but I think we all can see the long-term benefits, as I just mentioned earlier. This sales tax rebate helps make it affordable. We hope to see 100,000 homes convert to solar power within five years. That's quite a goal, but I think it's a worthwhile goal, and I think our environment deserves that. I hope Ontarians encourage their federal MPs to help Ontario in this important cause by putting in place a federal tax incentive similar to what we are proposing. I believe that all levels of government share in the responsibility of protecting the environment to ensure that everyone has reliable energy, reliable electricity, and that all three levels of government should work together for the benefit of all Canadians, all Ontarians. I think it's key that we ask that all three levels of government participate in such a program.

Some of these proposals are things that governments and other large organizations can do as well. We're committing that the Ontario government will target 20% of its electricity usage to come from renewable sources. That speaks to green power; that speaks to conservation. We challenge other organizations to match our commitment. I can tell you that our province would be a lot better off if large organizations and individuals take the challenge that this government wants to put forward. To help make this possible, we're proposing an electronic information system that will provide generators with a transferable electronic certificate showing the environmental characteristics of each megawatt hour of generation. That's quite a mouthful. Those are pretty big words, but I think they are key to protecting our environment, providing reliable energy to our homes and businesses in Ontario and, particularly because I'm in northern Ontario, providing sustainable and reliable power to northern Ontario.

I know I'm running out of time, Mr Speaker. I can see that you're concerned that I might not be able to get all my speaking notes into the record, but I want to assure you that I am going to do my best.

We are committing the government to the goal of ensuring that every newly constructed government or other institutional building is energy self-sufficient, using an alternative or clean source of energy. I think that's a great initiative. I think that shows leadership on the part of government. I hope that all MPPs will support this legislation that provides clean, safe energy to all of us who live in this province.

Through this legislation, we are proposing a requirement for net metering and connection arrangements between distributors, self-generators and small-scale generation.

One exciting opportunity that we have in Ontario, with its remote and First Nations communities, is to use wind power to supplement or even replace the costly, environmentally questionable diesel generators that, to date, have been these communities' only source of power. I was in Mattawa, Ontario, last weekend and I was talking to Mayor Backer, who seemed very keen on the fact that maybe we might be able to put clean power in the north. I was explaining to him these wind funnels that will harvest the wind. They'll provide clean energy to the north. He seemed very keen on the idea. I think it would be great for northern Ontario if it participated in this type of initiative. Not only does it promote environmentally clean electricity, it also promotes job creation and shows that northern Ontario is taking a lead in the fact that they want to make sure they protect the environment as well. I hope the federal government can lend its commitment to this very sensible and long-overdue idea.

1550

These changes are the initial steps in the move to innovate and the groundbreaking opportunities to use alternative fuel and energy. To better harness the excellent minds in Ontario working on alternative energy, the government is planning to establish a centre of excellence for alternative energy jointly between Queen's University and the University of Toronto. Its goal is to make Ontario the leading North American jurisdiction for research and development of clean energy technologies.

By paying attention to conservation, we can effectively increase our available supply of generation, help moderate prices and protect the environment. It's done with immediate payback and immediate reward for an individual company making that effort. To spur that effort, the Ontario government has committed to reducing its own power consumption by 10%. We challenge everyone—individuals, companies and institutions—to follow our lead.

We plan to help. The government will be directing substantial efforts toward a public education campaign that shows electricity consumers can reduce their consumption and thereby lower their electricity bills. Looking to the future, to a time where prices are stable enough to return to a competitive consumer market for

electricity, we need to lay the infrastructure for the time-of-use pricing of electricity. To that end, we believe that every home should have the opportunity to take advantage of interval meters. We propose that all local hydro companies should be required to offer this service.

As these initiatives demonstrate, this government has brought common sense and stability to the electricity market in Ontario. I'd like to thank you for my time.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Obviously the government is going to be required to pay, for the rebates and reduction in future bills, some hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars. I know the member would want to join me in expressing the concern that if federal dollars coming for health care are not specifically spent directly by the federal government, there are people within the Ontario government, particularly since Guy Giorno is back now, who will want to siphon away that money that is destined for health care and use it to pay the rebates. I know the member for Nipissing will want to join me in urging his colleagues not to do that. In fact, my recommendation, flowing from the Romanow report, is that the federal government increase its spending substantially on health care and spend it directly in Ontario on such things as diagnostic equipment and the cost of infrastructure in hospitals; in other words, places where the federal government can spend it directly, so that the members over there in the government don't take the money, as they have in so many federal-provincial programs, stick it in their pockets and give it away on their tax cuts instead of using it appropriately for health care.

Interjection: Name one.

Mr Bradley: I'll name one for you: the millennium scholarship. You took that money away. You siphoned it away from the students for your own purposes. What about the clawback in the child care tax credit, where you take it from those people and pull it back? Or disabled people? There are so many instances where this government takes the federal money and then puts its own money away in tax cuts for the richest people. I know my friend from Nipissing will be ever-vigilant about that and not want to see that money being steered somewhere else. I'm confident he will agree with me on that.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): So here we have a government standing up righteously and piously claiming to be acting in the best interests of Ontarians, claiming that they're working hard to stabilize rates. What is wrong with this picture? They're the guys who did this in the first place. They deregulated and privatized hydro. They had been warned time and time again—by this party, by Howard Hampton and the NDP, the electricity coalition and many others—that this was going to happen. There were examples of it all over the world, and they went ahead and did it anyway. They said, "Trust us. Rates are going to go down." And here we are today with this desperate pre-election ploy to get people to hopefully vote for them the next time around. Well, I will guarantee

you that they won't, because they're on to this government now.

They brought in this deregulation and privatization despite the warnings, did not act in the best interests of Ontarians, but acted in the best interests of the private sector, who wanted to make big profits off the Ontarians they're supposed to be representing. And now they stand up and are offering to give us back some of our own money, that we pay through our taxes anyway, to try to cover up the huge, huge dilemma they are in as they start to go down, down, down in the polls.

What are we going to see after the next election, should they, God forbid, be re-elected? We know what the plans are: to let those rates go up again, because they have no choice. That is what we're looking at here. The people of Ontario know that and they're not going to go along with it.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): If the comments from the member from St Catharines weren't so laughable, I'd respond. But the excellent member from Nipissing and his comments are right on topic. The viewer today should be aware that at the end of the day this is about the consumer and having a reliable source of electricity in the future.

If you look back far enough, the member from Toronto-Danforth, when they were in government, really started this problem. As I understand it, in 1993 they identified that there was a serious problem. Their whole government was in collapse—the social contract and things like that. They ignored it. In the meantime, Howard's been riding around Ontario in a bus with tinted windows—and there's nobody in the bus—preaching. I'll be speaking on this in some substance later.

I want to pay respect for the important issues that the member for Nipissing drove home. This government, in preparation for the broader debate, did call an alternative fuels committee, an alternative energy committee. Mr Gilchrist and Mr Galt of course served on that committee, as did Garfield and pretty well all of the members here. In fact, the member from Toronto-Danforth was on the committee. This was a unanimously adopted report, I might add. I had the good fortune to serve on that committee. But it's one of many committees this government has initiated. Mr Bradley, the member from St Catharines, would understand.

This whole thing goes back even further, from the Macdonald commission report day to the very important select committee on nuclear affairs, the NAOP, the nuclear asset optimization plan, which really clearly identified there was \$3 billion or \$4 billion of investment required at that time—Mr Bradley was on that committee—to get the nuclear plants up to production. In fact, OPG arguably still hasn't delivered on that \$3-billion or \$4-billion investment.

So the member from Nipissing, I commend you for your comments today, for helping the viewer understand what this government's committed to doing: having safe, clean, reliable power into the future.

Ms Churley: What a joke. Come on. I know you gotta do what you gotta do.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr O'Toole: If there's no speaker to stand up, I'll stand up.

The Acting Speaker: There is somebody ready to go, once you all come to order. That especially includes you. Please take your seat.

Ms Churley: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Well, you too, for that matter.

Once we have order, which I know we're going to have, we'll go to the member for St Paul's.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I listened closely to the member for Nipissing's speech. It was an optimistic speech about government conservation plans. I guess I'd firstly point out that the marketplace has been open for more than 200 days. This government has been in power for more than seven years. For the government to introduce conservation plans 200 days from the marketplace opening is either an acknowledgement of defeat, that in fact the marketplace wasn't ready in the first place, or it's simply a reversal.

I was interested to hear the member talk at length about how great these government conservation programs would be. I thought he might be interested to know that it wasn't that long ago—January 25, 2002, in Report on Business magazine—that the Minister of Energy, Jim Wilson, said this: "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs. Those efforts may have made the odd person feel good but they had absolutely no effect."

1600

I'm sure he wasn't referring to you, I say to the member for Nipissing. I think the problem, writ large, is a government that expresses with enormous confidence the power of capitalist imperialism without checks, without supply, without demand, without management and without rate relief, and then the next day reverses its position entirely and says that the conservation programs that the Minister of Energy said would be of little effect are now going to be wildly effective, as described by the member for Nipissing. So I look forward to hearing what he thinks of what the Minister of Energy said on January 25 of this year.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nipissing now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr McDonald: I'd like to thank the members from St Catharines, Toronto-Danforth, Durham and St Paul's for their thoughts and their concerns on my 20 minutes on this legislation.

I listened very closely to what they had to say and I particularly caught the member from St Catharines talking about, "Are we taking this funding out of health care?" or this or that. I believe that if we're moving forward as a province, we have to promote conservation, and by doing that, sir, we're also providing a legacy for our grandchildren and their children, to provide a safe environment for them, and at the same time a reliable

power source for our homes, for our businesses and for the prosperity of Ontario.

The one part that really jumps out about this legislation to me is the fact that we're encouraging green energy, we're encouraging conservation, we're encouraging citizens to be responsible, to turn off their lights, to turn down their heat when they don't really need it. Coming from northern Ontario, I can tell you that when we turn our lights off up there, it gets pretty dark at night. I find living down here in Toronto that I turn off the lights in my apartment and it's still light out. It just seems that everybody leaves their lights on all night long, and I find it incredible that this goes on. I like the challenge: we're challenging individuals and corporations and institutions maybe to turn those lights off. There's no need to have a 50-storey apartment building with every light on.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak, finally, in members' comments.

