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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 1 December 2003**

**Lundi 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2003

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I rise today to bring to Ontarians' attention another broken Liberal promise. Last Thursday, Dalton McGuinty told the Legislature that he would move to amend the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. He said, "This legislation is not having the intended effect." In Daltonland, words and commitment are simply a ploy to get elected. Dalton voted for the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. He said in his election platform that he would support it and not bend it at his whim. Dalton even signed a pledge to uphold this legislation just 10 weeks ago. Now the Premier is telling Ontarians that the legislation is not having the intended effect.

Dalton's attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of voters is not having its desired effect, as the Premier would wish. Liberals in Daltonland know that cynical politics would be their demise, yet they are forging ahead without a thought to keeping their promises. Surely Dalton will claim that he's improving the taxpayer protection act, but can we trust him? Can we take the Premier at his word? He has already raised our taxes, he is planning new user fees for seniors, he is raising hydro rates for homeowners and businesses and he is killing jobs and destroying opportunity for the people of Ontario. Dalton is the chief promise-breaker, and the people are starting to realize it.

#### TRILLIUM GRANTS

**Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls):** First let me thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in the House today. I'm pleased to represent the people of Niagara Falls riding, and I rise today to congratulate the many worthwhile organizations that recently received Trillium grants in my riding. I'm delighted these grants cover a wide variety of necessary community projects that will benefit even more people in our community.

The Royal Canadian Legion will have the opportunity to repair a roof on their vital community facility. St John Ambulance will receive a new mobile emergency first-aid post to serve attendees at the many community

activities. The Stamford Centre Volunteer Firemen's Association is able to make improvements to an outdoor theatre that attracts thousands of people to the north end of our community. The disabled will be better served with accessible washrooms at our important community facility the church of St John the Evangelist. Information Niagara will be able to develop a strategy to use volunteers to effectively disseminate information and referral services to our many diverse communities.

Many valuable services exist in Niagara Falls that rely on volunteers. I'd like to commend the individuals for giving back to their community and making Niagara Falls a great place to live, to work, to play and of course to visit.

#### SENIORS

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** Thanks to this new Liberal government, last week was one of the darkest weeks in Ontario's history for Ontario's 1.6 million seniors. This has to be some of the worst news they've ever received.

On Monday, seniors learned of the largest single tax increase in Ontario's history, with the loss of the seniors' education tax credit coupled with the loss of their provincial income tax cuts. The average senior is going to pay \$1,000 more.

On Tuesday, seniors learned that effective April 1, their electricity bills will increase by a minimum of 25%. An average senior will pay anywhere from \$600 to \$800 more a year.

On Wednesday, seniors learned that all of a sudden the promise of a rollback of auto insurance premiums wasn't going to happen. Seniors with good driving records would see their recent 30% and 40% increases upheld and, in fact, only see less coverage and maybe the loss of their seniors' discount as a result.

On Friday, seniors learned that this government was planning to eliminate the prescription drug program and begin income-testing it for seniors across our province.

Seniors have enjoyed the benefit of the lowest-cost drug program in North America. This is a program which does cost the government, along with social assistance recipients, about \$2.4 billion. It is not covered under the Canada Health Act. Yet, in 1997, the federal government promised a national drug program. Why did they not deliver it? Because they could not meet the standard in Ontario to provide as much coverage.

So the real plan here is yet another sell-out to the federal government to bring in an income-tested drug

plan. This will raise the threshold and raise hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for a drug plan.

Seniors in Ontario deserve to live with dignity and respect, and this government is taking it away from them with another broken promise.

#### HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** Tomorrow a new Hamilton city council gets sworn into office. I rise today to offer my congratulations to the candidates for municipal office who were elected on November 10. The voters have demonstrated their faith in them and in the work they do, and I know that faith is well placed.

I would like to recognize the efforts of all the candidates who ran for office but were unsuccessful. It takes a special kind of commitment and dedication to the community to put your name on the ballot.

I also take the opportunity to offer my special congratulations to Mayor-elect Larry DiIanni. Larry ran on a platform that offered hope and opportunity for the future of Hamilton, and as well to move past the divisive issues that have plagued our great city. This type of leadership will serve the city well in the months and years ahead. I've known Larry DiIanni for a long time, since my days on city council, and I know him to be a person of great integrity, great intelligence and great commitment to the people he serves.

I know that under Larry DiIanni's leadership, Hamilton will be well served, and that leadership will reach out to all aspects of our community.

Also, this week the new school boards will be put back in place. Hamilton Board of Education will be sworn in. The powers that were taken away by the previous government and the supervisor will be returned to the trustees. I know that it's an especially exciting week for trustees on the Hamilton board, because they will finally have the opportunity to carry out the mandate given to them by the people of Hamilton.

I also want to congratulate the trustees in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board for their successful re-election. I know they will continue to serve us well.

Once again, I offer my congratulations to Mayor-elect DiIanni for a victory well deserved, and to a city that's going to be very grateful for that victory.

#### PROJECT TURNAROUND

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I rise today on behalf of the operator, parents and youth involved in Project Turnaround, the strict-discipline facility for young offenders near Midland.

On Friday morning, the young offenders from Project Turnaround were carted away to other facilities, in spite of the fact that Minister Kwinter announced only two days earlier that the facility was to close when the operator's contract expires on January 31.

I'd like to thank the media for letting us know about this secretive move by the Liberals. I'll bet the Liberals

thought no one would find out by executing this dirty manoeuvre on a Friday, when the House isn't sitting. I'm holding them accountable today with this statement that will become part of Hansard.

**1340**

Why did the Liberals move so quickly to shut down this successful program? Don't be fooled when they say it is for economic reasons. We know otherwise. The cost to operate Project Turnaround is 33% less per diem per inmate. Why should we believe them when the minister himself doesn't even know the correct name of the facility and program? On November 27, I had to correct Minister Kwinter in this House on several facts about Project Turnaround, including the name of the program.

You'd think that Dalton McGuinty would have the common courtesy to let people know before they shut the door in their face. With this spiteful move, the Liberals have sent a strong message: Dalton McGuinty is not a friend of community safety, nor is he a friend of business.

Closing Project Turnaround, apart from the jobs that will be lost, will end up costing Ontario taxpayers more money to house young offenders as Dalton McGuinty pays back his union leader buddies.

#### PROSTATE CANCER

**Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East):** On Friday, November 27, I had an opportunity to speak at the third annual Bay Street breakfast to raise money for prostate cancer research. These successful events have raised over half a million dollars. The monies are important to fund research into the causes, the cure and the prevention of this disease.

Prostate cancer is the number one cancer for men. It's about as common as breast cancer. One in eight men will develop the disease over their lifetime.

This year there will be a new case every 30 minutes and a death every two hours. It may overtake the combined incidence of the second and third cancers among men, namely lung and colorectal, by the end of the decade.

There may be one million men with this disease but there are only 200,000 who know they have it. Prostate cancer remains the least understood major cancer. A diagnosis of cancer will be life-changing news for each and every one of these men who contract the disease.

That's why our government is committed to screening that works. Our government is committed to providing better access to care. The research will help enable advances in screening, diagnosis and treatment, as well as prevention and ultimately a cure.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to speak about the equity in education tax credit. This weekend I was at the Smithville Santa Claus parade, and I can't tell you the number of parents who came up to me at the

parade and asked me to fight to save the equity in education tax credit. I said, "Of course I will. Of course I will fight the Liberal decision to take that away," because I, unlike Dalton McGuinty and Gerard Kennedy, believe that parents can make the best choice of where they send their children to school. Parents can make the best decision for their child's education, more so than politicians or Ministry of Education bureaucrats.

One thing I fear the government benches have forgotten is that the parents in Erie-Lincoln who send their kids to Christian or independent schools pay their full share of taxes into the public system. On top of that, because they believe in faith-based education, believe in this approach, they pay tuition. They aren't asking us to cover the whole thing but just to treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

These are folks of modest means. You're not going to see any Cadillacs in the parking lot of Wellandport Christian school—hardworking middle-class and lower-middle-class families that want choice in education.

What makes it very unfortunate as well is that the government has chosen not only to end the equity in education tax credit but to make it retroactive to January 1, 2003. The other taxes that they're going to raise begin January 1 of next year, but they're making this retroactive. It's not only wrong but mean-spirited, cruel, punitive. It's the wrong thing to do, and I ask members on that side of the floor to vote with me and vote against this bad idea.

#### HIGHWAY ACCIDENT

**Ms Monique Smith (Nipissing):** I rise today with great sadness. Last night a tragic accident took place near South River, a community adjacent to my riding. A father and his four children from my riding were killed when their car hit a tractor-trailer travelling on Highway 11. Two other vehicles were also involved in this accident. It was a snowy night on Highway 11 last night. It was a tragic night.

My heart and the hearts of all the members here today, I'm sure, go out to this family and their loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Tragedies like this remind us about what is really important. They remind us how fleeting this life can be and how painful, how complete, a loss like this really is. After hearing a story like this, we all want to hold our family and friends close. Tragedies like this drive home to us that we must cherish every moment with those we love and make the most of our time in this world.

As we begin the sometimes dangerous winter driving season, such tragedies also remind us that we must continue to move forward with much-needed safety improvements to our highways across the province, and especially in the north, to prevent a tragedy like this from ever happening again.

Again, our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of this family at this incredibly difficult time.

#### LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** Have many of you been to the video store lately? You can't buy original-release movies any more. You now have to buy special editions called "the director's cut." They are releases that splice in new scenes that didn't make the original and splice out others that shouldn't have been there in the first place.

But, friends, these collector's items aren't just at the movies any more. Broken-promise Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are in on the film act too. Their new film is Choose Change: The Premier's Cut. Gone is McGuinty's election commitment to reinvest in our essential public services. Where McGuinty once said, "The Harris-Eves government tried to paper over problems by ... cutting public services ... such as education, health care, water and food inspection. It's time for a change," that scene is now on the cutting room floor. There's a new vision from the Premier, and it is, "Ontario's new Liberal government is preparing to reduce provincial spending by up to \$4 billion."

The reviews are in, and everybody has given it two thumbs down. According to TD Economics, making cuts that deep would mean freezing health and education spending at current levels and cutting all other public services by 20%. The cuts will also mean 407-style toll roads, higher small business taxes and two-tier drug plans for seniors.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today is World AIDS Day. I'd like to seek unanimous consent for members to wear a red ribbon in solidarity with the 40 million people worldwide with HIV and AIDS.

**The Speaker:** Could I just ask: We've got one more member's statement, if we can do that.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My statement is about promises. In this case, for this government, that means broken promises, promises made to get votes and then not kept.

We're fortunate to have the list compiled by Lorrie Goldstein, the editor of the Toronto Sun, of the 231 promises made by the McGuinty government. For those of you keeping score, have a look at numbers 5, 47, 50, 51, 65, 69, 70, 71, 167, 151 and 154, all of which have been broken.

Then there's the whopper promise—and yes, it's still on the Web site—that says, "Ontario workers and their families already pay enough. We will hold the line on your taxes." They are still saying that. That's the big whopper promise.

This is the old style of politics: You say one thing to try to get elected; you do another after you get elected. But there is nothing new under the sun. There was a radio show many years ago in which the star was known for his penchant for tall tales. That star was named Fibber McGee. Now in Ontario we have our own teller of tall tales, the Liberals' own Fibber McGuinty. You're off to a

great start, Fibber. We know you can do it; we know you can break most of those promises. Go get 'em, Fibber.

**The Speaker:** May I caution members: We keep using language that is not parliamentary, and I hope that we can refrain from doing that in the future. Whether it was written in the newspaper or wherever it was written, it is unparliamentary to use some of the comments that I am hearing today.

#### WEARING OF RIBBONS

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: December 1 marks World AIDS Day, and I seek unanimous consent to allow members to wear the red ribbon in solidarity with the 40 million people worldwide suffering from HIV and AIDS.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Again, before I ask unanimous consent, I would also ask members, if you're asking for unanimous consent for wearing any kind of plaques or ribbons or so, could you not wear them before you ask, but ask and then wear them.

Do we have unanimous consent to wear the red ribbons in the House today? I think we have agreement here.

1350

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** We have today in the gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Ukraine. Please join us in welcoming our distinguished guests.

Also in the Speaker's gallery we have Yuri Shymko, who is a former member for High Park-Swansea, and Leo Jordan, the previous member for Lanark-Renfrew.

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I might just offer a suggestion to correct the record, the reference to people coming from "the Ukraine" is not the kind of imagery we'd like to convey to our special guests. Ukraine is a country. It's the same as saying people come from "the Canada."