The Acting Speaker: It's my understanding that both leadoff debates were deferred and therefore I will look to the official opposition for their lead-off debate. With that, the member for St Paul's now has the floor.

Mr Bryant: The electricity competition marketplace opened more than 200 days ago, more than seven years into Tory governance. Now we are quite literally getting the bill for it.

Seven years, 200 days, into market opening, the government of Ontario got around to announcing their supply and demand plan for electricity, got around to rolling out the rebates and the price shock absorbers owed to all Ontarians. So after 200 days of this Tory journey of incompetence, the Eves government asks us to trust them that they've got it right this time.

We all recognize that price relief was desperately needed. As Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals said in this House time and time again, many Ontarians simply could not afford to pay their hydro bills. It's not that they were uncomfortable bills, it's not that they were unpopular bills; they were unaffordable bills.

I met people in Wawa who told me they had pulled out their hydro cables because they just couldn't afford to pay the bills any more and they were running their electricity through a John Deere diesel generator in their backyard. It was the 19th century, but it wasn't. It's a have province, but suddenly it wasn't.

While of course we need to bring in this rate relief and this price relief for all Ontarians, we say that much of this may be too little and it's certainly more than 200 days too late. Premier Ernie Eves has lost the trust of Ontarians with their electricity. More than 200 days ago, the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Ernie Eves, made a decision, one that he clearly regrets, given the bill we have before us today.

The Premier flipped the switch, opening the retail and wholesale marketplaces simultaneously, the only jurisdiction in the world that decided to do it at the same time. At the same time, the government sought to privatize electricity transmission, thereby undertaking all three reforms simultaneously. The volatility caused by these

simultaneous changes, plus the political volatility of a waffling Premier and a waffling executive council, chilled the competition marketplace into a deep freeze.

Meanwhile, contrary to promises from our current Premier and his predecessor, contrary to promises from energy ministers, however many times they were shuffled, there wasn't enough electricity supply in Ontario, yet the Premier of Ontario admitted in this House just a couple of weeks ago that he didn't even bother picking up the phone to call the person who could have told him that, the chairman of Ontario Power Generation, Bill Farlinger. Incredibly, he did not pick up the phone, he said, to call Chairman Farlinger, who could have told him what Ontario Power Generation had told the world with published reports and filings, that surely the Premier knew or ought to have known about and certainly his energy minister did know about: namely, the Pickering A nuclear plant, that was supposed to provide the adequate supply in the summer and this coming winter, wouldn't be on-line on time, until next year. But that was information this government just didn't want to hear. So you heard, you saw and you spoke no electricity evils, shuffling your energy ministers to avoid accountability, and instituted a doctrine of denial on all things hydro. The strategy backfired and now no one trusts this government with their electricity.

It turns out that reforming the distribution, transmission and generation of electricity in Ontario all at once was the worst kind of imperialism. Neo-conservative ideology dictated that if you opened the market, they would just come and build without the government having to lift a finger or even dial the phone. But that capitalist imperialism, plus political ineptitude, underscored the heroic simplification in market design, such that by day 200 of the market opening and beyond, it is now clear that this government shipwrecked our electricity system and nobody trusts them with it.

New Democratic Party leader Howard Hampton says to beware of all electricity profits. He says "profits" with a dollar sign. But his current plan clearly deals with wheeling and dealing with private generators, referred to in safe parlance as "independent power producers." Consider also what the New Democratic Party was saying at the time in which all three parties were sitting down and making an effort to resolve our electricity crisis. It was time, all three parties decided, to stop playing dumb on hydro. At that time, at that select committee, the NDP representative, Floyd Laughren said "I don't have a big problem with bringing competition into the system." In the December 1997 report coming out of that committee, the NDP states in their conclusion, "We support changes to the way Ontario's electricity market is structured."

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Ms Churley: We still do.

Mr Bryant: So I say to the member for Toronto-Danforth who just spoke forth, and to your colleagues in the New Democrat Party: instead of your faux paranoia over electricity profits, perhaps Ontarians should beware

of false prophets offering imaginary maps of faltered government efforts past, of failed hydro efforts past.

For the flipside of the capitalist imperialism that faltered for this government on electricity, the extreme alternative of the bureaucratic imperialism of the old Ontario Hydro, with all power resting in the debt-belching hydro Frankenstein, cannot in the long term make for a healthy electricity system in Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: I do.

The future for Ontario electricity is not bright. Let's avoid the simplification and imperialism that got us into this mess, and look to workable manageable improvements to our power shortage, replete with consultation and due diligence. Let us look not to the margins of ideological simplifications, but rather, determine what's workable and what delivers reliable and affordable electricity to all. Let's work with consumers and industry alike, putting aside planning on the back of a napkin, and pour the light of transparency on an electricity system shrouded in secrecy. Let us speak the truth to Ontarians, even if it hurts, about how and why power at cost is very costly.

Now that the diagnosis is in on the electricity shipwreck, the journey that started in May of this year, after only 200 days, I believe Ontarians will beware of magic bullets claiming the power to slay hydro dragons. We will look very closely at this bill in the coming days, as all MPPs seek to earn Ontarians' trust with their hydro.

Let us start at the beginning: the announcement by the Premier of Ontario that the marketplace would be opening. It was December 19, 2001, that Premier Harris said, "Nothing is going to go wrong. The supply is there." The Premier said he was confident that the end of the provincially owned monopoly would benefit consumers. And then he said, "This will clearly lead to better service, more choice and lower rates than if we had not taken this decision." If that were the case, then this bill would not be before us today.

The government made promises that they could not and did not keep. This did not happen. The supply was not there; the consumer protection was not there; the conservation measures were not there; the market wasn't ready. The market was opened with reckless abandon and then shipwrecked. This is the raise-the-Titanic project that we now have, announced on November 11 of this year, the bill before us. But let's be clear. All those pronouncements of this government, before the marketplace opened, turned out to be wrong.

The Premier would later say in an interview with the Financial Post on December 19, "I am 100% convinced" that opening the marketplace will result in cheaper power for consumers. "I am convinced," he said, "rates will be substantially lower than they would have been had we not taken this decision."

On September 25, 2001, the Premier said in the House: "We made it very clear, the conditions for opening the market in Ontario and the conditions that we laid out. We made it very clear that the market would not

open unless we could meet those conditions, like ample supply..., as appropriate competition to ensure that we're getting the competitive forces."

He said "We made it clear" in September. He said "We made it clear" the conditions have to be ample supply. And yet the government has known for a year now that Pickering A would not be up on-line and on time and there would not be ample supply. They were given the warnings. They may call it bad information now, but it was simply information that they did not want to hear.

It wasn't just the Premier who was making bold predictions and bold promises to Ontarians to trust them with their electricity. The energy minister too, Honourable Mr Wilson, said March 21, 2002, six weeks or thereabouts before market opening, "Ontario has a reliable supply of electricity."

He said on February 28, 2002, the week previous, "I am convinced that Ontario's competitive electricity market will enjoy the same success as other jurisdictions." Clearly, if that was the case, this bill would not be necessary. This bill is bringing in measures that had to have been in place before the marketplace opened. It is in part cleaning up a mess; it is in part doing what should have been done before the marketplace opened in the first place.

It is obviously an admission of defeat. I've said time and time again that nobody has a monopoly of success or failure when it comes to hydro in the Legislature, looking at the efforts of all governments over the past 25 years. Nonetheless, what we have experienced over the last 200 days has truly been a journey of incompetence. That, I will try and convince the House, could have been foreseen had all of the warnings been heeded.

The energy minister also said, interestingly—and I said this in response to the speech from the member for Nipissing but I'll say it again—on January, 25, 2002, in an interview with Report on Business magazine, Energy Minister Jim Wilson said, "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs." Those efforts "may have made the odd person feel good, but they had absolutely no effect."

This is a serious indictment on the announcements of the energy minister—the latest energy minister that we have—of this government that he made on November 13, the infamous day that Hydrozilla showed up and ruined the announcement; the infamous day, I suppose, that the government conceded that Energy Minister Jim Wilson was wrong, that in fact we need those conservation programs.

In any event, clearly nobody can trust this government on this subject when within 12 months you've got one energy minister saying conservation programs have no effect and another energy minister holding them out as a panacea.

Minister Wilson made it very clear, and I think to his credit, in 1998. He said it's not Ontario Power Generation that's running the show here. It's not Ontario Hydro One that's running the show here on electricity reforms.

It's not the Ontario Energy Board. It's not government enterprise corporations. It's not crown corporations. It is the government that must be held to account for the successes and failures of these electricity reforms. He was right. He was honest. He famously said in this House that, I think, he is the first honest energy minister—may have been in the history of Ontario, he said.

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He said on June 25, 1998, "The government will take the decisions in establishing the market along with the expert advice we're receiving from the Ministry of Finance." Now, who was the Minister of Finance in June 1998? I can't remember. Oh, Ernie Eves. He was the Minister of Finance. What Minister Wilson is quite rightly saying here is that the Premier—the finance minister of 1998—and the energy minister of Ontario ultimately must be held to account for the failures of this marketplace; not Mother Nature, not Eleanor Clitheroe, not Mr Farlinger or Mr Osborne or Mr Laughren, but the government of Ontario, the executive council, which comes to this Legislature to be held to account, which in turn is to be held to account amongst the general public.

I think Energy Minister Wilson was right when he said that; it's the government that will make the decisions in establishing the market. Ultimately, I think it has to be said, given the bill we have before us today, that the government is the one to blame. It's the government that has failed and not the scapegoats that they seek out, as we speak.

He went on to say of the chair of OPG, "I would remind all honourable members that Mr Farlinger and the new management that he has put in place at Hydro are turning around Ontario Hydro. He is a 'hands-on' manager.... It's on a direction now to be a world leader in supplying world-class, high-efficiency energy to the people of Ontario. We're the shareholders and it's in our best interest that we have the best possible management and the best possible chair."

I wonder if the energy minister today feels that way about our management and chair of Ontario Power Generation. If he does, he sure has a funny way of showing it.

I have asked Energy Minister Baird on several occasions in this House, "Do you have full and unqualified confidence in Chairman Farlinger and CEO Osborne?" When I first asked him that, he said, "Oh no, they are two different people." And he sat down. This was not a ringing endorsement. So I thought, "Well, I'll ask the Premier. He'll give a ringing endorsement, surely, of Chairman Farlinger and CEO Osborne." And he wouldn't do it either. He bounced the question over to the energy minister, who didn't answer the question.

You have to ask yourself, either the government of Ontario has full confidence and believes that Ontario Power Generation has the best possible management and the best possible chair, as Energy Minister Wilson said, and they'd stand up and say it proudly, "Yes, we've got the best possible management and the best possible chair," or they would say, "Well, we've got problems over there and we're going to fix it." In fact, the Minister

of Energy said of OPG's handling of the Pickering A nuclear refurbishment, "It was not OPG's finest hour."

The Premier, under questions this week in the media about whether or not he had confidence in Chairman Farlinger and whether or not Chairman Farlinger's tenure would continue, started talking about the delays in Pickering A. These are not words of confidence in the chair and management of Ontario Power Generation.

But I say to the Premier and the energy minister, this is not colour commentary. This is not talking about whether or not the coach and the quarterback are doing a good job or not over on TSN during half-time. You're the government. You are the ones who appoint them. As the energy minister said, "You're the shareholders, representing the people of Ontario, so you must take action if you have problems with what's going on over there."

Not only have the Premier and the energy minister damned these people with the faintest of praise, but they have damned our energy supply with the faintest of leadership, trying to be, I guess, vaguely critical of Ontario Power Generation performance, but at the same time doing nothing about it. It obviously must put Ontario Power Generation management in a state of paralysis and it obviously contributes to heap even more volatility upon the electricity marketplace, and so nobody wants to come and do business in the province of Ontario.

Meanwhile, the effort on behalf of the Eves government in particular to try and shuttle energy ministers in order to avoid accountability and to play this game of see, hear and speak no evil on energy electricity, that effort has an air of unreality when you consider the practices of the Ministry of Energy in conjunction with Ontario Power Generation.

Here's Energy Minister Wilson on June 10, 1998. He sets forth in print, in Hansard, the practice of this government, which continues to be the practice of this government based on answers that I recently received in the autumn from the Deputy Minister of Energy during estimates committee hearings. Here is what Energy Minister Wilson said: "I meet with Mr Farlinger and Mr Osborne every week at a set time, as did my predecessor Norm Sterling, as did my predecessor Brenda Elliott." So the Minister of Energy meets every week, and maybe now it's two weeks, but in any event meets on a regular basis, with the Ontario Power Generation chair and CEO.

Any suggestion that the government didn't know about the state of affairs at Ontario Power Generation, any suggestion that the government didn't know about the lack of energy supply in the province of Ontario, any suggestion that the government can point fingers about the delays in the refurbishment and Pickering are, frankly, unbelievable. They cannot be believed. You cannot imagine that the Minister of Energy would be sitting there with Chairman Farlinger and CEO Osborne and say, "I'm looking at this report, Chairman, and it says that Pickering is not going to be up until 2003." This is before the electricity marketplace opened, as I'll explain in a moment. Those reports were available for the

public. I'm assuming the Minister of Energy got hold of the annual information filings. You don't think that the Minister of Energy said to Chairman Farlinger and to CEO Osborne, "So we've got delays in Pickering, huh?" "Yep, that's what it says here." "Why? When is it going to be fixed? Do we have enough supply? What's going on?"

Of course they did. Of course the government was doing that. Of course the government knew. Are we to believe that the energy minister was just tapping his fingers on top of the Ontario Power Generation forecasts of lack of supply? That is unbelievable. It's simply unbelievable.

To bolster this case, consider the pronouncement of victory from Minister Stockwell on June 5, 2002. He was asked about whether or not Ontario Power Generation was doing a good job. You'd think, if the government was told in November of last year that there were going to be delays in Pickering, if they were told in January of this year that there were going to be delays in Pickering, if they were going to be told before the marketplace opened that the Pickering A nuclear plant would not be refurbished and we would not have the supply the government was counting on until 2003, you'd think that if the government was aware of all that and had a problem with that, at some point in one of those weekly meetings between OPG and the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Energy might have said, "You're not doing a good job."

Yet here is the Minister of Energy, on June 5, saying, "He's done a good job at OPG." He was talking about CEO Osborne. I asked him whether or not CEO Osborne is getting the salary that he deserves. He said about Mr Osborne, "He's done a good job at OPG. OPG is running well. They've done a good job of privatizing. They've done a good job setting up the open market. I think Mr Osborne has done a good job, and at \$1.7 million a year, I suppose that's reasonable."

Whoa. Clearly the government was aware and defending the actions of Ontario Power Generation right through to June, past the market opening, right at the cusp of what happened: the price spikes. The price spikes hit. Caucus meetings were no doubt very civil affairs on the government side, and the question was asked to the energy minister, "What is going on? Why these price spikes? How come?"

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Soon enough, energy ministers were shuffled and the new message was out: "It's not the government that's to blame; it's Ontario Power Generation that's to blame." No longer does the Minister of Energy say that OPG is doing a good job. No longer does anyone express confidence in Chairman Farlinger, a man referred to by the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, as a man of integrity. No longer are they talking about the "exciting new vision" that Chairman Farlinger brought to Ontario Hydro. No longer are they calling Mr Farlinger the best possible chair of OPG. No longer does the government refer to the best possible management team at OPG.

Now it's not their finest hour. Now OPG is full of delays. Now the finance minister, Janet Ecker, expresses concerns about delays. Now the energy minister is saying, "The delays are unacceptable." Now the Premier is saying, "You've got this delay and then that delay and then this delay and then that delay. You know, there's a problem with all these delays." No longer is there confidence. Why? Because it hit the fan. The prices went up. The price spikes went up.

By all accounts, the government was warned before market opening. Remember, the energy minister said it's the government that set up the marketplace. You can't blame anybody else. The government was warned. I know, because I've spoken to so many of these people.

They were warned by industry. They were warned by distributors. They were warned that this marketplace, as it is currently designed, is not built for price spikes, that it is not built for volatility, and that if you get it, the system won't be able to handle it. The distributors will have to underwrite it and they will be put on the edge of financial ruin. The consumers will have no price shock-absorbers, the government was told. They will flip out and not be able to afford their bills. In the midst of that volatility, political decisions will waffle on a weekly basis and you will end up with a deeply frozen, chilled marketplace that nobody wants to invest in, with consumers who can't afford to pay their bills, and with distributors who are put in a position where they have to go back to get some rule changes, which were denied, so that they don't have to declare bankruptcy.

The government was told, "You built a market that does not meet the realities of Ontario and the fact that we have one major player in the marketplace, and that's Ontario Power Generation."

"No, no," apparently the answer came back from the government, "there will be no price spikes." Of course, we would love to have a select committee, and we have called for a select committee. I bet the third party would support a select committee to find out and get to the bottom of what happened with this marketplace. The government doesn't do that, but maybe the government will change its mind and will agree to that so that we can try and find out what happened. I would love to confirm all this, get the people to come in and speak on camera and for the Hansard and explain what they explained to the government, the warnings they provided to the government.

The government, as I said before, constructed a fancy, red convertible without a top and then they drove it out into the Arctic tundra. Then everything got a little bit uncomfortable for the passengers. Everybody got uncomfortable, it turns out, including the government of Ontario.

The government was warned. When were they warned? How were they warned? In black and white, in reports filed by Ontario Power Generation that are sitting on their Web sites right now. It's not difficult to find them.

The first one was on November 27. Ontario Power Generation said that the reactor at Pickering could not be repaired by May 1: "OPG expects to begin commissioning the first unit of Pickering A nuclear generating station in mid-2002." It's a year ago the government got that warning.

Then it got worse. It got pushed back again. January 30, 2002: "Ontario Power Generation reports 2000 year-end earnings." It's a press release basically. In it OPG states, "Commissioning of the first Pickering A unit is estimated to start during the third quarter of 2002."

It's getting shakier still. First November and now January, and suddenly Pickering is not going to be coming back on-line until the third quarter of 2002. That's when the alarm bells should have gone off and the government should have said, "Whoa, we don't have adequate supply. Pickering is not going to be ready. We're not ready to go. We're not ready to flip the switch."

I understand, the Premier was too taxed to pick up the phone and call Chairman Farlinger to get that information, but it is frankly beyond belief that the Minister of Energy of the day did not deliver the information to the Premier that Chairman Farlinger delivered to Premier Harris—because he had the time to meet with Chairman Farlinger to find out about the state of Pickering. It is unbelievable that the Premier did not sit down with the Minister of Energy, who we know was meeting with the chairman and CEO of OPG every week. He knew, because he read those reports. He knew, because he would have discussed this in their meetings. I can't imagine a matter that would have been more urgent than this. So the Minister of Energy knew that Pickering A was not going to be up on-line and on time, and he knew it last January.

But it gets worse. The annual information form for the year-end December 31, 2001—this was filed before the marketplace opened up—says, "OPG currently expects to return the first unit" at Pickering A "to service in late 2002 or early 2003."

Well, there it was in black and white before the government of Ontario. Not once, not twice, but three times they were told by Ontario Power Generation. The energy minister was told, and the energy minister must have told the Premier, that in fact Pickering A was not going to be up on-line and on time. It is the government that has to be held to account for it, because they were told.