It was defined by the Russians as a region—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Jackson:** —you might learn something, Mr Treasurer—to depersonalize the people of Ukraine. As one who traces his ancestry to Ukraine and one who's very proud of that, they are a country, and incidentally the first country in the world to recognize the state of Israel. So I would appreciate—and I apologize, Mr Speaker—if we could just change the record.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much for the information. Of course I've learned something today, like we all have, I presume.

**Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It was reported in the press on Saturday that I did not attend, on behalf of Mississauga South, the federal-provincial conference on the GTA. I would just like to have that corrected.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. That's not a point of order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU  
HIGHWAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'AUTOROUTE  
PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name Highway 417 the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Highway / Projet de loi 10, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de nommer l'autoroute 417 Autoroute Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have got it. Carried.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** Pierre Elliott Trudeau became a member of Parliament, representing the Montreal riding of Mont-Royal, in 1965, and in 1967 was appointed Minister of Justice. He was Prime Minister from April 20, 1968, until June 4, 1979, and from March 30, 1980, until June 30, 1984.

The commencement and completion of Highway 417 took place during Pierre Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister of Canada. During his time in office, Mr Trudeau spent countless hours on Highway 417, travelling to and from his private residence.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau a été nommé la plus grande vedette de l'actualité du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle au Canada en décembre 1999 et sera toujours reconnu pour l'appui précieux qu'il a apporté à la promotion de la démocratie de ce pays et à l'étranger.

Nommer l'autoroute 417 en l'honneur de Pierre Elliott Trudeau rendrait hommage non seulement à son apport et à son dévouement envers cette grande autoroute qui relie l'Ontario et le Québec, mais reconnaîtrait également l'effort de développement d'un pays qu'il a légué au Canada.

MICHAEL MAXWELL ACT  
(HEALTH INSURANCE  
AMENDMENT), 2003

LOI MICHAEL MAXWELL DE 2003  
MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act, in memory of Michael Maxwell, to amend the Health Insurance Act to provide for immunization against meningitis C / Projet de loi 11, Loi à la mémoire de Michael Maxwell modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin de prévoir une immunisation contre la méningite C.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** This is the third time I've introduced this bill in memory of 17-year-old Michael Maxwell, an Ingersoll teen who died in March 2002, 29 hours after he contracted meningitis C.

If passed, the bill would ensure that vaccinations for meningitis C would be included in the routine immunization program currently available for Ontario families. It would mean that no Ontario infant, child or youth would be unable to get this vaccination merely because of its prohibitive cost.

The provinces of Alberta and Quebec already have the meningitis C vaccination included in their routine immunization programs. It's time for Ontario to do the same. No other family like the Maxwell family of Ingersoll or families in Sudbury this fall should ever again have to face the grief and tragedy associated with this disease.

#### LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** May I just take the opportunity to introduce, in the Speaker's gallery, the 2003-04 Ontario legislative interns. We have Michael Acedo, Sarah Baker, Holly Bondy, Melanie Francis, Amanda Mayer, Kate Mulligan, David Myles and Chris Shantz-Smiley. Would all members please join me in welcoming our interns.

#### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

##### MINIMUM WAGE

**Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour):** I am very pleased to announce to the members of this Legislature that after almost nine long years, minimum wage earners in Ontario are finally getting a raise.

Effective February 1, 2004, the general minimum wage for Ontario workers will increase from \$6.85 to \$7.15 per hour. But that is not all, Mr Speaker. The minimum wage will increase every year on February 1, until it reaches \$8 an hour on February 1, 2007.

1400

Today we keep our commitment to deliver positive change to the people of Ontario by announcing that we will raise the minimum wage to \$8 an hour over four years. Today we are taking an important step to help the less fortunate.

Our government is committed to fair, balanced and progressive policies for Ontario workers and employers. These increases mark the end to almost nine years where the most vulnerable workers in Ontario did not get their fair share of Ontario's economic growth. While Canada and Ontario prospered, minimum wage earners lost

ground as they saw the cost of living rise and average wages rise while their wages remained frozen.

By phasing in this increase over four years, the government is balancing the needs of Ontario's low-income workers who need this most with the needs of Ontario's businesses to be competitive.

This increase will also apply to Ontario's other minimum wages. For example, the minimum wage for students under 18 who do not work more than 28 hours a week will rise from \$6.40 to \$6.70 an hour. The minimum wage for liquor servers will also rise, from \$5.95 an hour to \$6.20 an hour.

The increase in the minimum wage will give a boost to a large number of low-income workers. In the year 2000, there were an estimated 680,000 wage earners in Ontario who earned between the liquor server's wage of \$5.95 and \$8 an hour. They represent approximately 11% of the workers employed in Ontario in the year 2000.

Our government recognizes the challenges faced by business, and in particular small business. Phasing in the minimum wage over a four-year period is a reasonable, responsible approach. Businesses affected will know their costs in advance and be able to factor these into their business plans. This phase-in will keep Ontario businesses competitive with other Canadian and American jurisdictions. This approach will help keep vulnerable workers from falling further behind the rest of Ontario workers and give them some share in the benefits of Ontario's economic growth while balancing the need to keep Ontario businesses financially stable and competitive. And providing minimum wage earners with this additional money will increase consumer spending and give a boost to local economies. This will contribute to the economic well-being of Ontario.

In conclusion, increasing the minimum wage is another important, positive commitment kept by our government. It is good news for low-income earners who will finally get a pay increase after almost nine long years of waiting. They will continue to see their wages rise until they reach \$8 an hour in February 2007. This is fair, it is reasonable, it is responsible, and it is the right thing to do.

##### MEAT INSPECTION

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Today I'd like to inform members of the House of a very important step this government has taken to enhance food safety in this province. This government is following through on our commitment to real, positive change for Ontario by hiring more full-time meat inspectors.

We will be recruiting experts to the public service who can deliver high-quality inspection services to respond to public concerns over the safety of our meat. In doing this, we will bolster business confidence in buyers and retailers of Ontario meat products.

We said we would do it, and we are doing it. In November, this government began working with the On-

tario Public Service Employees Union to resolve a long-standing dispute on the delivery of meat inspection services. In less than two weeks, we had an agreement. By the spring of 2004, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food intends to hire 61 full-time and 57 part-time meat inspectors. With 10 full-time inspectors already on board, this means there will be a total of 128 meat inspectors working as ministry employees. I have asked ministry staff to make the implementation of this settlement a priority. That is a commitment, that is taking action, and that's the right thing to do.

The people of Ontario deserve a safe food supply. Their confidence in our agri-food industry is critical, and we will see that Ontario's food inspection system becomes one of the world's best.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Responses?

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I want to commend the minister for the announcement that shows they care and want to make sure that the people of the province of Ontario are confident that we have the safest food. I just wish he had come up with a solution that would have made a difference in that confidence for the people of Ontario.

The announcement the minister is making today is that he is going to change the status of our present meat inspectors. He's indicating that they're going to hire a lot more qualified people. I would like to say that the people who have been inspecting the meat in this province for the last 10 years are very qualified. That's why I think it's great when the London Free Press says the minister is going to hire those people as OPS employees to continue inspecting our meat and do a quality job—the same people who are presently doing it. I want to commend them for making that choice.

I suppose I could say that's the first time the members opposite are actually keeping a promise they made. I just wish he'd kept the other promise that he was going to have a public inquiry into the meat inspection system so the people of Ontario would know that the concern that exists in our meat system is not the inspection of the meat abattoirs that are operating under licence from the provincial ministry, but in fact it's to do with the people who are slaughtering cattle and not having them inspected. We need more enforcement to make sure that no one is putting meat on our market that shouldn't be there. The minister doesn't even speak to that. He implies with his announcement today that somehow, by paying more for the same service, it will make the meat safer. I totally disagree with that premise.

I just wish the minister was as forthcoming with some of the other things on behalf of our agriculture community, such as ensuring that hydro rates would stay capped until 2006 so they can afford to produce the safe food that is going to the abattoirs; such as saying that the first point of contact for nutrient management would stay with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, where our farmers have assured us and the minister it should stay. I just wish he had kept some of the commitments he made in his election promises and some of the commitments he

made publicly to the farmers when he was first appointed, as opposed to working out a deal with our OPS services and just putting our contract workers back into the union fold.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** With regard to the minimum wage, over the past eight years the taxes people have paid in this province have continued to fall, giving low-income Ontarians more take-home pay in their pocket. That has also resulted in taking over 870,000 people off the tax rolls in Ontario—people who no longer paid taxes in Ontario. Even though they were on minimum wage, they were not paying taxes.

Bill 2, the infamous tax bill being introduced to this House, the Fiscal Responsibility Act—anything but responsible—is the largest tax hike in Ontario's history, adding \$4.4 billion to the taxes this government will bring in over the next few years. Those people who were taken off the tax rolls will be added back on, so minimum wage earners who were once off the tax rolls will now be back on. The net result will be that they will pay about \$100 a year more in taxes than they did last year, because of the increase in the minimum wage and because of the increase in taxes that the Fiscal Responsibility Act is going to introduce in this province.

It is typical Liberal policy, where Mr Bentley giveth and Mr Sorbara taketh away.

1410

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** As finance critic, I am equally concerned about this. What Chris giveth, Greg taketh away. While they will increase the minimum wage and give some money with one hand, Mr Sorbara will be in their pockets with the other. He'll probably make money on this regime.

One of the big accomplishments of the previous government was that we took literally hundreds of thousands of low-income and working families off the tax rolls. Thousands of them continued to pay federal tax but paid no provincial income tax whatsoever.

The most outrageous thing is that in Bill 2, in that bill specifically, the Liberals have singled out low-income earners to be hit as taxpayers. Their bill specifically highlights the lowest income tax bracket, which is outrageous, and it's wrong.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to respond to the government's announcements today.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The member for Kenora-Rainy River asks for unanimous consent for up to five minutes. Agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Hampton:** First of all, with respect to the minimum wage, it's important to note that what we're really seeing here today is about a 4% increase in the minimum wage, if you compound it. If the minimum wage had been increased by 2% in 1996 and 2% in 1997, this is the level that it would have been at. A very modest 2% increase in 1996 and 1997 would have put the minimum

wage at about \$7.15 an hour. Liberals want you to celebrate that they have now increased the minimum wage to the level that it would have been at in 1997. What this means for the lowest-paid workers, what this means for all those workers who have had their wages frozen, is not very much.

In contrast, let me point out that in the year 2000 StatsCan set the poverty line at \$18,371 for a single person living in a big city. Earning \$7.15 an hour, a person working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year will get \$14,872. They'll be \$3,000 below the poverty line. Liberals want you to celebrate that.

Since 1995, inflation has soared 20%; water, fuel and electricity costs are up by 30%; food prices by 14%; and Ontario rents rose, on average, 26%. Liberals want the lowest-paid workers to be happy with a 4% increase in the minimum wage. The minimum wage should be increased to \$8 an hour now, with annual increments to follow. That would be a fair minimum wage.

I want to point out to the Minister of Labour that I've heard some of your backbenchers already saying that it's only students who work for the minimum wage. Nonsense. Some 63% of the people who work for minimum wage are women: women who are trying to pay their rent, put food on the table and keep clothes on the backs of their children. And you tell them, after all these increases in costs, that they should be happy with a 4% increase in the minimum wage.

Your government would have received this report from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. What does it say? It says that poverty traps women and children. This is not going to do anything for them.

I want you to note that it's not often that I acknowledge that the Conservatives are right, but at the same time that you're giving this minuscule increase in the minimum wage, your colleague the Minister of Finance is in fact increasing taxes on those very lowest-paid workers, and your colleague the Minister of Energy, despite all your promises, is going to increase electricity rates by over 10% for those same people. You're not going to provide any more money. You made an announcement today, but the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy are going to make sure that all of that money is taken very quickly, either through the tax bill or through the hydro bill. Eight dollars an hour now, not 1997 minimum wage levels.

#### MEAT INSPECTION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: I listened during the election to Liberals who said there needed to be a public inquiry into Ontario's tainted meat scandal to assure the public that this was not going on in other places or that it was not happening on an ongoing basis. What happened to that promise? What happened to the promise of a public inquiry?

What we're getting instead is an internal review by some of the officials who in fact stood by as tainted meat

episode after tainted meat episode happened at Aylmer Meat Packers in your own riding. So the very people who stood there and gave Aylmer Meat Packers a tentative slap on the wrist as they processed tainted meat, as they processed dead stock, are now going to conduct an internal review, and you're going to tell the people of Ontario that that's acceptable.

It goes to the fundamentals of living in a healthy and safe society that people are able to depend upon the meat that is processed and that they eat. Already you're breaking another promise. Where is the public inquiry? Where is the independence that is going to take the review out of the hands of the very officials who watched while this went wrong?