The Premier had to make a big decision. He won the leadership of his party and was the Premier-elect, or whatever he is called, on March 28. He was sworn in in April. He got his first briefing the first Monday after he won the leadership on March 28. This is a Premier who must have been told this information. He had to make a decision: does he delay market opening until we have the supply-and-demand conditions that this bill today tries to put into place? Does he wait till we have the price shock absorbers? Does he wait until he has the rebate system ready to relieve consumers of unaffordable bills? Does he wait until he has the supply plan in place that is in this bill before us now? Does he wait until he has the con-

servation measures announced on December 13 and that are in this bill now? Does he wait or does he flip the switch and open the marketplace? He did the latter. He opened the marketplace with reckless abandon. Either he was wilfully blind to the damage that would be caused or he decided that he would believe in the theory of capitalist imperialism that says, "If you just open the market, it'll all be OK."

Well, clearly that is not the case or else we wouldn't have this bill here today. This is the bill to make up for the mistakes of the past. It's an indictment of that major decision made by Premier Ernie Eves, the first major decision that faced him as the Premier of Ontario. Lord help us when he gets his hands on the funding formula and on the Romanow report, because then he's going to have some other tough decisions to make, ones requiring consultation and diligence and getting things ready before you open it up. That's not what happened with electricity. What happened with electricity was a journey of incompetence, and it's all right here in black and white.

So the National Post, no enemy of the government, writes on November 13 in a column by Andrew Coyne, "Mr Eves's blatant politicization of the electricity market, as others have pointed out, has erased any chance of developing a private power industry in Ontario: investors simply do not trust it. Well it is just the same for voters. I mean this quite literally: voters have no reason to trust a word the Eves government says.... The Ontario ... government has reached the end of its useful life. It should be removed—no, hurled—from office, and the sooner the better."

Clearly, along the way, the transmission chaos contributed to the volatility. Here's what I mean by that: the reforms to distribution and the reforms to the wholesale market generation took place at the same time. The retail marketplace and the wholesale marketplace opened at the same time in November. As I said, I think in retrospect the government sees that as a mistake, because they've had to come in and bring in changes to it.

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In the midst of that were the reforms to electricity transmission, the third part of our electricity system; not only the stuff upstream that makes the power, generation; not only the stuff downstream that delivers the power, distribution in retail; but the stream: the electricity transmission highway. That was wholly owned by the people of Ontario, Hydro One, a natural monopoly and money-maker for the people of Ontario. Like Highway 401, it's a matter that had to not have a fiduciary principle but good public policy as its guiding principle. It had to put the people first. This is a company that made money for the people of Ontario. Hydro One was a natural monopoly and a natural money-maker.

It is also the electricity highway that other potential investors would plug into. The independent power producers would plug into the highway, and they needed to know there would be a highway to plug into. They're not going to travel, build the vehicle and try to deliver it

downstream if there's no stream. If there's no electricity highway to travel along, obviously they're not going to come in and build it. If there is volatility with transmission too, it would be the death knell of the reforms, and of course it was.

In December of last year, Premier Harris announced that Hydro One would be privatized, sold via an initial public offering; the whole thing, 100%, sold to the private sector. Interestingly, the now Deputy Premier, Elizabeth Witmer, said during the leadership debate that she had concerns and questions about selling off Hydro One. The cabinet was aghast. Now-Premier Eves, Mr Stockwell, now the House leader, and all the other candidates thought it was outrageous that Mrs Witmer, now the Deputy Premier, would in fact slag the selling of Hydro One. She turned out to be prophetic.

Then Ernie Eves took over, became the Premier of Ontario, and he said, unequivocally, "The IPO is on. The IPO is on. The IPO is on. We will sell Hydro One." Then a by-election came along, one that the member for Nipissing is very familiar with, and suddenly the IPO was off the table. It was off the table during the by-election. It was at that point—between having your Deputy Premier question the wisdom of this move, the public pressure about the stupidity of the move and the Premier saying in the midst of a by-election that the sale of Hydro One was off the table—that everybody who might come and invest in the province of Ontario and build more electricity, so that we could have the supply and lower prices that were promised by Premiers past and present, just said, "Forget it. We're not coming into this province until this mess is cleared up."

In the midst of it, the former Deputy Premier—the runner-up in the leadership race to the current Premier, now the Minister of Enterprise—Mr Flaherty said, "No, the IPO should go ahead." It was really a flip-flop, Flaherty flipped, and then the whole thing flopped after the by-election. The decision was made that Hydro One wouldn't be privatized by an IPO, but they'd sell 49% of it.

That volatility and a total lack of certainty as to what the government of Ontario will actually end up doing on Hydro One—because now we've asked the present finance minister, "What are we going to do with Hydro One?" The answer from the Premier at some point was, "There's no rush." So we don't know what's going to happen with Hydro One. Again, that volatility. Clearly they're going to sell Hydro One, and it's enormously unpopular among the people of Ontario. They're going to do it through a fire sale to try to finance electoral promises, but from an electricity reform perspective it was a disaster.

On top of all that you get the political chaos of a Premier who is changing his mind on transmission on an almost bi-monthly basis. You then have, when the heat is on, a former cabinet minister, now-member for Burlington, send out a petition saying that we should freeze rates. You then have the Minister of Labour—there's a principle of cabinet solidarity that says that if you want to

depart from the cabinet's position, then you must resign. Nothing could be more straightforward than departing from the position of the government on the competition marketplace, but he just bolted. The Labour Minister said, "No, I don't like the current system and I think we need to bring in price caps."

The parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General said the same thing in published accounts. There were others. The Speaker of the House—not the current Speaker, but Mr Carr, the member for Oakville—also released a petition.

So there is the political instability. Again, if you are an investor, you are thinking of building in the province of Ontario to provide enough supply. When I talk about the independent power producers, this is something that all three parties—check out their Web sites—support: the concept of independent power producers coming and providing power so that the taxpayer isn't picking up the tab. But they're not going to come in under these circumstances, with the government falling apart at the seams, a total lack of confidence in the policy of the government.

Then, of course, on November 11 the Premier announced that the rate freeze would be brought in. It was pretty clear by September at the latest that rate relief was necessary. I think it was incumbent on all members of the Legislature to try to assist their constituents who called up. Many of them had heart-wrenching problems with their bills. They couldn't afford them. They couldn't understand them, nor could the Energy Minister. I asked the Energy Minister to read an energy bill from Great Lakes Power and he could not. It was very unclear. We need standardized, clear energy bills. People couldn't understand them, they were too high and they couldn't afford them.

So we had a mess. We had a fire that had been started by the government, and I think it was incumbent on all members of this Legislature, no matter what side of the House we were on, to help put out the fire. That does not mean that the New Democrats and the Liberals were complicit in the arson, or, to switch metaphors, put the holes in the ship that was our electricity system, now shipwrecked. No, but we had to help. We had to try to put this fire out. So working within the current rules and laws that were before us, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals began, at the first instance when the House returned, to call for the government not to roll the rebate out next summer or before the next election, but to roll it out now. Thus began the campaign to roll out the rebates to compensate Ontarians for Herculean hydro prices.

October 1, 2002, press release from the official opposition: "OPG Needs to Roll Out the Rebate to Compensate Consumers Now." I said in a question to the energy minister and also in my statement in response to a minister's statement: "So our message to the government is, we need relief for Ontario consumers now. We need you to roll out this rebate now—the full rebate, all the rebate and nothing but the rebate now. Will you join us in

fighting to roll out the rebate now?" That's October 1, 2002.

We are here now, rolling out the rebate. We are here now, calling for the price shock absorbers that should have been put in place before the marketplace opened. Obviously, the price relief had to be provided.

On October 3 I asked the Premier, "It's the people's money, not yours to play with. Why won't you give Ontarians their hydroelectricity rebate now?"

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Initially, the Premier wasn't interested in this rebate. He talks about Tinkerbell and the bedpost sometimes. He was in political never-never land at the time. He just refused to admit what this bill before us admits, that in fact he made the wrong decision in opening up the marketplace the way he did.

Here's what he said on October 3: "I indicated this morning that I expect the rebate program to be as advertised by OPG and I expect the people of Ontario to be entitled to their rebates." The way it's advertised by OPG is, they wouldn't get it until August of next year. That didn't stay the case. The Premier said it would stay as advertised, then he changed it on November 11.

In the October 8 standing committee on estimates, I asked the energy minister, "When do Ontarians get their rebate?" The minister said, and I quote, "It could be in August; it could be in April." Boy, that sounded a lot like a pre-election goody rebate, August or April. The government refused to roll the rebates out now. Now they're trying to roll out the rebates, but that wasn't their plan in early August. It was our plan; it wasn't their plan.

October 16: I asked the Premier, "Will you agree to roll out the rebate to compensate Ontarians for Herculean hydro rates now?" The Premier said, "We will look at the long-term picture.... It's important to get the entire picture before you decide what a rebate is going to be. You can't do it on the basis of a week or a month or even a three-month period of time." You can't do it, he said. "So it will be important to look at this in a long-term perspective."

Again, this is October 16. This is three weeks before the announcement of this price relief measure and he's still in never-never land. The Premier is still saying, "No, you don't get the rebates yet. You can't do it." He said you can't do it. He just dismissed the Ontario Liberals' effort to get the rebates rolled out now. He dismissed it and said they can't do it.

So we try again, because we don't give up. October 18: I wrote the Premier and said, "With news that September rates are even higher than those of July and August, it is time for you to show some leadership and roll out the hydro rebate for Ontario families and businesses immediately." I didn't get a response to that, or I'm waiting for my response. I guess I got my response and it's the bill before us.

November 5: Dalton McGuinty asked the Premier, "When, Premier, are you going to help these people by providing them with a rebate?... Where is the rebate that they need today?" I don't know how many times we had

to tell the Premier that people can't wait until August, that they can't wait for this long-term rebate, that they can't wait for some pre-election goody, that they need the rebate now. Why? Because bills are unaffordable now. This isn't about giving people a goody. This is about helping people afford their bills. This is about affordable electricity, which the government promised to provide, but did not, and thus we're here today with this bill.