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### BALANCED BUDGET LEGISLATION

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Premier, on September 11 during the recent election campaign, you signed a pledge, witnessed by John Williamson, promising to abide by and respect the current taxpayer protection and balanced budget law. Do you intend to keep that promise?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that he heads a party that maintained throughout the course of one entire election that there was no deficit. He maintained that he was not in contravention of the balanced budget legislation. The fact of the matter is you were hiding a \$5.6-billion deficit. If anybody has made the case for us to have a stronger piece of balanced budget legislation in Ontario, it is the Leader of the Opposition.

**Interjection:** Just say you're sorry

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The question was asked. I'd like quiet when the response is being given. Give the same respect.

**Mr Eves:** Perhaps the Premier would like to try to actually respond to the question being asked.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Eves:** I was quite popular with him when he was on this side of the House, as I recall.

Your quote is, "We will live by the balanced budget law." Yet in Ottawa on Friday, November 21, you said with reference to the same balanced budget law that you committed to during the campaign, "It's having at present in its existing form a perverse effect upon government." You indicated that you'd instruct your Minister of Finance to come up with the "next generation of balanced budget legislation"—it tied the hands of your government and you couldn't do what you wanted to do. "That thinking doesn't quite jibe with what we're told on the election campaign trail," Mr Williamson said. Mr Premier, which Dalton McGuinty should we listen to, the one on November 21 in Ottawa or the one who signed the pledge

and led the voters to believe you would actually comply with balanced budget and taxpayer legislation?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** We think it's important to be truthful with Ontarians when it comes to the state of the accounts. You maintained that there was zero deficit. You maintained that the books were balanced. Mr Peters produced an independent report, and he tells us that you were hiding a \$5.6-billion deficit. He tells us that revenues were in fact \$4.4 billion lower than you claimed they were. He said that expenditures were \$1.5 billion higher than you claimed they were. We intend to bring forward a new generation of balanced budget legislation that makes it clear to the people of Ontario exactly what the state of the books is.

1420

**Mr Eves:** I know it's difficult for you to answer a question, but try to answer the question being asked. That's the whole purpose of question period.

*Laughter.*

**Mr Eves:** I see they haven't lost their supply of sardines over there.

Another quote from John Williamson this past Friday—he was on CFRB in Toronto: “I mean, the people of Ontario expect the Premier and his government to balance the books. He promised them. He put it in writing. So you know, we're happy to have his signature, because if he breaks it, it's a clear indication that he misled voters.” Mr Williamson's words, not mine.

On the other hand, on your Web site today, as we speak, it says, “We will live by the balanced budget law. We support and voted for Ontario's balanced budget law.”

Which Premier are we to believe—the one on November 22 or the one today, who right now, as of this moment in time, still says on his Web site he's going to balance the books of the province?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say to the Leader of the Opposition, our legislation is going to put a stop to the kind of games that he and the former government played for eight long years.

I want to commend to the Leader of the Opposition the report produced by Mr Peters. Among other things, he says, “Although the March 2003 budget”—that is the auto parts budget—“provided for a gain, for example, on asset sales and rentals of \$2.2 billion, there has been only one major” asset “sale to date ... at an estimated gain of \$132 million.”

You talked about \$2.2 billion. He said there's only \$132 million.

He goes on to say that the March 2003 budget included unspecified savings of \$500 million from program review and evaluation and \$300 million from a year-end savings target, again without identifying those particular savings.

What we're trying to do, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, is put an end to these—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** To the Premier of the province: Premier, you indicated throughout the course of the campaign as well that you were going to move as aggressively as you possibly could on all of your commitments, that you had a fully costed four-year plan independently verified and certified. Part of that plan was to deal immediately with a \$2-billion deficit and that you could, the next morning at 9 o'clock, cut \$2 billion worth of spending. Could you please identify what that \$2 billion, fully costed and independently audited, contains and how quickly you're moving on it?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I say to the Leader of the Opposition, he missed Bill 2. It is moving forward in a very aggressive and progressive way to deal with your \$5.6-billion deficit.

There's no doubt about it, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, that we're bringing a different approach to dealing with the Tory deficit than the Tories did with respect to the NDP deficit.

Let me give you a few examples. You cut water inspectors; you cut welfare rates; you even went so far as to cut out a nutrition allowance for expectant mothers on welfare. What we've decided to do is to roll back your irresponsible corporate tax cut. You took \$2 billion out of our children's schools. What we've decided to do is cancel the private school tax credit. So there's no doubt about it whatsoever, I say to the Leader of the Opposition: We are bringing a different approach, a progressive approach, a responsible approach to dealing with his deficit.

**Mr Eves:** As a supplementary, you were quoted as saying, “What we are going to do is we're going to engage the people of Ontario in a very important discussion and we are going to consider some ideas, which to this point in time might have been on the list of unmentionables, the things that might be unthinkable.”

Could you tell us exactly what those unmentionable and unthinkable things are, and do they happen to include raising taxes?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Let me tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to open the door wide to sweeping privatization of health care in the province of Ontario. What we've done in the face of creeping privatization is slam that door shut with our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

I can also tell the Leader of the Opposition that while he allowed tuition fees to skyrocket by as much as 300% in some cases, we are freezing tuition in the province of Ontario. That's a good idea, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, of how we intend to proceed in the face of your deficit.

**Mr Eves:** Late last week, senior officials in your government indicated to various members of the media that they're preparing to reduce spending by up to \$4 billion a year—a task, they say, that includes eliminating free

drugs for seniors, allowing more privately built toll roads and cancelling of tax incentives. Could you confirm that that is, in fact, what you are considering?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I'm going to tell the Leader of the Opposition that I'm not going to indulge in speculation, but I will tell the people of Ontario that we are not going to approach this deficit, the Tory deficit, the way that you approached the NDP deficit. We will not be cutting back on welfare rates in the province of Ontario. We will not be cutting out the nutrition allowance for expectant mothers in the province of Ontario.

What we will do instead is roll back your irresponsible corporate tax cut. We will not go ahead with the private school tax credit. What we're going to do is bring about real, positive, lasting change for the people of Ontario. We'll do it in a progressive way. We'll be up front with the people of Ontario. We will not, as you did, hide that \$5.6-billion deficit.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question?

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is, again, to the Premier. It's a serious question and an important one. I think you should put aside the notes from your spin doctors, listen to the question and provide an answer.

During and after the election campaign, you said, "We've accounted for a \$2-billion deficit." You also said, "We've also built in a \$1-billion reserve and we've been given very clear instructions from the people of Ontario and we will abide by those instructions." Your words.

Will you stand in your place and tell us: What have you done with this \$3 billion, or is this just another billion-dollar Liberal boondoggle?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** This is just too rich. We're being cross-examined by the members of the official opposition, who, throughout an entire campaign period, maintained straight-faced to the people of Ontario that the books were balanced when, at the end of the day, we discovered a \$5.6-billion deficit. They have no legitimacy, no grounds whatsoever, to ask these kinds of questions when they themselves hid from full view of the people of Ontario a \$5.6-billion deficit.

**Mr Baird:** This is the man who said to Paula Todd on TVO, "Don't worry. We've accounted for a \$2-billion deficit." This is a Premier whose own Minister of Energy said just last week, "In fact our campaign document provided for a \$2-billion ... deficit, which we felt was manageable." Now is the time for this Premier to manage.

Let's look at his own economist, who certified and verified the Liberal plan: "What I did was enough to turn a \$2-billion deficit into a zero. Arguably, it could turn a five [billion-dollar deficit] into a three."

Again, on behalf of the people in Nepean-Carleton, on behalf of taxpayers across Ontario, would you stand in your place and tell us what happened to this \$3 billion that you said was manageable, that you said you could handle?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Again, I say to the member opposite, if he missed it, I'd commend to his reading Bill 2. Bill 2 is aggressive, it is progressive, it will get the job done, in terms of getting us about halfway to dealing with your \$5.6-billion deficit.

As we move forward, we're going to do something which you and the members of your party refused to do: We're going to be up front with the people of Ontario. We're not going to play games when it comes to dealing with the numbers. We will not saddle them with a \$5.6-billion deficit.

1430

### BECK 3 GENERATING FACILITY

**Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls):** First, I want to say that not only is Niagara Falls one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world, but Niagara Falls is also the centre of hydroelectricity generation for all of Ontario and a large part of the United States.

I'm pleased to be part of the Liberal government. It has taken a keen interest in hydro issues we are currently facing in Ontario.

My question is directed to the Minister of Energy. Minister, the Liberal platform contained expanding the hydroelectric generation in Niagara Falls. Would you please give this House an update on the planned expansion for Beck 3?

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** To my colleague from Niagara Falls, I want first to congratulate him on raising this issue with me within two days of being elected and being on top of it.

We believe that Beck 3 poses a huge opportunity for increased supply. I say to the member opposite, this will be among the first new energy supply in 13 long and painful years, something that was ignored by two previous governments. I say to the member and to his community, thanks to your efforts and the efforts of your community, be assured that Dalton McGuinty and this government are going to proceed with that grid.

**Mr Craitor:** My supplementary question to the minister is that Beck 3 means not only expanding the generation of hydro to energy consumers in Ontario, but also hundreds of jobs in Niagara Falls and a boost to our local economy. Minister, will you give the residents of my riding in Niagara Falls a timeline on how this government will proceed with the expansion of Beck 3?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** To the member for Niagara Falls, thank you for a very pertinent and important question. I will be receiving, early in 2004, a report on moving forward with this. I expect that after reviewing the results of the study, we will act both responsibly and, I can say to your community, swiftly.

Make no mistake: We are going to do more than just talk about supply, like the previous government did, a government that left our energy sector in tatters when it left office: no new supply, artificially low rates, no plan for dealing with OPG, no plan for correcting its own

problems, a government whose record was 11 flip-flops on the energy file.

The member for Niagara Falls has been fighting valiantly for this. He has the undertaking of this government and Premier McGuinty that Beck 3 will proceed in 2004, after receipt of the report we're going to get next month.

#### BALANCED BUDGET LEGISLATION

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier. During this election campaign, you ran on a platform of wanting to do government differently. You speak about introducing character legislation. Premier, there are students here listening. The public has been watching you for the last two weeks in this Legislature. You have not answered one question in a straightforward way. I'm going to give you another opportunity.

Last Monday, your finance minister introduced legislation in this House called the Fiscal Responsibility Act. You're proposing to do two things through that act: one is that you're imposing, retroactively, a financial burden on the hard-working families of some 110,000 students in this province who attend independent schools; second, you are breaking a promise to the people of this province that you will not raise taxes for working families. Will you do one honourable thing today? Will you admit that you broke a major promise to the people of this province and that you are contravening the Taxpayer Protection Act by introducing this legislation?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The people of Ontario know that we ran on those very commitments and we're honouring those commitments.

Let me tell them something else. Let me draw what we did just a few moments ago in this House to the member's attention, because I'm very proud of that as well. We are increasing the minimum wage from \$6.85 an hour to \$8 an hour. There are close to 700,000 minimum wage workers in the province of Ontario, people who get up in the morning and do their very best to cobble together some kind of living. What we've said is that we're going to help them; we're going to raise the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$8 an hour. We are proud of that commitment and that's why we're moving ahead with it.

**Mr Klees:** Well, it appears clear that the Premier is incapable of answering a straightforward question. He did not answer the question. I want to give the Premier one more opportunity to actually answer the question.

Speaker, you will be aware that an application was brought to the Ontario Supreme Court of Justice seeking an injunction against Bill 2. I want to quote to you from the words of the justice who rendered his comments on this: "Even if the facts upon which the charter breach is alleged....

"I have no hesitation in saying that there are clearly issues raised by application. Not only is the proper interpretation of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999

engaged, so also is the issue whether the election platform exception ought to have applied and, if so, whether the letter which Mr McGuinty sent to the Chief Election Officer complied with the requirements for that exception."

Will the Premier today admit that his commitment to the people of this province not to raise taxes for working families was breached and that Bill 2 breaches the Taxpayer Protection Act?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** My understanding, to the member, is that that application for an injunction was in fact dismissed today. I also want to remind the member opposite that the only government that has ever violated the Ontario Taxpayer Protection Act was his government.

I want to remind the members opposite and the people of Ontario that we have an unwavering commitment to improving the quality of public education for all Ontario children. That's where that money's going to go from the private school tax credit: into our public schools.

#### OSTEOPOROSIS

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** My question is for the Minister of Health. I have some serious concerns about osteoporosis. It's a serious problem for many Ontarians, especially our seniors. It causes bone fractures. In fact, the disease affects one in four women and one in eight men over the age of 50, and 80% of those who have an initial bone fracture aren't checked out for osteoporosis—shamefully.