November 5 I asked the Premier, "What people want to know now, Premier, is, when are you going to be rolling out the rebate and how much is the average rebate going to be?" We didn't get an answer from the Premier. We have been trying. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have been trying, and fighting to get that rebate rolled out.

We now have a bill that the government suggested in their responses would never be needed because the rebate would never be needed, and yet we now have the rebate. Why? Because eventually the Premier figured out what Dalton McGuinty had been telling him, and that was that electricity prices were just plain unaffordable. Jobs would be lost. The economy would be further crippled. More people would find themselves unable, in some cases, to pay their rent, those on fixed incomes, or meet their basic needs. Why? Because they couldn't afford their hydro bills. They just couldn't afford them. But now we have it before us.

Is the bill perfect? As soon as the bill was introduced, I asked the Ministry of Energy for a briefing, because obviously there's a lot in this bill and we wanted to make sure that Ontarians were getting the rebates they deserved, that in fact the price shock absorbers were there that were needed. I, as member for a Toronto constituency, was particularly concerned that customers of Toronto Hydro, those who had signed on to fixed contracts, especially those who signed on to fixed contracts unaware of what they had signed, would be protected.

So I asked for the briefing, and we didn't hear back from them. I do not fault anybody in the ministry. I do not fault any of the ministry staff. I know the professional civil servants tried to put something together as quickly as possible. It is sad, frankly, that the bill was introduced before the briefing was ready. I said that obviously I need to have a briefing before I can start debating the bill. That should go without saying. That's not the way it works in the Ontario Legislative Assembly. The briefing was scheduled, guess for what time. It was 4 o'clock this afternoon, when I was rising to speak. Just a fabulous coincidence. In any event, looking at the bill, I can say off the top that there is obviously a great concern that this government has got to address and that they know they have to address.

In his announcement on November 11, the Premier said, and this is from his press release, "Large commercial and industrial consumers could choose between their current arrangements and a fixed 4.3 cents per kilowatt price for power." The problem, as Minister Baird found out afterwards, was that would mean that all the industries, all the big companies, would go with the 4.3 cent

price cap, which would mean that nobody, no generator, could ever get the financing to come in and build in Ontario, because they wouldn't have the anchor base load with a large company and thereby be able to provide power for all Ontarians. So they found out that if they did this, what they promised they'd do on November 11, literally the wholesale marketplace would have shut right down.

A few days later the Minister of Energy said on CBC radio that he was talking with big commercial and industrial users to see if they should be exempt from the freeze and permitted to buy their power on the open market. It's another change of policy, another one after November 11. I would have thought they would have got their fix-up plan fixed up before they announced it, but they didn't. Now the government's in a tough position from a negotiating perspective because they made a promise they know they simply cannot keep. But that is in the current bill and that's a big problem. The government knows it's a problem. Again the homework wasn't done.

Just as they rushed to open the marketplace without having got their act together, this thing was rushed out. They waited too long and found out too long—despite the fact that for months everybody was telling them hydro rates were just too high and hydro bills were unaffordable, they were in denial. The doctrine of denial has set in over there, energy ministers have been shuffled, so if you ask a question of the current energy minister, he could say, "I've only been the energy minister for a few weeks." "What about your predecessor?" No answer. Mercifully we have Hansard, mercifully we have published reports, and so we now have the record in Hansard of what happened.

What happened is that the government was warned that there was not enough supply. The government was warned that they had to have a supply-and-demand plan. The government was warned that they had to have consumer protections. The government went ahead and opened the market anyway. Then when the government found out what a mess it was, there were a lot of shuffles and a lot of prevaricating, and this new bill to try and fix it. But to make matters even worse, the new bill has got a big problem in it, in that it will totally shut down the wholesale marketplace, which the government is relying on desperately for reliable and affordable power. It will shut it down for good.

I have a funny feeling that in the comments in the leadoff from the third party you might just hear a thing or two about Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals, so I would be remiss if I did not, in my remaining five minutes, talk a little bit about New Democrat solutions, diagnosis and prescriptions.

I would say that for all the wrong reasons, Mr Hampton's diagnosis of the electricity system in Ontario did turn out not to be inaccurate. However, now's the time, now that this bill is in and the price freezes are in place, to look at the prescriptions of the New Democratic Party. People may be surprised to learn that one of those

prescriptions involves that thing the NDP allegedly reviles: private power.

If you go to their Web site, you will see they are interested in public-private partnerships. "When new supply was needed, the government would be," and this is a quote from their Web site, "open to bids from non-utility generators who meet environmental standards. Much of this would be independent power." Do you know what independent power is, folks? It's not public power. So do you know what that means? It means it's private power. Independent power is private power.

1700

This whole debate about bringing back public power is a total misnomer. Right now, public power is about all we have: Ontario Power Generation. So any paranoia over privatization, however wrong that may be with Hydro One and how ever wrong it may be, obviously, to privatize the nukes in Hydro, it hasn't happened. It's not privatization that is the sin, and I heard the member from Toronto-Danforth say an hour ago that privatization drove the prices up. Privatization? What privatization? There wasn't any privatization. There wasn't any.

So, then I guess the danger is private power. The NDP says that private power is the enemy. The only robber baron out there right now is a public company. It's called Ontario Power Generation. They're the ones who are making a lot of money. It's not Enron, it's not a private company; it's OPG. So independent power, private power, call it what you want, is the only affordable way, along with public power, that we are going to provide reliable and affordable electricity.

I think it's just a false debate to suggest that this is about privatization and public power and private power. It's not. All three parties want to get so-called independent power producers to come to Ontario because we don't have enough supply. All three parties want that.

If you want to talk about records, and I know the New Democrats just might cite Liberal pronouncements past, and accomplishments past, I suppose I must talk about the NDP record during their governance between 1990 and 1995. This is the government that used hydro by Costa Rican rain forests; raised rates by 40%; built no supply; added \$4.2 billion to the debt in private power contracts; cancelled the hydro lifeline to Manitoba; and promised, and then broke the promise, to give everyone a new refrigerator.

I say with respect to the New Democrats' prescription, they are for private power like everybody else. They are for independent power producers like everybody else.

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: You'll have your chance in a minute.

They'll either blow up the debt, or they'll hike your taxes, or both. They won't say they'll lower rates. They'll just keep them stable, they say. They can't keep power going when we need it most because they refuse to import, and would cancel the Bruce A restore.

The great political tango being played right now between the party in power that engineered this journey of incompetence in electricity and the New Democrats

speaks the line that at least the New Democrats are consistent. I say they were for a competition marketplace in 1997; now they're against it. They say they're against private power, but it's on their Web site. I hope all Ontarians will take a close look at all—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you. Time now for comments and questions.

Ms Churley: The Liberals are still desperately trying to justify their position in support of deregulation and privatization of hydro. They're still trying to make the case for privatization and deregulation. "It's not bad, and it's the right way to go. It's just that these guys, the Tories, blew it, did it all wrong, were incompetent and did it too fast." But if it were the Liberals, they would have done it right, while still ignoring, listening to the speech today, what happened in California and other jurisdictions, completely ignoring the price manipulation that went on, the Enrons of the world. There are already investigations going on here for potential manipulation of the market. They're still ignoring all of these things.

Then he has the nerve to stand up and say that the NDP once supported—now, this is really getting desperate—privatization. A member who has not been with this caucus for several years sat on a committee and was quoted as saying that he had no problem with some private sector involvement. Look, this caucus under this leader has consistently and always opposed privatization and has been the only party to do so. We have made it clear from that time on, and we have never wavered from that position.

We have always said that changes need to be made. We still say that changes should be made, but we are the only party that's made it clear that we do not support privatization and deregulation. That is the bottom line here. We have seen from other jurisdictions that it doesn't work. We predicted the rate increases. We predict brownouts and blackouts, given what's going on. The NDP does have a credible plan to deal with all of those issues.

Mr McDonald: I listened to Mr Bryant speak. I have some Hansard quotes here that I just want to read on their position on hydro. Sean Conway, invitation to a \$350-per-person energy sector reception: "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario."

This goes on to say, "I think that it's important that we move ahead with competition both in terms of generation and in terms of the transmission."

Sean Conway says, "Let me be clear. We need a competitive marketplace." The electricity market that we have "is one where we see a competitive market in the generation of electricity."

Mr McGuinty goes on, "I have been very consistent with respect to Hydro One. I think it should be kept in public hands. I have been very consistent when it comes to generation" that it should be competitive.

Mr Bryant says, "The only way we're going to get more made-in-Ontario electricity is to permit the private sector to come in and build made-in-Ontario electricity."

Mr McGuinty says, "The responsible thing to do would be to bring the private sector in with the public sector and say, 'Look, folks, we're going to have to work together here in a place where there is real competition and tough regulations to make sure that we can have' sufficient electricity.

Mr McGuinty goes on to say, "Rates may very well have to go up. We've been getting a bit of a free ride here in terms of the debt...." He also says, "I'm not saying today that I'm guaranteeing we're going to leave this ... package" together. This was on November 15.

Mr Bryant, on October 28, 2002, said, "Our position has not changed since 1997." Mr Bryant, I agree with you. You don't have a position on hydro.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I am delighted to participate in—

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Monte, tell us about Patti Starr.

Mr Kwinter: Let me just tell you about some other things first.

What I really want to talk about is that this government never misses an opportunity to seize an opportunity. When they made their announcement on November 11, this sort of casual view of the Premier sitting down in a typical Ontarian's living room to talk about the fact that he was going to give that family a rebate—this is a family that had a 50-inch television set and lives in a house that most people would aspire to in their dreams. And what happens? Instead of coaching this person—because obviously this wasn't just a casual drive-by where he said, "Let's drop in there and talk to this person and see what they have to say." They had to bring in generators, they had to bring in the media. It was fully orchestrated.

"What do you think of this?" She said, "Oh, this is wonderful. We thought we were going to have to cut back on our Christmas lights and now we're going to have to put out all of our Christmas lights again. That's fabulous."