Given that hip fractures cost our health care system over a half-billion dollars a year and hospital stays are four times longer than normal hospital stays, what can you tell us today, Minister, that your ministry is prepared to do to assist our seniors to combat this dreadful circumstance?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'd like to thank the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot for his excellent question. Last week, many members from all parties had the opportunity to join the osteoporosis society of Ontario for breakfast, where we learned more about the potential benefits of investing in an osteoporosis strategy in Ontario. I'll note that the party opposite, when they were in government, reviewed, planned, considered, talked about and actually promised in their budget of 2003 that they would fund such a study, and yet when I look in the budget of the Ministry of Health, I see no such funds.

I commit to the honourable member that I will have a meeting with the osteoporosis society early in the new year and we'll get started on the work of putting in place a plan that will see preventive health in place and prevent hardship to many Ontarians as well as, obviously, saving our health care system precious dollars.

**Mr McMeekin:** Minister, I know the osteoporosis association was really pleased that you took the time to come out to the breakfast and hear the concerns. I also know that a detailed plan, prepared in consultation with

stakeholders and outlining some 18 different strategies, has been sitting on a shelf for some time. Some important actions are outlined there, including a cost-benefit analysis of the various options.

I appreciate the fact that you've covenanted to meet with this group. When do you think we might hear something specific about when we'll move forward with the plan that's been outlined?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** Thank you very much again to the member. I'm happy to acknowledge that a lot of work has been done on this. We have one of those opportunities to seize upon work that has been done and begin to make a difference in the lives of Ontarians.

I commit to the member, as I said earlier, that I'll be working with this group early in the new year. With our fiscal circumstances in mind, I'll be fighting hard to try to make sure that a preventive investment like this is the kind of high-priority investment that we'd make as we move forward.

1440

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** My question is for the Premier. You promised in your election platform that you were going to improve the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors. It now appears that you're getting set to break yet another promise and raise taxes for seniors. Imagine the shock on Friday when seniors woke up to find that you were considering imposing an income test or deleting some of the drugs for coverage or putting in place user fees. Can you guarantee seniors that you will not be reducing their access to drugs or putting in place an income test?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member for her question. The Minister of Finance has something to say on this file.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I tell my friend from Kitchener-Waterloo that we are determined to come to grips with the fiscal mess that they left in the previous budget. It was under her watch as Minister of Health that a significant deficit in hospital financing began to emerge. It now stands, as the Minister of Health will confirm, at \$800 million. But with all of that context, I want to tell her that while the National Post may indulge in speculation about seniors' health care, I certainly am not going to do that.

**Mrs Witmer:** You made a commitment to the people that you were going to improve the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors. Can you today guarantee that you will not impose income testing for seniors, decrease the number of drugs available or introduce user fees? It's simple: yes or no?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Within six weeks of taking office, we've reversed the Conservatives' plan for private hospitals, both in Ottawa and Brampton. We're dealing with their private health care clinics and MRI machines. We are determined and committed to ensure that the

seniors of this province are treated fairly and equitably and get the health care they deserve. They did not get that under the previous administration.

#### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I ask unanimous consent of all New Democrats to ask a question.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is there unanimous consent from all members of the House? Agreed.

**Mr Hampton:** My question is for the Premier. During the election, you promised to stop the Conservative cuts to health care and education. Four days before the election you said, "The Harris-Eves government tried to paper over problems ... by taking the easy route of cutting public services in vital areas, such as education, health care, water and food inspection. It's time for a change." But on Friday, your staff told CanWest news you're going to slash public investment by \$4 million, and that will mean cuts to health care and education on the front line.

Premier, I don't believe the people of Ontario got the version of the Liberal election platform that included cuts to health and education. Are your underlings misinformed or are you going to break yet another election promise?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The leader of the third party raises a very serious matter. We intend to bring a different approach with respect to how to deal with the Tory deficit. We're going to be very upfront in terms of the kinds of options we're going to place before the people of Ontario. We're not going to do what this government did when they hid the real state of financial affairs from the people of Ontario, and I am not going to engage in speculation and guessing games with respect to the contents of the next budget here in this Legislature.

**Mr Hampton:** Well, your staff didn't mind speculating with CanWest Global News, and some of your officials didn't mind speculating on cuts to health and education. And you didn't mind speculating during the election campaign about promises for health and education when your then finance critic said in June that there was a \$5-billion deficit and your now Minister of Public Security said in August that there was a \$5-billion deficit.

You knew there was a \$5-billion deficit, yet you went out and made 231 election promises. You promised \$1.6 billion for schools; you promised \$2.7 billion for health care. Tell Ontarians today: Will you deliver the money you promised to our schools, our hospitals and our environment, like you promised? Or are you going to break that promise, like you've broken several others?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** To the leader of the third party, I'm not going to bring the approach that he brought, either when he was in government or during the course of the campaign. We are not going to engage in trying to nail Jell-O to the wall, and we're not going to spend our way out of this deficit in Ontario. We intend to bring a

balanced, responsible approach to dealing with this matter. We're not going to pretend that the \$5.6-billion deficit does not exist. We intend to proceed in a responsible manner and address the matter of the deficit and, at the same time, to bring about measurable improvement in our schools, in our health care, in the strength of our communities and the protections that we provide to our environment.

#### WATER QUALITY

**Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce):** My question is for the Minister of the Environment. The people in my riding of Huron-Bruce want to know when they will be able to enjoy their lake again. This fall, public beaches were posted along a 40-kilometre section of Lake Huron. They were permanently unsafe for swimming because of 10 years of chronically high E coli bacteria levels.

Lake Huron is the world's third-largest lake and a major tourist destination. Its beaches, wildlife, nature and picturesque communities are the jewels of the Lake Huron shoreline in Huron and Bruce county. Lake Huron is also a source of drinking water for the people of Huron-Bruce. What will you do to reassure the people of Huron-Bruce that they will be able to once again enjoy their lake?

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** I would like to thank the member of Huron-Bruce for her very good question. I'm happy to stand in the House today and say that ensuring clean, safe water is a top priority for this government. We agreed with Justice O'Connor that proper management of our drinking water must be a priority. This government will provide stronger, clearer and comprehensive rules to ensure a safe water supply. I am aware that representatives from the Ministry of the Environment did attend the meeting in Huron county, along with members of the health unit, to discuss the water quality issues, including the beaches. Ministry staff will continue to work with the health unit to address water quality issues in the area.

**Mrs Mitchell:** I am sure that the people of Huron-Bruce will be glad to hear that you are keeping a close eye on the situation. Let me remind you that Lake Huron is a natural resource, unique in the world as a source of fresh water. We have a responsibility to keep Lake Huron clean and safe for future generations. We have seen what an increase in E coli levels can do to a population. Neglect can only contaminate water bodies. How quickly will you act to fix this problem?

1450

**Hon Mrs Dombrowsky:** It is indeed unfortunate that members of the opposition are not interested in this answer, but I would suggest it reflects the same kind of interest they paid to this very important matter when they were government. This government's efforts to address water quality on Lake Huron are underway as we speak.

On November 26, my colleague Steve Peters and I announced that the Ministry of the Environment has assumed responsibility for compliance and enforcement

of the Nutrient Management Act. This fulfills recommendation number 11 of the O'Connor report; that was a commitment we made during the campaign.

Also, on November 14, 2003, I announced that the government was taking the first step in its strategy on source protection through the formation of two expert committees: a technical experts advisory committee and an implementation advisory committee. The work of these committees is critical to forming the development of a source protection program, including legislation needed in this province to ensure that our source water is protected.

#### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is for the Premier. This is a handy reference document that I commend to the members opposite, from the Toronto Sun. The 231 election promises includes promise number 5: "We will put in place a real cap of 20 students per class in the all-important early grades, kindergarten to grade 3." Experienced educators in Ontario have said that this is bad public policy. In fact, Joseph Carnavale, the superintendent of the Toronto Catholic board—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. I can't hear the member from Whitby-Ajax.

**Mr Flaherty:** Experienced educators have indicated that this is very bad public policy, particularly Joseph Carnavale, for example, the chair of the Toronto Catholic school board, who said, "The honest truth is that when you put it in practice, it means your child is going to be in a portable, going to have an uncertified teacher and, more likely than not, is going to be in a split-grade class."

Indeed, principals have told us that this takes away the discretion they need in operating our schools in Ontario. The Minister of Education has already started to move away from this promise. He's paved the way for you, Premier. Go ahead, Fibber, tell us when you're going to break this promise.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would remind you of your reminder earlier in the House about using unparliamentary language, and I would ask the member to withdraw that statement.

**The Speaker:** I didn't hear the member because of the noise that is going on, but if the member said anything unparliamentary, I'd ask him to withdraw.

**Mr Flaherty:** If I said something unparliamentary, I would do so.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I know the Minister of Education is anxious to speak to this matter.

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** I hear from the member opposite his interest in stopping kids in this province from having the advantage of being in smaller class sizes. While he was in government and while he chaired an education policy committee, they did increase class size. They did make it easier for kids to get

lost in the classroom, to not get the individual attention. We see that we don't have the literacy and numeracy results we should have, partly as a result.

In BC, they've moved ahead. In Quebec, they've moved ahead. In all kinds of jurisdictions, in no less than 22 states in the US, they've moved ahead. In this province, we've allowed ourselves to fall behind. We will be moving ahead on class size. We hear the advice from the member opposite as the kind that would hold children in this jurisdiction back, not move them forward the way they're supposed to.

**Mr Flaherty:** This is not about the children in our schools. What do you do with the 21st child? Put him out in a portable? Put her in another school? This is what it means in practice. It is about satisfying the commitments made to unions by the members opposite during the election.

Today's Minister of Education said this about promise number 5: "We've costed it very carefully. We have money allocated. It's very doable, but even more important, it's necessary"—from the Minister of Education. So I ask him in this House, "We've costed it very carefully," you say? How much? Produce the costing for the members of this House to see. Second, "We have money allocated." How much have you allocated? Thirdly, how much are you going to raise taxes, and which taxes in the province of Ontario, to pay for this dumb promise?

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** Had we not seen the behaviour of this government, people would wonder, "What has he got against the kids of this province doing well in public schools?" The only students the member opposite has stood up to defend are those in exclusive private schools. We cannot hear, on his behalf, what the principals of this province have agreed, what the parents of this province have agreed, what the school boards of this province have agreed and in fact what several of the business associations of this province have agreed, which is that we need to advantage our kids in this province. We have to stop falling behind. We have to have the best public education in the world.

I would advise the member opposite to look at our platform, where it's all carefully costed. There in black and white are not just the results we want to achieve but the cost of them. For the member opposite to say that \$500 million should be diverted from those kids into private schools shows us again why he is sitting in the seat he has today.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** My question is for the Minister of Labour. For nearly nine years the minimum wage workers of this province have been waiting for a raise. During that period, inflation increased by approximately 15%. Most other workers in this province saw their wages increase by that amount. During that same period, however, minimum wage workers saw their incomes stagnate during some of the

most robust economic years of the 20th century. Minister, you have announced the first step toward addressing this injustice: On February 1, our workers will finally get a raise.

There is a concern, however, that businesses will not be able to afford the minimum wage increase and that this will lead to job losses and higher unemployment. What do you plan to do to ensure that this does not happen?

**Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour):** I'd like to thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for his very important question and for his concern about businesses in the province and the need to remain competitive.

Today we've announced real, positive change for the people of Ontario. For the first time in nine years, the minimum wage is being increased, and it will continue to increase to fulfill our campaign commitment of \$8 an hour. Today we are going to help. We have announced a program to help the lowest-paid, most vulnerable workers in the province. We are going to deliver on the commitment we made during the campaign, and we are going to do it in a fair, responsible and balanced way by phasing in the increases to make sure that businesses have time to adjust. That's our commitment: a fair, reasonable and responsible program.

**Mr Brown:** Minister, I'm pleased to hear you are committed to justice for minimum wage earners while keeping the needs of industry and the economy in mind.

Raising the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$7.15 is an excellent first step. However, we must not forget that other minimum wage earners besides those earning \$6.85 per hour exist. Liquor servers currently earn \$5.95 an hour, while students earn only \$6.40 an hour. Many people also work as hunting and fishing guides, and they are currently paid a minimum of \$34.25 for up to five hours of work and \$68.50 for five hours or more. They too need a raise. It would be unfair to increase one group's wages while leaving the others behind. Can you tell us what you will do for those other minimum wage earners?

**Hon Mr Bentley:** Of course the member is absolutely right: It has been nine long years that all those groups of workers have been neglected by the previous government, and we're going to fix that.

There are not just hunting and fishing guides that we're concerned about; there are home workers and liquor servers, who are more prevalent in my riding of London West. Let me tell you what we're going to be doing to fix the injustice that has been effected. First of all, the student rate will rise from \$6.40 an hour to \$6.70, effective February 1, and it will continue to rise until it reaches \$7.50 an hour on February 1, 2007. And that's not all. The other rates will also rise: The liquor server rate from \$5.95 an hour to \$6.20 on February 1, 2004, and then it continues to rise to \$6.95 per hour on February 1, 2007. But that's not all.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

**Hon Mr Bentley:** Hunting and fishing guides will go up until it's \$35.75, and \$40 on February 1, 2004, and finally—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

1500

#### HIGHWAY TOLLS

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** My question is to the Premier. During the election, your party made very specific promises to the motorists of Ontario. You said you had a platform to deal with gridlock and that you felt that “no new toll roads” was the way to go. Frankly, your Liberal candidates spoke at length in every corner of this province, but in particular in Hamilton and the Halton region, about the fact that you were opposed to the mid-peninsula highway ever becoming a toll road. Last Friday, the National Post, quoting a senior Liberal in your government, indicated that you were considering allowing the private sector to build new roads and to charge tolls on those new roads.

My question to the Premier is simply this: Is it now your plan to change this election promise and to begin charging for tolls on roads? And specifically, are you planning to charge a toll on the mid-peninsula highway, which all of your candidates campaigned against?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Mr Speaker, I'll refer the matter to the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** I would like to thank the member for his question. My objective is to ensure that Ontario's roads and highways are maintained to the highest standard. We are not going to do what they did with the 407. I am not going to speculate about what is going to happen in the future. We have absolutely no plans at this point for the tolls.

**Mr Jackson:** The honourable minister across the floor has clearly indicated to this House that it is now back on the table that we can have a toll road on the 407. All he has indicated is that he's not prepared to consider leasing or selling some arrangement for the land. What he is confirming today is that he has kept his option open for a toll road.

There was a second promise made by every member of the Liberal Party and those who got elected in the Halton, Hamilton and Niagara regions. In fact, your Liberal candidate in Erie-Lincoln campaigned on how fast they would build the mid-peninsula highway.

I'm going to ask you, Minister, is it your intention to honour the promise made by your Premier, to honour the promise made by every candidate who ran for the Liberal Party in our region, that you will subject the mid-peninsula highway to a full environmental hearing? We want you to put it on the record today that you're that kind of minister, that you'll make that commitment. We want to know today, will you commit to a full environmental hearing for the mid-peninsula highway?

**Hon Mr Takhar:** We will commit ourselves to putting the mid-peninsula highway to a full environmental assessment.

#### CRIME AGAINST SENIORS

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Today is December 1. It is the kickoff to the holiday shopping season. At this time of year we often hear horror stories about seniors in Ontario falling victim to fraud. No one wants their parents or grandparents to fall prey to criminals. Your ministry is responsible for protecting consumers, including seniors. What will you be doing to help protect the thousands of seniors in my riding of Guelph-Wellington and seniors across Ontario from fraud during the holiday season? In particular, what will you be doing to combat the problem of phony charities scamming seniors?

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** I want to thank the honourable member for Guelph-Wellington and congratulate her on her first question and for all of the work and concern that she has shown to the senior citizens in her community.

The Dalton McGuinty government is committed to protecting all consumers in the marketplace, in particular senior citizens. We're concerned, as the holiday season approaches, that some unscrupulous business people are going to try to take advantage of particularly vulnerable people in our society: senior citizens. My ministry is working very diligently with the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee to explore ways to increase seniors' awareness and how they can protect themselves in the marketplace.

In the coming days, I'm also going to be releasing the 2004 Fraud Free Calendar. It's a public-private partnership that gives practical consumer advice to seniors. Copies of those calendars will be available in the 61 government information centres. As well, they'll be sent to all MPPs so they can distribute them as they see fit.

**Mrs Sandals:** Thank you, Minister, and congratulations on your first answer. Our seniors will be happy to hear you're taking action to protect them. However, seniors whom I know don't want to be thought of as victims. Many want to be participants in cracking down on fraud and scams. What can seniors do if they think they maybe have encountered fraud?

**Hon Mr Watson:** Again, thank you to the member for Guelph-Wellington—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Watson:** —and I want to thank the junior member for Nepean for his support here today.

I know members opposite are concerned about this issue as well. Our ministry, in co-operation with the Ontario Provincial Police, works with a program called Phone Busters and Senior Busters. Phone Busters is a national deceptive marketing call centre, and Senior Busters is a very important program. I want to pay tribute to the senior citizens who help staff the phone line. It can

be reached at 1-888-495-8501. Also, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services operates a consumer complaint hotline. If seniors do find themselves in difficulty, they can contact us toll-free at 1-800-889-9768. I would encourage individuals—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I would encourage you to sit down.

#### TAXATION

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, the people of Erie-Lincoln are becoming increasingly concerned about your string of broken promises and what it means to their pocketbooks. Your first two bills in the Legislature brought in the biggest tax hike in the history of the province of Ontario, and it is significantly increasing hydro rates paid by consumers across the province. Will you be good to your word and guarantee to the Legislative Assembly today that you'll not be increasing personal income tax rates any more, that you'll not be increasing the gas tax rate, and you'll not increase the tax on wine, spirits or beer?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Let me take the opportunity to disabuse the member opposite of the notion that he has about our commitment to our promises. I'll just remind him of some of those that we've already delivered on.

We've stopped approving auto insurance rate increases; we did that 15 minutes after forming the government.

We have announced that we will freeze tuition.

We've established a Ministry of Children's Services.

We've introduced legislation to eliminate the private school tax credit.

Yesterday we delivered on our commitment to raise the minimum wage to \$8 an hour.

Another thing we're doing for our families: We're going to make sure their meat is safe by having enough full-time inspectors on the job working in the interests, not of the private sector and private profits, but rather the public interest and the safety of our families.

*Interjections.*

1510

**Mr Hudak:** While the Liberal benches are cheering, I think the heartbeat of taxpayers in Ontario has gone a lot faster with that answer.

A very simple yes or no question—I remember the TV commercials: Looking straight into the camera, Dalton McGuinty says, "I will not raise your taxes." Maybe I didn't have a high-definition TV and didn't see the asterisk. Maybe the TV screen wasn't long enough and I didn't see that your fingers were crossed. It's a simple yes or no question.

You were the man who was the Boy Scout. You're walking down a trail of broken promises. You were going to do things differently. You were the man who was going to starve cynicism. You're feeding them an all-you-can-eat buffet of broken promises.

Answer the question directly: Are you raising the gas tax, are you raising taxes on alcohol and are you going to

raise the personal income tax rate any more than you've already done?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I think the member opposite just broke some kind of record. Never has one individual inserted so many clichés into one question in the history of this Legislature.

I'll tell the member opposite what does quicken the pulse of the people of Ontario. It's the fact that they have been saddled with a \$5.6-billion deficit that compromises their ability to improve their schools, their health care, the protection of their environment and their communities. They're not going to forget that, I can assure you, for a long, long time.

#### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** My question is for the Minister of Finance. On October 23, within an hour of being sworn in, you announced a freeze on auto insurance renewals, and last week you introduced a bill that would protect Ontario drivers from substantial increases. However, I've had a number of phone calls to my constituency office from people who are concerned about their auto insurance premium renewals. The calls I'm getting are that their auto insurance rates have gone up since October 23.

If we froze auto insurance premiums as of October 23, how can these rates continue to climb?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** Thanks to the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell; it's a very important question. However, the answer is pretty simple.

What insurance policy holders are experiencing is the residue, tail end Tory auto insurance approvals that have gone on for the past four years: rate increases in 2002 of 9.2%; 2003, 7.3%; in the second quarter of 2003, 8.5%; and I could go on.

I tell my friend that what we did was take steps, as the Premier said, and within 15 minutes of being sworn in we froze rates. No further rate increases would be approved.

**Mr Lalonde:** I am extremely happy to hear that we kept our promise to drivers. Dalton McGuinty and his government are committed to following up on our promises. It is unfortunate that the previous government allowed this to happen. But it doesn't matter who did it. The drivers in my riding want to know what we are doing to protect them from these increases they are facing.

Several drivers in my riding have reported being hit by heavy rate increases of 20%, 30% and even more. Some constituents of mine are getting renewals backdated as early as October, even though their policies are not up for renewal until December. This doesn't seem to be fair for drivers who have had clean driving records.

What action will you take to protect the drivers of my riding and those across the province from these hefty increases?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** My friend raises a very important issue. What drivers should know is that in some instances

there will be increases in rates based on rate approvals that were approved before we came into office.

The important part of the question is, where are we going from here? Our bill, which is going to be debated today in the House, provides for a 90-day period of freeze, within which time we will be bringing forward a set of reforms that will have the effect of reducing insurance rates by, on average, 10%. That will begin to take effect shortly after January 23, when the freeze is lifted. Thereafter, we're not going to stop there. We're going to continue reforming the system until it is a system that is competitive and rates are ones that are affordable by the drivers of this province. They expect nothing less and they're going to get nothing less, I tell my friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** I'm going to ask the Premier one more time about the Ontario drug benefit program. He refused to respond to the speculation about the fact that they were considering removing some drugs from coverage, introducing user fees and income testing—in other words, two-tier health care.

Yet, in June 2001, this same Premier said to the then Premier, Mike Harris, "I just gave you the opportunity to provide every possible reassurance to our seniors that you will not introduce income testing for their drugs or user fees for their drugs, and you refused to provide that assurance. I'll give you one more chance. Prove you're on the side of seniors now."

I say to you, Premier, prove that you're on the side of seniors, that you won't break another promise and you're not going to raise taxes. Give them the assurance that you won't do that and are not considering it.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I thank the member opposite for the same question again. I want to remind her that one of the most important things that has ever been done for seniors with respect to their health care, and it's the same in terms of being one of the most important things we've done for all Ontarians in terms of their health care, is to slam the door tight on this government's creeping privatization of our health care. We've introduced the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which is all about standing up for seniors and all other Ontarians who are entitled to a high-quality system of universal, public medicare.

#### PETITIONS

##### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I'm just going to read it.

"Whereas the previous government left the current government of Ontario with a \$5.6-billion deficit. As a result, the residents of Scarborough Southwest demand immediate action to eliminate the deficit and bring Ontario's fiscal house in order.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to move as quickly as possible to eliminate the \$5.6-billion deficit."

I'd like to table this with the Clerk.

#### TOBACCO TAX

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition here signed by a great number of my residents and the residents from the riding south of Oxford. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide cigarette and tobacco displays behind a curtain, and support a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas history has proven that increases in tobacco taxes cause increases in the smuggling trade for illegal black-market tobacco whose contents are neither regulated nor inspected; and

"Whereas forcing store owners to hide their tobacco displays unduly punishes both store owners and consumers for the purchase and marketing of what remains a legal product;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject the increase in tobacco taxes and the ban on the display of tobacco products, and protect the rights of consumers to purchase a legal, regulated product—tobacco."

I present it on behalf of all the people who signed this.

#### VISITOR

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure all members of the Legislature will want to join me in welcoming the mother of one of our pages. Her name is Linda Brett and she was in the audience—I don't know if she's still here at this point in time. Her son, Daniel Brett, is an acting page. I will be having lunch with him tomorrow. I wanted to thank the mother for coming and for allowing her son to work in the Legislature.

1520

#### OPTOMETRISTS

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It comes from Fort Frances and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

“Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

“Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

“Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP, Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

“Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases, and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill.”

I agree with the petitioners and I've affixed my signature to it.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTRICITY PRICING), 2003

### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTABLISSEMENT DU COÛT DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario à l'égard de l'établissement du coût de l'électricité.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** We're at questions and comments now. The last time we were at the third party. We had completed the third party. We are now over at the government side for questions and comments for two minutes.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I need clarification on the rotation as to whether or not we had a member with minutes left to complete, as in eight minutes. That's not the case?

**The Speaker:** No. My understanding is that the last time the third party had finished their questions and comments for two minutes. Let me just check.

It is my understanding that the member for Toronto-Danforth had finished her two minutes of questions and comments and that it's now in the rotation of the government. I asked for further questions and comments. It seems to me that it's on the government side. Is there someone from the government side?

**Mr Levac:** Within the two minutes, just to put on the record again, we're talking about Bill 4. It's the energy bill that has been proposed before the House. We want to be very clear that we're being realistic about electricity prices. The previous statements by the members on the other side of the House have made it quite clear that they've got one way or the highway, and it's the only way to do this. What we're trying to do is find the balance. With this proposed legislation, our government is taking a responsible approach to try to have electricity pricing that better reflects the true cost of electricity.

Some of my own words were used against me by a member of the north in the NDP. They basically tried to say that I was against this all along. Quite frankly, I had indicated that this bill proposes where we should have been right from the very beginning. The municipality I represent would have been hit with a \$1-million debt, when the municipality itself chose to be debt-free. They actually got themselves out of debt as a whole municipality because of good budgeting, good financial restrictions that they put on themselves and spending that was tailored to their needs. When this bill came in from the previous government, it was going to foist upon them a \$1-million debt. Quite frankly, we can't do business that way, where we just shift the debt around, which is exactly what's happening with this cap. It was pointed out quite clearly that the cap of 4.3 was matched just because Toronto had it and they didn't have any rationale for why 4.3 should have been used as a cap in the first place.