She could have said, "Mr Premier, do you know what? We really appreciate the fact that you're trying to help us out, and to show that we are going to do our part, we are going to cut back on our Christmas lights." A kilowatt of energy saved is more valuable than a kilowatt of energy generated, because you've got to pay to generate it. When you save it, it costs you nothing. In the end of the equation, one kilowatt saved is identical to one kilowatt generated, other than the cost. I think there was an opportunity that could have been followed. It could have sent a signal to the people of Ontario that we are prof-ligate.

I talk about the member for Nipissing; I agree with him. When I'm down in Florida and I talk to people, because of the cost of power, they are so conscious. You cannot buy an electric kettle in Florida because it draws too much power. People don't turn on their air condition-

ing until they need it. I'm saying that this is an area this government should pursue.

1710

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The member for St Paul's speaks of free fridges. How enviable it is to be so young, because I remember the government of paint jobs and free fridges. It was the Liberal Peterson government of Patti Starr. As a matter of fact, one of the first capers that Shelley Martel and I ever embarked upon was when, with great stealth, we made our way up to Eglinton Avenue, west of Yonge, on the north side, to the House of Chan, purported hangout of the Starr gang; to wit, the Patti Starr gang. We expected, opening the doors of this very reputable steak and Chinese food joint, to walk in, and we thought it was going to look like Leon's, you know, the Price warehouse with rows and rows of fridges, along with the vault where all the misappropriated funds were being stashed. That's what "fridges" triggers for me, the fridges that were being doled out by virtue of the Patti Starr largesse, she of the House of Chan—not a bad steakhouse, in the total scheme of things.

I just find it incredible that a Liberal would want to talk about fridges being given away, when those fridges and the free paint jobs—indeed, I watched cabinet minister after cabinet minister being hung out to dry, flapping in the wind, as the Patti Starr scandal and its stench regrettably took down, among other things, that government.

But I want to tell you this: I've been proud to stand with Howard Hampton. I've been proud to join him on the public power bus. I've been proud to access his Web site, www.publicpower.ca, because it's the New Democrats who are advocating and fighting for public power, hydro at cost, publicly owned, publicly controlled, regulated.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Paul's has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bryant: I don't know if many people watching that would understand what was just said. The New Democrats are very sensitive on this issue. The truth is that the New Democrats in 1997 were very much in support of the competition marketplace. It was great to listen to the member for Toronto-Danforth say that, despite the fact that Mr Laughren, the NDP representative on the select committee on energy, in 1997 was their representative under the current leader, Mr Hampton, and he said, "I don't have a big problem with bringing competition into the system." I think what the member for Toronto-Danforth seems to be saying is, "He wasn't speaking for the NDP."

Then you might think that in the NDP's final, concluding report they might have disavowed themselves from their representative, but they didn't. There was not a word of that. Obviously Mr Laughren was speaking on behalf of the New Democrats—that's how it works on these committees—as Mr Conway did for the Liberals. What the New Democrats said in their final report was,

"We support changes to the way Ontario's electricity market is structured."

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: No, that's Mr Hampton and the New Democrats.

The reality is that the New Democrats know that there has to be a mix of rebates and price shock absorbers and there have to be independent power producers and public power producers. We are all now going to try and figure out, after the Tories shipwrecked our electricity system, how to move forward in that direction. But let's not pretend that there are any magic bullets out there on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Now we're going in rotation for debate.

Mr Hampton: I am very pleased to take part in this debate. It's always interesting to see how the Liberals could take a debate about hydro electricity and turn it into a revealing history of free fridges in the Liberal government of 1987 to 1990. I will avoid any fascination with free fridges. Instead, I want to focus on how important a dependable, reliable supply of hydro electricity is to Ontario's residents and Ontario's industries and, equally, how important it is to have hydro electricity that is affordable and predictable in terms of the pricing.

There is some history to this whole issue, and I welcome anyone at home—if you've got a public library in your community, chances are they will have a Hansard of the Ontario Legislature. You can go to your public library; you can probably access it either electronically or in print. I welcome you going to the Hansard, either electronically or in print, because there is a very interesting history here.

The Liberals now, as we heard from the last speaker, are desperately searching around for something to hang on to in this debate. I want to point out why Liberals are so desperately looking around for something to hang on to.

We know the Conservative position. The Conservative position—and I think they started enunciating their position in about 1996. Before that they talked about how they wanted to make some changes to the electricity system, but in 1996 they started talking about the prospects of privatization and the prospects of competition, and yes, there was in fact a committee of the Legislature to study the issue.

The Conservatives put forward their position; they wanted privatization. They wanted competition. The Liberals got on board, totally; they wanted privatization, deregulation, competition. The New Democrats said, "Yes, we see some need for changes in terms of the hydro system in Ontario," but we felt strongly enough that we actually issued a dissenting report. The Liberals and Conservatives agreed on a report; the New Democrats issued a dissenting report. We said that there are some real problems here—problems for the environment and problems for consumers. Did the Liberals dissent from the Conservative fascination with privatization,

deregulation? Not at all. The Liberals were right there, right along with them.

In fact, I researched my files. It's interesting when you keep files, because you can go back to those files and you can read them into the record. This is a file from February 5, 2001. It's Radio 640 AM in Toronto, and the host is Larry Silver, and he is interviewing the leader of the Liberal Party, Mr McGuinty. He asks him some questions about hydro privatization.

He starts out by saying, "I'd like to talk to you"—Mr McGuinty—"about hydro deregulation. Howard Hampton, from the New Democrats, has raised a flag, and I'd like the Liberal viewpoint on that topic...."

He continues. Mr Silver says, "The Harris government has plans to deregulate the hydro industry later this year, you know, open it up to the private sector, have other people supply you your hydro. Now NDP leader Howard Hampton, he is warning that homeowners, businesses, everybody will get stung by this, that they're going to face higher hydro bills if the province does proceed with the deregulation of the electricity sector." This is back on February 5, 2001. This is some time ago; we're almost talking two years ago. "Dalton McGuinty, what's the Liberal stand on this idea?"

Very clear question: "Dalton McGuinty, what's the Liberal stand on this idea?" Mr McGuinty responds, and I want to quote: "Well, first of all, I don't bring any kind of ideological bent when it comes to deregulation." I think this is what the Liberals mean when they also say that they have open minds when it comes to privatization of health care too. It doesn't come with any ideological bent. He says, "The fact of the matter is, Larry, that some deregulations are good and some are bad. From the Ontario family perspective, when I'm knocking on doors here at election time or at any time between elections, and you talk to people, when they think about hydro, there are only three things that they want to focus on. They want to know, 'What's going to happen to my rates?' They want to know, 'Is it going to be reliable? I want to make damn sure when I flick the switch the lights come on. That's very important to me in business and at home.' And the third thing they always want to know about is, 'Is there going to be safe generation of electricity here? Is it going to be safe for me and my kids?'"

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He launches into an attack on Ontario Hydro—it's funny, it's the same attack the Conservatives launch into: "Now, we had a problem with Ontario Hydro. We had a runaway locomotive on our hands. Costs were skyrocketing out of control. They were into all kinds of things that they shouldn't have been into, and the problem was they didn't face any competition." This is the Liberal leader speaking. "So we believe that there should be deregulation in Ontario Hydro and introduce competition and help bring this beast to heel. What we've got to make sure is going to happen, though, Larry, is to make sure that we've got some real competition in place, and so far what the government has done from our perspective is they haven't taken the steps necessary to make

sure before they completely deregulate that there are enough stronger competitors...."

I can only conclude that Mr McGuinty wanted privatization to proceed faster and further.

Mr Silver, the host, then asks another question. Basically, he asks Mr McGuinty, "And you know what I'm concerned about is, and I bring it back to the Highway 407 issue, is that they said, 'OK, no, we've got it in place. The Quebec company can run the 407.' Do you approve of that?"

McGuinty: "Well, that's just it. When they were proceeding with their bill, which is going to bring about this deregulation, we specifically asked that the government include a clause in the new law that guaranteed that rates would come down as a result of deregulation. I mean, that's the whole idea behind this thing is to bring in competition and to bring rates down."

McGuinty finally ends with, "I mean, who's ultimately going to be responsible, and that's a question that the government has failed to properly answer yet, so again, we believe you've got to go towards deregulation.... That's the way to introduce real competition."

When you read that, it sounds to me like the Liberal position was pretty clear: privatization. And you needed, according to Liberals, to sell it all off and sell it quickly—complete deregulation—and then competition would do the rest.

New Democrats have never bought into that. New Democrats have said from the beginning that if the government wanted to go down this road, there had to be real measures in place to protect consumers and to protect the environment. We didn't buy into this process. We submitted a dissenting report to the one which the Conservatives and Liberals bought into. That continues to be our position today.

Even after February 1, 2001, New Democrats continued to point out that if you looked around, deregulation and privatization of electricity was not working out very well anywhere.

It wasn't working out in California, where prices didn't go up by 10 times, by 20 times, even 30 times; they went up by 50 times. Just to get a sense of the magnitude of what happened in California: in 1998, before California started putting in place the deregulation measures, the all-in cost of hydro electricity, of power, in California, was \$8 billion. That's for industry, for consumers, for institutions like hospitals, colleges, etc. Two years later, after deregulation had been implemented and was now operating on an almost full-blown basis, the all-in cost of hydroelectricity in California went up to \$29 billion a year—from \$8 billion to \$29 billion.

If people read from time to time that corporations are being brought before judges and juries or being brought before commissions of inquiry, the reason for that is, consumers and industry in California are trying to figure out who made off with the \$21 billion; who stole \$21 billion out of the pockets of California consumers by means of deregulating the hydro electricity system. That's what Californians want to find the answer to.

I could perhaps give them some information about where the money went to. The Enron executives, before the house of cards started to collapse, shipped several suitcases to the Cayman Islands. I bet if someone were to open those suitcases, they would find an awful lot of money. Some of that money, I suspect, even found its way into George Bush's election campaign, since Enron was the major financial contributor to Mr Bush's election campaign. They even allowed Mr Bush to use the corporate jet to fly around the country. But it wasn't just Enron. There were several other private hydro generators in California who, it now is very clear, did exactly as Enron did. Once the market was deregulated, they manipulated the supply of hydroelectricity. They shut down generating stations. They created an artificial electricity shortage, and then when that electricity shortage happened and people needed electricity, they just jacked up the price. They jacked it up and jacked it up until California consumers were gouged out of \$21 billion of unjustifiable charges in one year. That was the evidence before this Legislature.

I brought those issues into this Legislature day in, day out. I questioned former Minister of Energy Mr Wilson. I questioned former Minister of Energy Mr Stockwell. We all questioned them. We said, "Are you paying attention to what happened in California?" "In view of what happened in California, don't you think you should watch carefully what's happening here?"

Sorry, Speaker.

Interjection: Howdy, Jonathan.

Interjection: Hi, Jonathan.

Mr Hampton: It's not every day that a four-and-a-half-year-old boy gets to come to watch his father speak. I'm sure he'd rather watch me play hockey, but this will have to do today.

So this was not stuff out of the blue. We asked these questions in the Legislature.

Then there was the fiasco in Alberta. Before deregulation and privatization, Albertans had some of the most affordable electricity rates in North America. Why? It's pretty easy to understand why. You've got those huge natural gas fields. You can take the natural gas right out of the ground, you can run it into a generating station and you can generate electricity right there. In fact, if you go to Medicine Hat, and I invite all members of the Conservative caucus—it's safe territory for you; the MLA from Medicine Hat is a Conservative. I've been there. In Medicine Hat, Alberta, the natural gas fields are right there. They take the gas out of the ground, they run it into a generating station and they generate electricity right there. It is some of the least expensive electricity in all of North America. That's what Alberta had.

Then the Klein government proceeds along the same path that this government has been on and they try to force municipalities to sell off their electricity system and they engage in deregulation. What happened? Hydro prices, hydro bills, shot through the roof again. In fact, Alberta consumers became so angry that Premier Klein in Alberta, a Conservative Premier, brought in—now, get

this—first of all, rebate cheques. Just before the Alberta election, he started mailing out rebate cheques to electricity consumers in Alberta. He proclaimed a rate cap. In fact, the estimate is that Alberta spent over \$2.3 billion of taxpayers' money to hide the cost of deregulated, privatized hydroelectricity from Alberta consumers. Then they called an election.

My colleagues in Alberta, New Democrat colleagues, said to the people of Alberta, "Look, as soon as the election is over, the price caps will come off; the rebate will disappear." In Alberta, they always vote Conservative, so they voted Conservative again. But what happened? Almost within six months after the election—the official election results weren't even in yet in terms of all the tabulations and being printed—what happened? Off came the price caps. Off went the hydro bill rebate. What happened to people's hydro bills? They went through the roof again.

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That's not the end of the story. In fact, if you read these radical newspapers, like the Red Deer Advocate from the home of Stockwell Day—some of the Conservative members might know Stockwell; they might know him personally—it regularly writes editorials complaining about the manipulation of the Alberta electricity market by private generating companies. It regularly complains about the price gouging, the price fixing that's going on.

In fact, what you're seeing in Alberta now is some companies that have no interest in electricity, other than that they need electricity for their business, having to go out and build their own generating capacity. Why? Because they can't depend on the privatized, deregulated market in Alberta to deliver predictable, reliable supplies of electricity at affordable and predictable prices. It's unbelievable. That's what happened in Alberta.

It doesn't end there. Do you know that a mere three weeks ago in the state elections in the United States the people of Montana voted overwhelmingly to terminate deregulation of electricity in that state? Why? Because after deregulation of the system, the price of hydroelectricity in that state went up four times. After people experienced that, they said, "We're not having anything to do with it. We're having nothing to do with it." They voted to terminate deregulation and have a regulated electricity price again.

In Nevada, where they gamble on just about everything, people there have voted in a referendum to abandon, to cancel, to terminate hydroelectricity deregulation there as well. Why? Again, deregulation resulted in very high prices, huge price spikes and resulted in an unreliable, unpredictable supply of electricity.

When will this government learn? Have they learned yet? Well, this bill suggests to us they haven't learned a thing. The Electricity Pricing, Conservation and Supply Act reads like a carbon copy of Ralph Klein's playbook in Alberta. The government has to call an election probably within a few months. They know that people are angry about hydro prices that have gone through the roof.

What do they do? They bring in rebates and a price cap just before the election. They say that this rebate and price cap is going to continue on far into the future. I'll make another prediction here today: these rebates and this price cap will last for about two months after the next election. Then, as in Alberta, they will be terminated.

What is this legislation all about? I'm sure you've heard of Rent-a-Car, Rent-a-Maid or Rent-a-Wreck? This is called Rent-a-Vote. Bring in a rebate just before the election, provide some price caps just before the election, and rent a vote.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Rent-a-Boat?

Ms Churley: Vote: V-O-T-E.

Mr Dunlop: Is that like your bus? You mean boats, not votes.

Mr Hampton: That's exactly what it's about.

Mr Kormos: A boat's a different issue. That's the Hydro One boat.

Ms Churley: Yes, a sailboat.

Mr Hampton: If they want to talk about boats, I'd be happy to talk about the Hydro One yacht, because that's the other part of this. You see, they said both to Hydro One and to Ontario Power Generation, "You're going to be privatized, so start acting like those big, mean dogs on Bay Street. Move your salaries up from that measly \$500,000 a year you're getting paid now as the president of Hydro One. Yes, \$2.5 million." So they did. The government said, "We recognize that you want to have a better car. Go out and buy the most expensive Mercedes you can and it'll be paid for through people's hydro rates. And oh, by the way, when you get tired of driving the Mercedes around, just take a limousine." So the president ran up limousine expenses. I think it was \$183,000 in a year. The former president at Hydro One had this fascination with sailing, so they got a yacht. She didn't pay for it privately; it was paid for out of the people's money. That's what goes on here. That's why privatization is so wrong. That's why deregulation is so wrong.

This is an essential public service. People need it every day. People shouldn't be paying for yachts and Mercedes and \$6-million retirement allowances and \$2.5-million salaries on their hydro bill. But that was this government's strategy. That was fine by this government—until they got caught and it became public. Then, "Oh, we've got to cover that up." That's what this bill is. This bill is nothing other than an attempt to hide from the people of Ontario the true cost of privatized, deregulated hydro.

Why does privatized, deregulated hydro cost so much? This is something people want to know. I suggest they go to their hydro bill, because now you'll find eight, maybe nine charges on the hydro bill. Why? Those charges are simply an indication of all the profit-takers, the fee-takers and the commission-takers that are now on your hydro bill, thanks to the Conservative government, with Liberal help.

In a not-for-profit hydroelectricity system, whatever it costs to generate, transmit and distribute electricity is

what people pay. Under the system the Conservative government created, the generating company not only wants their costs, but if they can soak you for a 40% profit or a 50% profit, or in the case of Enron and others if they can jack up the price 20 times, they'll do it. The transmission company: they want their 10% or 15% profit. The distribution company wants their 10% or 15% profit. And I shouldn't forget the president of OPG or the president of Hydro One, because they want their \$2 million or \$3 million or \$4 million. Then the folks on Bay Street who move the money around in the background wanted a \$200-million or \$300-million commission. Then the real parasites, the electricity retailers, the Direct Energys, if you read the contracts they fleeced people into signing, they wanted a 40% markup too.

When you've got all these profit-takers, fee-takers and commission-takers on the hydro bill, it is no wonder someone's bill goes from \$100 a month for hydro to \$200 a month or more. No wonder. The corporate friends of this government are all lined up on people's hydro bills, trying to get into their pockets. That's what was going on.

I want to say a word about Direct Energy. They are a really interesting outfit. Just over the last month, I've had about four or five constituents come into my constituency office and they will hold up a contract. In this case they were natural gas contracts. They will hold up a contract they signed with Direct Energy in, say, 1999 or 2000, and in the contract, Direct Energy promised to provide them with natural gas at, say, 11 cents a cubic metre. When you read the contract, it's very clear: 11 cents a cubic metre. You can see the person's signature.

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Then they show you a bill they received the first month or two months after signing this and, yes, it's for 11 cents a cubic metre. Then they show you a bill six months later and suddenly the price shoots up to 35 cents a cubic metre. They'll show you a letter they wrote to Direct Energy saying, "Why are you charging me 35 cents a cubic metre when you said you'd deliver it at 11 cents?" There's no response. Then they show you another letter, and no response, and they show you another letter, and no response. So I took their contracts and I took their letters and I wrote to the energy board and said, "What's going on here?"

What we got back was that the energy board said very clearly, "Direct Energy has done something quite illegal here." They've ordered Direct Energy to reduce the price to that which was agreed on in the contract and they've ordered Direct Energy to rebate these people for the overcharges. What's interesting is that despite the consumer writing to Direct Energy, despite the consumer phoning Direct Energy, despite the fact that the consumer time and time again asked Direct Energy to look at the contract and provide gas according to the contract, Direct Energy ignored them. Direct Energy deliberately and intentionally engaged in a strategy of price gouging of those consumers.

That's exactly what this government has invited into the hydroelectricity system. The shock of people. I remember when I confronted Premier Eves with the high hydro bills, he said, "Well, people should sign up with an electricity retailer." Then I brought a Direct Energy bill in, and again it had doubled. Why? Because, when you read the fine print of the Direct Energy situation, they were bumping this person's price up by 50%. They were going to charge him 50% more than he'd ever paid before, but they were going to tell him it was a good deal. That's why people's hydro bills have gone through the roof.

What is the government going to try to do here? Temporarily, they will try to hide this from the consumers of Ontario, from the public of Ontario, until after the next election. Now what is this going to cost, because it is going to cost something, and how is it going to be paid for? Here is the great irony. I remember all the former Ministers of Energy, this Premier, the former Premier, saying that the reason the government had to privatize Ontario Hydro was that there was a debt. That's what they said. They had they privatize because there was a debt. How is this government now going to hide the true cost of privatized, deregulated electricity from people? They're simply going to drive up the debt. When you read the legislation, that's what it says. They're going to drive up the debt. They're going to hide the true cost of very highly priced, privatized, deregulated electricity by simply putting it on the debt.