In terms of the speakers in this House, I want to make it quite clear that a responsible way to deal with this is to remove that cap. We're getting responses from across the province on this issue. They're talking to us and saying, “Now we're headed in the right direction so we're going to finally pay the value of what we generate.” We've also added into that the conservation issue, which is very important.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm sorry about the confusion a little earlier.

I want to take a moment to thank the member from Don Valley West and the member from Stoney Creek for their comments in the House on this particular piece of legislation. I'm not in favour of this legislation, of course, mainly because there was an agreement in this House just a year ago now to leave this cap on until 2006. Certainly we believe on this side of the House that 2006 would have given the government of the day, the citizens of Ontario and industry in Ontario the opportunity to use that time to have further generation come on stream, as well as the fact of being able to allow good, strong economic growth in the province, which, of course, is what we need to pay the bills in this province, to pay for the different kinds of promises that all provincial parties in governments need, and that's the \$28 billion or \$29 billion we spend in health care and the \$14 billion or \$15 billion we spend on education.

My concern with lifting the cap is strictly the loss of job creation in Ontario. As well, I'm hearing—and I don't know what the members opposite are hearing. That's certainly not what the member from Brant has heard. In my municipality and in the riding I represent, people are very concerned about the broken promise. I was at probably 15 events on the weekend and the voices from the citizens I represent were continuing to say that Dalton McGuinty had broken yet another promise.

I look forward to more comments this afternoon and hearing our members say a few words on this bill as well.

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank you again for the opportunity to say a few words.

**The Speaker:** There's a wrap-up of two minutes from the member for Don Valley East.

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** West.

**The Speaker:** West. Sorry.

**Ms Wynne:** Not to be confused with "East." Very close.

The bottom line, because of the financial situation confronting Ontario, is that it would be irresponsible for the province and taxpayers to continue to subsidize electricity consumption. This bill outlines our plan for taking responsible action. This subsidy jeopardizes our ability to invest in health care and education. It jeopardizes our ability to follow through on the things that we know need to be done. What we're doing right now is playing catch-up. We're having to clean up a mess that was created, and one of the ways we're going to do that is, we're going to lift this cap on electricity so that we can start to address the deficit that's confronting us.

On October 2, the people of Ontario elected a government capable and willing to make decisions based on the best interests of all Ontarians, and that includes dealing with our issues of conservation. We can't keep doing what we've been doing in this province. We can't keep over-consuming. We have to start dealing with the fact that energy is not an infinite resource. We have to find ways to conserve what we have and build local solutions, build supply, while conserving what we have.

That's why I am confident that the citizens of this province understand that we have to make a change in the cap that was put in place by the Tory government. It was an irresponsible, time-sensitive cap in the first place. It was never going to be in place permanently. It was always the intention of our government to remove the cap. The current deficit has accelerated our agenda. It hasn't changed our plan, it hasn't done anything but force us to move more quickly in the direction we had already intended to move in. That's why we are lifting the cap. It's the responsible thing to do.

1530

**The Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** Thanks for the opportunity to speak on the energy bill this afternoon. First of all, I'd like to say I've got some relatives visiting from Manitoba. To my nephews Matthew and Addison, it's great to have you here in Ontario.

I also sat on the alternative fuels committee, which dealt with a lot of energy issues. It was a great pleasure to sit on that committee. We had a number of members—Mr Bradley, Ms Churley was there, Ms Bountrogianni, Mr O'Toole—who worked very hard, did a lot of great work there and heard a lot of comments from various presenters on energy and efficiency, whether it was electricity, electricity pricing or electricity generation. It was great to see.

I remember Collingwood, for example, coming forward with an energy-reduction program that saved them, I believe, in the area of 22% of electricity generating costs simply by monitoring and regulating water heaters through a computer program that was centrally set up so that those individuals who used water at certain times would have it when they needed it. When they wanted to shower in the morning, a family of two would be able to do that, but they wouldn't reheat that after they had gone to work until later on in the day when those peak periods in the generation costs were a lot less.

There were so many things that we heard. I certainly hope the new government of the day—first of all, I should congratulate them, as this is the first opportunity I've had to speak in the House, on winning the recent election. It takes a lot of time and energy, and the province has certainly spoken on what they feel is the new government and how it's going to unfold for us. Also, I hope the new government does look forward to other multi-party committees such as the alternative fuels committee, because it was very interesting and informative for all of us to work together.

As I mentioned, on that committee we had Collingwood express the fact that they could have a 22% reduction in their peak load costs simply by monitoring and regulating the way the hot water heat was done in that community. People didn't realize that at the time, when cost pricing was done on peak loads. As the demand reached here, the cost for the day was set at that. They reduced it by about 22%, taking the cost down to here, so their cost across the board was substantially less, just by taking care of the hot water heaters in that area.

Since the introduction of this bill, I've had a number of concerns come forward from the seniors in my riding, for example, who are concerned about being on a fixed income, and other individuals on fixed incomes as well, such as those on disability. What is the cost going to be for those individuals who have electric heat? How are they going to be able to afford the cost of that? I know one individual spoke very clearly and asked about the possibility of two meters, one for the electric heat and one for the generation. The possibility to regulate or monitor the amount of electricity used outside that area was a potential opportunity because of the impact on fixed-income individuals and how we'd be able to deal with that. This individual's suggestion was two meters, one for the electric heat and one outside that, so you got outside that margin of 750 kilowatt hours per month.

Also, what is the impact on small businesses? The function of a government is to create an environment that

attracts business and brings it into its jurisdiction. What is the impact on those small mom-and-pop operations and how they're going to unfold and how it's going to work for them?

Governments try to create an environment, and when you add the other aspects, whether it's the increase in minimum wage that was brought forward and mentioned today or the small business taxes, when a company looks to locate in an area, electricity is one of the key components for that, and that is because it is one of the major costs. Being from Oshawa, I'm sure people would associate General Motors as being one of the key employers—and it quite definitely is. When they look at that, they look at what the cost is to generate electricity so they can produce their product or their goods.

When I had the opportunity and privilege to work in the Ministry of Natural Resources, we had a number of lumber producers, for example. The difficulty with that was that a lot of them were deciding whether they were selling energy or producing lumber. When they sold energy, because a lot have their own mills and generating plants—I would imagine that the new minister would be invited up for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Iroquois Falls for the lumber mill there where they did a \$50-million upgrade to produce more electricity. The difficulty there is that when they're producing electricity, they're not running the mill. So the people who work in the mill are not employed cutting lumber, whether it's in the forest, transporting it, whether it's the trucks that bring it in, or actually in the mill making the paper or the chips and by-products that go with it.

So companies have to decide where they are going to produce and what the impact of this change is going to be on those companies. How are they going to determine if they're selling on the spot market—and that's one of the difficulties that I hope the new government is going to contend with. They have to give notification of a two-hour period before they can sell in that market. In that two-hour time frame the cost of electricity could substantially change. Not only does the electricity cost change, and the sale of it, but also the employment criteria for the people who supply the mill, work in the mill and transport the goods back and forth. These are some of the things that the new government of the day has to decide the impact of.

Quite frankly, I would hope a lot of people know that in northern Ontario the mining and lumber industries are the lifeblood of employment and opportunities. So those companies have to best determine how it is going to unfold for them.

I can remember back when we were first elected in 1995. One of the family members from the Mackey group who was a race car driver as well was in Michigan at the time and he said, "Ontario used to be our number one supplier for employment here in Michigan, but since you came along," referring to us winning in 1995, "we're concerned with the amount of jobs that are not going to locate in Michigan but are now locating back in Ontario."

I'm a bit concerned about the impact of that environment I spoke of, whether it's the increased cost of

electricity on businesses, whether it's the increased costs in minimum wage, plus the taxes, for businesses that locate here. Certainly we have a great province and there is a great deal of benefit for companies locating here; whether it's workers' safety and insurance or the OHIP costs that help attract businesses to the province of Ontario, they all factor that in. Before we came to power in 1995, a lot of those locations were in Michigan. We brought them back. What's the new impact going to be?

I had the opportunity as well to sit with the Durham home builders on the weekend. They were celebrating their 50th anniversary, and I certainly congratulate them for 50 years of contributing to the economy, to the community and to the jobs in my region—in Durham region and Oshawa. The amount of growth has been phenomenal. We're growing in leaps and bounds. We're seeing new developments come forward. Hopefully, as things progress, once the expansion of the 407 gets through the region of Durham, you're going to see one of the largest economic stimuli for future growth in the region of Durham.

Again, they're concerned with some of those aspects, and electricity cost is one of the concerns. It's not so much the cost of the production of the house, but it's the cost to get there; as I mentioned earlier, the increased costs for mills and lumber mills. And lumber is obviously one of the key commodities in producing, as is brick. Bricks are fire-formed and a lot of electricity is utilized in that process as well to build those houses. Those costs will slowly start go to up again. What is the impact going to be on those businesses when they're not selling houses, and the jobs aren't locating in the area, because of increased costs?

But 50 years is certainly a long time for the Durham home builders and I certainly congratulate them on 50 years of dedicated commitment to the region of Durham.

Ontario is still listed as one of the fastest-growing jurisdictions in the G8 countries and this is because of the environment that was in that area. You have to make sure you have an environment that attracts businesses and takes care of its individuals. So long as we had that and the businesses were locating here, we certainly grew in leaps and bounds in Ontario, because quite frankly for a significant period of time we didn't have that ability to grow and prosper for businesses to locate here. Then they came forward. What is that impact going to be? I think businesses will be the key ones who will be deciding on what and where they should be locating.

#### 1540

I mentioned the alternative fuels committee. There are some other aspects there that I think should be integrated, hopefully through the committee process. Net metering is one of the key components. There are individuals who have self-generation, whether it's through solar power or wind power. They produce enough electricity that they have the ability to sell on the grid. So when their solar power is generating more electricity than they utilize in the house at that time, they sell that back on the grid. A bill is required for what is called net metering, to give

those individuals the opportunity to sell back on the grid. Also, the time of day or demand management is very key as well.

The net metering was very interesting. I can remember Mattawa. I know there appears to be a question about net metering, but in Mattawa there were some individuals who had been off grid for a number of years. Actually, while campaigning, I happened across a couple of houses that we found very interesting because their entire roofs were covered in solar panels. Those would be the individuals who would be very concerned about the ability to sell back on the grid, so that their meters go in reverse when they're contributing back into the grid. Demand management is very key—I know Mr O'Toole mentioned it during his speech last week—and the time-of-day costs.

Those are some of the things that could be looked at as well. But it's very difficult to monitor and regulate that, because how do you assess when the meter goes around? It doesn't say, "It went around at this time." How much electricity is used at what time of the day? If individuals want to run the dryer, the washer or the dishwasher at certain times of the day, at peak periods there should be an additional cost to use those services because it would be a deterrent for individuals to run the appliances at that time.

One of the suggestions that we had on the alternative fuels committee that was very effective was the use of timers on appliances. They could set them for the middle of the night so the dryer would go off in the basement, as it is in our house anyway, at 2 o'clock in the morning when there was no peak load and the cost for electricity production was very low. That would assist, in a much more friendly environment, in generating electricity.

One of the other things was the amount of electricity used. If you charged more at certain periods of the day, people would be more reluctant to use it at that time.

One of the areas I had a real concern with was schools. There was no incentive in schools. When I was a kid, it was always the same thing. "Turn the something something light off," Dad used to say. Now that I've got a couple of young boys—Josh and Garrett, who are six and eight—I say the same thing. They walk out of the room and they leave the light on all the time.

People think in the microcosm, and there is difficulty with that. I can remember walking into one house and they had the TV and the lights on for the dog when they went out. I said, "Do you understand what that costs?" because we were dealing with electricity at that time. They said, "What does it cost? I don't know—maybe 50 cents an hour to do that?" I said, "Yes, but you don't understand. You're thinking in the micro; you have to think in the macro. We've got 60,000 houses in Oshawa. If every house had a TV and a light left on, that would be 60,000 lights and 60,000 TVs that are causing the production of electricity."

When you get into those summer months, when all those appliances are on and the air conditioning is going and everything else is happening, that certainly adds to

the generation costs where the coal-fired plants fire up to supply those peak demands. If we can reduce those and get people understanding—and it has to start right in the schools. If the schools had an educational program whereby the kids understand—I ask my kids about it all the time and they don't really get a good sense of energy savings and the cost. I know that in our house in excess of 50% of all the lighting cost is with energy-efficient bulbs. Quite frankly, my wife, Dianne, was a bit concerned: "What are you spending all this money for on these bulbs?" I said, "It's going to be a saving in the long term, not only for us but for the environment, for the future generation of our kids."