What's the other way they're going to do it? The other way is to do something this government has done a lot of, which is download on to the municipalities. They have already engaged in a course of action where they blame the municipalities. They blame the municipal utilities: Toronto Hydro, Mississauga Hydro, Hamilton Hydro, London Hydro, Thunder Bay Hydro, Greater Sudbury Hydro, Ottawa Hydro. They blame the municipal hydro utilities. In fact, what they're going to do is push a lot of the costs of this cover-up down on to the municipal hydro utilities.

We've got a number of municipal hydro utilities that are already on the brink of bankruptcy, that are already in difficult financial situations, thanks to this government. What will happen to those municipal utilities? By the way, those municipal hydro utilities delivered the hydro to people's homes for over 80 years in a reliable and predictable fashion and at an affordable price. Now they are being pushed to brink of bankruptcy by this government. What can they do?

The one thing that municipalities will be forced to do is to sell off their municipal hydro utility. I say to people out there, bad deal; don't do it. If you do that, you expose yourself even more to the rip-offs that you saw happen in California, that you saw happen in Alberta and that you saw earlier here in Ontario, over the summer. You're even more exposed.

The other option for municipalities is to increase property taxes to pay for the costs that are being pushed on to the municipal hydro utility for this government. What

does it amount to? Not only is the \$75 rebate cheque in effect a pre-election, rent-a-vote scheme, but it's one that people will pay for through their property taxes. So you get a \$75 rebate cheque and then you get a \$100 increase in your property taxes. You lose. But add on to that that after the election your hydro bill goes back up again.

That's what is about to happen here. That's why New Democrats oppose this legislation. I know Liberals are in favour of it and Conservatives are in favour of it. I'm not surprised at that. Liberals and Conservatives have been together on this from the beginning and they're together on it now. New Democrats are calling it what it is: nothing but a scheme, a scam to cover the cost of privatized, deregulated hydro until after the election. It is nothing but a scheme, a scam to rent people's votes until after the election.

There are some other aspects of this, some really terrible aspects. I had an opportunity the other day to talk with Tom Adams, the executive director of Energy Probe. Mr Adams and I have our very clear differences. Mr Adams has been a friend of the Conservative government and a friend of the Liberals in that he advised them both on hydro deregulation and privatization. In fact, I think he served on the market design committee. He is still an almost religious proponent of hydro deregulation and privatization. But do you know what he said to me the other day? He said, because of what this government has done, because of the fact that they have gone down this road of hydro deregulation and privatization without ensuring there is adequate supply, that we could very well see blackouts in Ontario this winter. Keep this in mind.

We built a public power system in this province after 1910 and into the 1920s. Since that time, I think there have been only one or two situations over an 80-year history where there was a power blackout or brownout. But he said, "Thanks to this government, and thanks to the Liberals for helping them, Ontario realistically faces the prospect of a blackout this winter, people not having enough hydro."

Imagine for a minute: we know that the temperature in this province in winter can go down to 30 below, 20 below—10 below is cold enough. Imagine people who depend upon electric heat not having electricity under those conditions. Imagine people who have to rely upon medical equipment that is powered by electricity when it's 30 below and the power goes out. Imagine the risk that people in Ontario are now forced to undergo because this government refused to heed the warnings of California and Alberta, because Liberals refused to recognize what was happening in California and Alberta as a result of hydro deregulation and privatization. That is, regrettably, a real risk this winter for people across this province.

On a very cold day we could see significant parts of the province not have electricity. It's not just electric heat that this affects. If you've got some other kind of furnace and you do not have electricity, then the furnace doesn't come on either. If you've got an oil furnace and the

electricity doesn't work to ignite the system, the heat doesn't come on; natural gas, the heat doesn't come on. This puts literally millions of people across Ontario at great risk this very winter.

I say to people that this will not happen by accident. This will happen because a government was so arrogant that it thought it could ignore the experience of California, it thought it could ignore the experience of Alberta and other jurisdictions. This will happen despite the warnings. It will happen because the government ignored the warnings.

I want to speak a bit about the future here. One of the other aspects of this is that the government says that they're going to provide some incentives for new hydro generation. I've been out there and I've talked to a number of the private companies. I've talked to Brascan. I knew Brascan's corporate strategy when they bought four hydro dams from Ontario Power Generation a year ago. By the way, they got a great deal. Our estimate is that the government sold off those hydro dams for about half of what they were worth. If you compare the generating capacity of those hydro dams with other hydro dams that were privatized in the United States during the same period, this government sold them at about half price.

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Brascan used them to make a ton of money this summer when the price of privatized, deregulated electricity shot up to \$1,000 a megawatt hour. I talked to Brascan. Brascan was clear about what they're going to do. They're going to apply to put an electricity transmission cable under the St Mary's River so that they can transmit electricity into Michigan. They're interested in accessing the Milwaukee-Chicago market where prices are 40% higher than they have been in Ontario, and they estimate that through the difference in price, the much higher American price plus the exchange rate, they can make a substantial amount of money.

They also said at the same time that as soon as they access that American market in a deregulated, privatized environment, as soon as they access that much higher price, then that is the price that they will want from their consumers in Sault Ste Marie, in Wawa, in Blind River, in Garden River and elsewhere along the north shore of Lake Huron.

There's nothing in this strategy to protect consumers. It's not about lower rates. In fact Brascan is very clear. They said, "If the government wants us to build new generating stations, new hydro generating capacity in Ontario, the price will have to go even higher in Ontario." That's what they said.

We've called up Sithe Energies. Sithe was proposing to build two natural gas generating stations, about 500 megawatts each. The government was even boasting about them before they were built. I can remember some of the members standing up saying, "Great news about hydro deregulation and privatization: a new generating station is going to be built in Mississauga by Sithe Energies." I think even a couple of the Liberals joined in

on that announcement. And what happened? The prices didn't go high enough. If the prices had gone higher, then they'd be interested in building.

The price didn't go high enough. It seems to me that what the government is also trying to hide from people is that if the key to new hydroelectric supply is private generation, profit-driven generation, the price will have to go even higher still.

I have to hand it to Mr McGuinty. I'm not sure which Mr McGuinty this was, because there have been several nuances and changes of position. Oh, this was the Mr McGuinty of December 13, 2001. About a year ago he said—this is a quote in the *Globe and Mail*—"Rates may very well have to go up. We've been getting a bit of a free ride here in terms of the debt that Ontario Hydro has amassed." This is the same Dalton McGuinty that now says he agrees with the rate cap. He's in favour of the rate cap. Just throw it on the debt and pay for it through the debt.

That's the truth about privatized, deregulated electricity. If you want private, profit-driven companies to come to Ontario to generate electricity, the price will have to go even higher still.

I also want to talk a bit about energy conservation. The government made some, at best, embarrassing announcements over the last couple of weeks. In fact Hydrozilla went to one of the announcements. Hydrozilla, frankly, I think stole the show on the government. Hydrozilla is this left-leaning lizard who goes around eating wallets because that's what privatized, deregulated electricity does: it eats your wallet. It takes your money. And then when it has taken your money it comes back for more.

The government made what were clearly embarrassing announcements. The Minister of Energy drove up in a car powered by bacon fat. What that has to do with hydro-electricity and what it has to do with energy conservation, I don't know. As I said before, perhaps that is an illustration of this government's fascination with pork-barrelling. This is a government that believes that you send out a rebate before the election and then you just roll in the votes: rent-a-vote, as I say.

What was so embarrassing about this government's announcement is that it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. Ontario does need a conservation strategy. There was a conservation strategy in place in 1995. It was called the Green Communities strategy. This government got rid of it. Do you know why? Because the profit-driven private hydro companies didn't want it. They didn't want it. Why don't they want it? Because they want to sell as much electricity as possible at the highest possible price. That's how you jack up your profits. If you're an Enron, a Brascan or a British Energy—although British Energy's turning out to be quite an embarrassment for this government too since they're now bankrupt.

Interjection.

Mr Hampton: Oh, yes. Read the news reports today, John.

Profit-driven private hydro companies don't want conservation strategies. That's why this government got rid of the Green Communities strategy in 1995. But this province desperately needs one. We need to put in place at least a \$300-million-a-year strategy where we can work with municipalities, boards of education and community groups to retrofit hospitals, schools or community centres, to retrofit apartment buildings to reduce the electricity that is consumed, to reduce the natural gas that is consumed, so that when their hydro bill goes down and their natural gas bill goes down, people can then repay the loan from the fund which allowed them to do the retrofit in the first place.

Then, you take that money and you roll it into the next community, the next apartment building or the next group of private homes. Over the course of a couple of years, we can substantially reduce the electricity and the natural gas that we consume in this province.

Ms Churley: And meet our Kyoto targets too.

Mr Hampton: And meet our Kyoto targets at the same time. But does the government have a strategy for that? No. No strategy at all.

What did they announce? I will say that taking off the provincial sales tax on the sale of freezers, refrigerators

and other electrical appliances is not a bad move, except for most lower- and modest-income families, that \$20 or \$30 is not enough to help them purchase.

Now, if you're dealing with the Liberals and Patti Starr and they're giving away free fridges, it might work, but not everyone can get on that form of payola. Not everyone is that connected to the Liberal insiders.

Mr Kormos: Or that star-struck.

Mr Hampton: Or that star-struck, for that matter. But I just say to you, your offer to reduce the PST is not going to help the majority of modest- and low-income families across this province, because it's not enough of a price reduction to allow them to buy the fridge, the stove, the freezer or any other electrical appliance. As a public relations gesture, it's not bad, except Hydrozilla took over the press conference, but as an effective conservation strategy it's nothing, nada. It doesn't do a thing.

Speaker, I note that it is 6 of the clock. I move adjournment for now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Mushinski): It now being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until a quarter to 7.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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