I think people need to look at those things, such as tax incentives on energy-efficient appliances. I remember during the campaign that the big thing the NDP had was the fridges; they were going to replace refrigerators. The difficulty with that was—and it didn't come up during our campaign—what are you going to do with all these fridges when they're done? Where is all the Freon that was used to cool those fridges going to go when they've taken them to a landfill site somewhere? You try to regenerate them but most of the time they just go into a site. Those weren't taken into consideration.

I think incentives are very key and very necessary for a lot of individuals so they can see the added benefit not only in the short term but in the long term. Give the gift of savings for the future. I know my mother will probably receive some energy-efficient bulbs for Christmas this time around just to help out with the energy costs in the household, as an incentive to help reduce the cost of electricity, as well as the cost to the environment.

There are a lot of opportunities. I think it's right back at where it starts. The youth of today are the ones who are going to inherit our environment. I think there are a lot of things that we are able to do. I certainly hope with the impact of the legislation coming forward—when you add the cost of minimum wage, the cost of the business taxes—business will still see Ontario as a key place to locate. The future opportunity for multi-party committees is very key in developing policy that would be helpful. I know the alternative fuels committee was one. I think that going right back to the base of educating our youth about the impact on tomorrow is so key.

With that, I'll close my remarks as I appreciate and forward to some comments to see how the other members speak here today.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** The member, I'm surprised, didn't use up all his time. I was preparing my two-minute question-and-answers and I don't have them ready. I request unanimous consent that the member use up his time.

I listened carefully, actually, to the member for Oshawa because we did both serve on the alternative energy committee. It was a committee that actually worked. It was the only one I experienced in this place that overall was fairly non-partisan. We all worked really hard. I was the only New Democrat there, working along

with many Tories and some Liberals. We came up with an amazing document that I urge everybody who has an interest in alternative fuels and efficiency and conservation to read, because it got shelved by the previous government. To be fair, they didn't have a whole lot of time to deal with it, but I urge the new Liberal government to remove that report from the shelves and start implementing the recommendations because there are some very far-reaching, excellent recommendations as to how we can save energy.

On this bill before us today, which in a few minutes I will have an opportunity to talk about in more detail, I will talk to people a bit about ways that we can conserve energy and become more efficient, but what I also will want to talk about is what's wrong with this bill before us today and why it's not about energy conservation and efficiency, but it's simply about a hike in the hydro rates in this province. It's another broken promise by the Liberals who promised over and over again during the election campaign that they would keep these rates on until 2006. That promise has been broken. So people were prepared to not have rate increases; now they're going to see them.

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I'm pleased to rise and make some comments to the member opposite. The persons whom I think we all share a concern for are those who are least able to pay. So I was pleased today to hear the Minister of Labour stand in his place and tell Ontarians that we are going to raise the minimum wage.

Back some time before April of this current year, I met with what I would call caregivers who came to my office. They were deeply concerned about the poor and the working poor. They were also concerned about the lack of volunteers who would come and assist them as they tried to assist others to make their commitments in day-to-day life, and issues such as heat, clothing and food—many items that we take for granted. I mentioned to them that it was a commitment of ours to raise the minimum wage, albeit over time, but we would raise the minimum wage. I have to tell you that they were gratified to know that we were going to, after almost nine years, raise the minimum wage for these persons so that they can afford the utilities, food, clothing, shelter and the basics that we all take for granted.

1550

In regards to this energy bill, we're taking a realistic approach to energy usage and pricing here in Ontario. Small business people, during the blackout that happened some time ago over all of Ontario and the eastern seaboard, came to me and said, "My product was destroyed because of the hydro being out." I think the people of Ontario want to know that when they flip the switch or put the plug into the wall, they are going to be secure in knowing that the product they have in their stores and their businesses—I'm talking about refrigeration, for one example—is going to be safe, that it's going to be available to the public on the next day. That's what we're about: the security of our hydro.

**The Speaker:** The member for Simcoe North.

**Mr Dunlop:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm looking forward to helping you light the trees downstairs this evening, or something. I think I'm involved in that a little later on.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Dunlop:** Yes, we're going to cut the usage.

Again it's a pleasure to make a few comments on those of my colleague from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette, former Minister of Natural Resources, and a very well respected member of Parliament in this Legislature.

I couldn't help but take notice of Mr Hoy's comments, particularly around minimum wage. It's kind of like, as was mentioned a couple of times today, Chris giveth and Greg taketh away. Those were a couple of comments we heard earlier today. There's no question that the minimum wage will help a little bit, that there are some people it will help out in our province.

However, my concern about that, and I've mentioned this a number of times in other comments here, is that it will have an impact on very small business people who are trying to hire students for the first time. I know some of those businesses, and already they're very concerned about it, particularly when they're seeing the rate being lifted on their hydro. We know right now that Bill 2, the largest-tax-increase-in-history bill, will have a very negative effect on small business people, and wage earners as well. We'll now see the 700,000 whom we've been able to get off the minimum provincial income tax rates go back on. I think we've got some strong concerns around that area.

I'm not really making a lot of comments right now on my colleague's comments because he will be wrapping up here in a couple of minutes. I do want to thank the Speaker once again for the opportunity to address you this afternoon.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** This is a bit of an odd debate. We find ourselves in a situation where we're actually listening to the previous government, by way of the speech by Mr Ouellette, whom I also respect as a member of this assembly—a person of integrity; I have no question about that. But the member is in a position of debating a bill about a government that's now saying it wants to remove a rate cap on electricity that was installed by the Tories. I find that a little bit ironic because the Conservative government had tried to deregulate and privatize hydro, and it didn't work. The net effect of it was that electricity prices in this province went through the roof. We said at the time, and the Liberals said at times, depending on what day it was—one day they were in favour of deregulation and the next day they were opposed. I think they flipped about five times. Finally, before the election, they were squarely behind Howard Hampton and said, "We shouldn't privatize. We shouldn't deregulate." They even went so far as to say, "We shouldn't remove the rate cap." Now, that's what the Liberals had said prior to the election.

We find ourselves in a funny situation where the Liberals, who are now the government, are coming back

and breaking their election promise by removing the rate cap. What they're doing by way of this bill is essentially privatizing and deregulating hydro. The ironic part is that the Conservative member finds himself in a position of having to criticize a Liberal government for essentially doing the same thing that his own government wanted to do, except for the rate cap. So I find it a little bit ironic.

Des fois, dans cette Assemblée on voit des affaires qui sont bizarres. Je peux vous affirmer qu'aujourd'hui c'est une de ces journées-là; on s'attend d'habitude, quand un gouvernement est élu, qu'ils vont garder leurs promesses puis ils vont aller dans la direction dont ils ont parlée durant les élections, mais dans ce cas le gouvernement dit (1), « On va briser notre promesse; on va allouer la déréglementation et la privatisation de l'électricité, » et (2), « On va s'assurer que les prix de l'électricité vont monter. » Moi, je peux vous dire, comme consommateur d'électricité, que c'est de la méchante nouvelle conservatrice et libérale.

**The Speaker:** Member from Oshawa, two minutes.

**Mr Ouellette:** I'll begin with the last speaker. I thank the member for Timmins-James Bay.

During my speech earlier on: If anybody, it was his riding that benefited most substantially, with the Iroquois Falls new hydro development, a \$50-million redevelopment that was taking place for a mill in his community, because they wanted to generate their own electricity, and his community or his riding saw that substantial benefit. I know he'll probably be invited to that mill opening, with the new generation, when they cut the ribbon there.

To the member for Toronto-Danforth, yes, it was a pleasure to work on the alternative fuels committee. It was very productive and it gave us a lot of insight on how communities and businesses were dealing with that very serious issue regarding electricity costs, alternative fuels and the opportunities in the future. If in the early 1990s we could have gone into environmentally-friendly-based as opposed to gas-based, whether it's wind power generation or other generation, we would certainly be in a different situation at this time.

As well, the member for Chatham-Kent Essex spoke about the minimum wage impact. My intention there was to discuss the impact as a government creating an environment for business. When I was in business, I was a general sales manager for a company. The owner came forward and said, "Our accountant says that we have to have an increase of 10% in the sales of our average product." I turned to the manager who was running the business at the time and said, "What would you rather have 15% of the current amount that we're making or 25% of nothing?" Right now, that business is not in existence.

**The Speaker:** Further debate.

**Ms Churley:** I had an opportunity just last week to speak for a couple of minutes on this very important bill before us today. I have the pleasure of a full 20 minutes today to berate the Liberals, many of whom are sitting here, I'm sure, waiting to hear what I have to say, taking in every word, no doubt in great anticipation.

I mentioned the other day that I've been fascinated, Mr Speaker, as I'm sure you are, sitting in the chair—now, of course, you're non-partisan and you must listen. I've sat in that chair as the Deputy Speaker and it's an amazing thing. It's hard to believe, to the new members, that this is such a partisan place. I know some of the new members are coming to me now and saying, "You all seem to dislike each other so much here," but yet between question period and other times, we are actually friendly with each other. It does take a while to get used to, doesn't it? Even school kids don't behave like this. They would be thrown out of the classroom, expelled. However, it is the nature of the place. But it is interesting, when you sit in the Speaker's chair, how you really do become neutral. I was surprised that when I was the Deputy Speaker, when I sat elevated in that chair, how I listened to everybody and tried to be fair with everybody, and how sometimes, even as a member of the government, you could understand that your own government can be saying pretty silly things.

In this case, this Bill 4 before us today, we've seen a leader who has flip-flopped in a spectacular fashion. This is of course from Liberals. As we all know from way back, the word most associated with Liberals is "flip-flop"; the flip-flop party. But in this case, it really is spectacular. Mr McGuinty, the Premier of this province, promised not only once, twice, three times or four times, but dozens of times—before the election, during the election, right after the election—that he would not lift those caps until 2006. I have to say that I never supported the caps. I made it very clear in this House and, in fact, as you know, our party voted against the rate caps, although our leader did take the lead in raising the issues about the huge rate increases across this province daily in this House—the Liberals raised them as well—and begged and pleaded with the government day after day to put on rate caps. Eventually the government caved and did what was being asked. But time and time again, the then Liberal leader, now the Premier, promised to keep those caps until 2006.

I never supported the rate cap for two reasons. Anybody who's known me for a while will know that I entered politics as an environmentalist, and part of my dedication and commitment to the environment is probably not that much different from anybody else's in this House now, because over the past several years we've all become more environmentally conscious. There's no doubt that there's more and more evidence now showing the link between health and the environment, and certainly the link between the bad air created by our automobiles and some coal plants. We all know those connections now.

Many years ago, I did get into politics as an environmentalist—ran as an environmentalist—and part of the reason I ran was because of bad air in my community through incinerators and through other industry. I started, as a citizen, closing that industry down. I quite successfully stopped a huge, city of Toronto garbage incinerator from being built in the riding, as well as helping to get an

old one closed down and dealing with a lead plant that was literally poisoning our children. Those were the kinds of things that got me into politics in the first place, and I continue to have a keen interest in the environment.

Of course, when it comes to the rate caps—and this is one of the major reasons why I never support them and I didn't in this case, and we all know this—the lower our rates are, especially if it's not power at cost and we're being subsidized, there is no incentive to save energy.

**1600**

Secondly, I opposed the rate caps because it was putting a very expensive Band-Aid on a much bigger problem. The bigger problem was the deregulation and privatization of our electricity system, which my leader, Howard Hampton, has now written a book about. He became—I don't think anyone would argue—the foremost authority and the most impassioned speaker on hydro day after day after day. The previous Tory members will remember that. In fact, last year we made our little video for the press party all about Howard not being able to talk about anything but hydro. But the reality is that he was making a good point then and continues to make a good point now: that where we need to get back to is power at cost.

What Liberals and Tories will say repeatedly is that we never have really had the power at cost because of what we refer to as the stranded debt. The Tories especially would talk a lot about the stranded debt left behind by previous governments. I want to be clear what that stranded debt is really all about—this very, very large amount of money. It must be confusing to many people who don't pay a whole lot of attention to the intricacies of this debate. It's the money that was borrowed to pay for the building of nuclear plants, in particular the last nuclear plant that was built in this province, Darlington. We know we have a lot of technical problems, to say the least, with our nuclear plants now. That plant ended up coming in way above cost at the time. I wasn't in the Legislature then, but I recall Ruth Grier was here and was very passionate about this and forced the Legislature to take this out to a committee.

Nonetheless, Darlington went ahead at great cost and we are still paying for those nuclear plants that we built many years ago. We know there are tremendous problems with these plants, and we are now so reliant on those plants that it's scary. They are too expensive and we now find that there are so many technical problems. There's no room for error with nuclear plants because of the repercussions if something does go wrong. We don't have to deal with the deadly nuclear waste right now, but our children, our grandchildren and their children will. We don't know where to put it, and that's going to cost multi-billions of dollars. I think by now we all agree that allowing ourselves to become so reliant on nuclear power has been a mistake, but that's the mess we're in now. We have to deal with that particular aspect.

Certainly New Democrats have made a commitment to not build any new nuclear plants. I don't know what the Liberals' position on that now is. I believe Mr

McGuinty indicated that he would be open to building new nuclear plants. Hey, if he wants to break a promise, I wouldn't mind him—there are a few promises Mr McGuinty made that I'd like to see him break, and that would be one of them. I have to check that. I said, "I think," but I'm pretty sure he did. I think I've got the quote, but not with me. I'll get back to you on that.

But I can tell you some of the other things that Mr McGuinty said when it came to not increasing those rates. People listen when there's an election on. It's one of the few times when people actually do pay a lot of attention to what goes on in this place and what politicians have to say: during elections. And people vote. Well, in this case, they voted overwhelmingly—we know they wanted to get the Tories out, and it worked. The Tories are out. They're sitting over there now. Right over there. We can all applaud that, except for the Tories, of course. That was achieved.

But they also listened to what the politicians, and in particular the leaders, had to say. What Dalton McGuinty promised in this election was essentially what Tories promised before, and that is, "We can do more for less." It's not working.

I know that Gerry Phillips said—we have the quote—

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):**

Read the whole quote. Read the entire thing.

**Ms Churley:** The whole quote? OK. Mr Phillips said there is a risk of a \$5-billion deficit.

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** Read it all.

**Ms Churley:** Methinks they doth protest too much. I've got the entire quote.

Another member from your—

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** Oh, boy, are they defensive—getting really angry over there.

Gerry Phillips is a smart man. I used to read Gerry Phillips's speeches in this House if I wanted to know some of the financial aspects and things going on. We all respect Mr Phillips's ability to understand the financial aspects of this place.

Mr Phillips predicted there was going to be a \$5-billion deficit. Another minister over there predicted it would be about \$4 billion.

I know and we know that the Liberals went into the election knowing there was going to be a big deficit, and they made tons of promises, tons of promises they knew they couldn't keep.

Mr McGuinty said time and time again—I'm going to read to you—and people listened to this and believed this, and it meant something to them.

"I think the most important thing to do at this particular point in time is to put a cap on those rates through to 2006." That was Focus Ontario, November 23, 2002. That was then.

"We will keep the price cap in place until 2006." That's from Hydro You Can Trust, The Ontario Liberal Plan for a Modern, Public Hydro, released September 2003. "Hydro You Can Trust."

“The Liberals, meanwhile, frontrunners in the polls, vow to maintain the rate cap at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour until 2006—the same timeline the Tories have promised.” That’s from the London Free Press, September 30, 2003.

“Dalton McGuinty says a Liberal government would build additional hydroelectric generating plants.... McGuinty also said he would keep a rate cap in place until 2006 and keep hydro in public hands.” That’s from Broadcast News, September 29, 2003.

“Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty said his party would keep hydro in public hands.” That’s from Canadian Press, September 8, 2003.

McGuinty “said the 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour freeze on rates will go sometime after 2006....

“It’s going to add to the hydro debt and if there was another way around it, I would be delighted to entertain it. It’s going to have to come out of rates. It’s going to be like a mortgage and we will”—all—“have to pay it a little longer.” That’s the Toronto Sun, September 6, 2003.

Remember, before the new Premier voted for the cap, he opposed the cap. He said, “This is a quick fix, a transparent attempt to buy votes, to buy favour with our own money.” He said that back on November 15, 2002.

So what New Democrats continue to say is that we know this is a very complicated and complex issue, but there are some simple answers to at least the beginning process of fixing it, and that’s to keep our hydro in public hands and immediately end hydro privatization and deregulation and, as well as that, to get very, very serious about conservation and efficiency plans, because what we have before us is not about conservation and efficiency; it’s about keeping our hydro in private hands. So there are fees being paid—the middleman is getting paid—but there’s no comprehensive conservation and efficiency plan.

#### 1610

During the election, David Suzuki came to Toronto. It was an election and everybody was really busy, I know. I went to hear what Mr Suzuki and others from the foundation had to say. They had an expert from California come up to talk about what Ontario needs to do, and indeed what Ontario can do, to bring in real conservation and real energy efficiency plans. And yes, it will require some resources; there is no doubt about it. As California did when they deregulated and found themselves facing blackouts and brownouts and all kinds of problems—industry shutting down, jobs lost, the whole thing—they had to get very serious. In fact, California has always been a leader in conservation, for a number of reasons that I don’t have time to go into.

I recommend everybody read this—Bright Future: Avoiding Blackouts in Ontario. There are some very good recommendations as to where we have to go if we’re serious about conservation and efficiency. There are also some very good suggestions, as I said earlier in my two minutes in response to the member from Oshawa, from the alternative fuels committee, which I

sat on. Some of those would take more time than others; some of them are doable right now. But we have no choice than to seriously get on, not with worrying about and trying to build new generation—yes, perhaps we need to go ahead with Adam Beck. But I am not in favour of going out there, all over the place, and producing all kinds of new generation and making that the flavour of the month, the serious issue; that is, we don’t have enough generation and we’ve got to ask the private sector in public-private partnerships, which is what’s happening now, to build new generation. Instead we should, and could, be focusing all our energy, if I could use that word, on real energy conservation and efficiency programs. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel here; they already exist. There are so many good ideas, even here in the city of Toronto: the better buildings program—retrofitting buildings. There are all kinds of things we can do.

Good tips is just not good enough. When the Minister of Energy made his announcement on this bill, he said there are good tips out there for conservation and efficiency. We need real incentives, real programs and, yes, real resources dedicated to conservation and efficiency. Not only is that the right way to go, it’s also the right way to go in terms of our environment—cutting down on the number of people who die every year.

The latest information on mercury—we’ve always known mercury, as well as lead and dioxins and so many other things we breathe in, is a problem. But the latest study on mercury—tons and tons of it spew out from coal plants every year, and our children were all breathing that in. We now know, more than we ever knew before, that mercury is more dangerous to children’s health—all the more reason why the commitment to close down the coal plants by 2007 is critical. The only way we’re going be able to do that is to bring in serious conservation and efficiency programs.

One of the things that’s really annoying me—I listen with great interest to so many of the members who are standing up. Talk about spin and using words, creative words, to wiggle out from under this major broken promise, always going back to, “There was a deficit we didn’t know about,” which the Tories still deny there ever was.

We knew. We said continually, before the election and during the election, that there was a deficit and the only way to keep a whole bunch of promises was to raise some taxes, and we said we would do that. The Liberals said, “Don’t worry, we can do all these things without raising taxes,” and are now saying, “Gee, there’s a deficit. We didn’t know about it, so we can’t keep our promises.”

It really annoys me to hear all this spin. For instance, the Liberals’ new slogan for breaking what they called ironclad promises is now “taking responsible action.” So, breaking ironclad promises now is about taking responsible action, or because of this “unknown deficit, this deficit we didn’t know about, we now just have to ‘accelerate our agenda.’ We were going to get rid of

those rate caps anyway in 2006. But because of the unknown deficit”—

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** You opposed the rate cap.

**Ms Churley:** Come on, Dominic. I've already addressed that. You missed that part of my speech. I addressed it.

A broken promise is a broken promise, and they knew that there was a deficit, and we're not going to let them get away with trying to hoodwink the people of Ontario and say, "We didn't know about a deficit," where we have evidence that they did know. Now they're saying, "Because of this deficit we didn't know about, we have to accelerate our agenda." That's the weirdest spin on this I've heard yet: "After having promised to keep rate caps on until 2006"—we're going on to 2004, so more than two years away—"because of that, we have to break our promise and we're going to lift those rate caps now."

In closing, I will say this: Some people, because of the rate cap and the way it's going to happen, will not be affected that much. But think about people in apartment buildings. Think about some of our industry. Think about the people who are going to be affected. Also think about the people who believed that promise and planned their businesses, their lives, accordingly.

People were talking about minimum wage, for instance, and we got \$8 over four years. Tack that on to increases in hydro and all of the other increases and things—people making the minimum wage are actually going to be having less money in their pockets under the Liberal government than they had under the Tories. The Liberals are now going to raise taxes for low-income people.

Madam Speaker, I'll leave it at that for the moment. Thank you for this opportunity.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Caroline Di Cocco):** It is now time for questions and comments.

**Mr Agostino:** I enjoyed listening to the member from Toronto-Danforth and agree with almost everything she said.

First of all, I find it interesting coming from a party that ran a platform that was going to raise taxes by \$1 billion in this province to the people of Ontario. Public auto insurance was the centrepiece of their platform. But if you look at their financial breakdown and their cost estimates, it wasn't anywhere to be seen—as usual, irresponsible opposition promises.

Let's think about this for a sec. The NDP—the same party that opposed a price cap—voted against our lifting of the price cap. This is the same party that opposed a price cap. So I'm trying to figure this out. You oppose it; then you think we did something that you'd want us to do, which was lift this; and you still vote against it—typical opposition politics.

That's the beauty of opposition, I guess. You could just say whatever you want. You could be totally irresponsible with your commitments and your promises, but that reality changes when you're in government.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** You must be talking about their energy policies.

**Mr Agostino:** Your leader, Mr Hampton, who just walked in, of course had that luxury throughout the campaign: a stunt a day, nailing Jell-O to the wall. He wrote a book which spoke against price caps, but then voted against the legislation that would lift those price caps.

I find it quite fascinating, but this bill, for the first time in the history of the province, actually encourages conservation. It actually works to say to people, "If we can work together for the problem we face—there's not enough production of energy in this province, and until we deal with that, this hydro monster is not going to go away."

We have been responsible, and the member for Toronto-Danforth mentioned that it would have been irresponsible of us to continue down this road from both the point of view of fiscal responsibility and of encouraging energy conservation. I look forward to other comments on this.

1620

**Mr Dunlop:** I wanted to congratulate the member from Toronto-Danforth for her comments today. As she said earlier, she got into politics just for that reason: She was interested in some of the incineration projects that were taking place in the province. I don't know how many years ago that was, but I know that today the same kinds of issues are still there.

It was interesting, listening to the member from Hamilton speak, when he said that in the opposition you can say whatever you want. I just love reading back in Hansard. It's one of my favourite pastimes now, looking back over the last four years and seeing what the opposition members actually said. It's amazing what they said during the election campaign, the number of promises. There are 231 in that Toronto Sun article, but across the province there are another 100 promises in each riding. So there were literally thousands of promises being made to the residents of our province of what they were going to do once they got in power. I'm looking forward to the next four years, to be quite honest, to see how many of those promises we can actually fulfill, not only in the riding of Simcoe North but in all the different ridings across the province.

With regard to hydro and the generation, I want to make a quick comment on that because I think one of the biggest problems we've got is finding the proper generation down the road. At this time, I wish we had a lot more huge dams and huge rivers in our province than we probably have. One thing I really hope we can do—and I wish the government all the best in this endeavour—is to tie those two contracts in with Quebec and Manitoba. I think that's key because there are some large projects in those areas that we should take advantage of. However, we've already signed the memorandum of understanding. You can carry on with that now, and we're looking forward to that. Plus, we're looking forward to those coal generators being eliminated by 2007.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to congratulate the member for Toronto-Danforth for exposing the reality that there is no

conservation plan in this legislation. There is no electricity efficiency plan. What this is, is the substitution of a Liberal rate cap for a Conservative rate cap, but there is no conservation plan and there is no energy efficiency strategy. The Liberals want to pretend, as the Conservatives used to pretend, that if you jack up the price of electricity, somehow that's a conservation plan.

In California, after they let the Enrons and all of your other corporate friends run the electricity system there, they drove the price of electricity through the roof. But electricity is an essential service. Even if the hydro bill skyrockets, people still need it. You can't go unplugging the refrigerator, letting all your food spoil, and call that conservation. When it's 20 below out, you can't turn down the thermostat and let everybody freeze and call that conservation.

This is an essential service. Jacking up the price, which is what you propose to do, as they proposed to do, merely means that seniors who are living on fixed incomes, people who have low incomes, can't pay their hydro bill and then you're going to have to figure out what to do before somebody freezes in the dark or before somebody can't afford to pay.

Similarly, jacking up the hydro bill means that sooner or later you put all kinds of important industries in this province in a very tough position: the steel industry, the pulp and paper industry, the mining and smelting and refining industry and, yes, the auto assembly industry, all of which use substantial amounts of electricity. Some will decide to close or they will decide to relocate outside the province. Merely raising the price isn't an electricity efficiency strategy and isn't a conservation strategy. Stop trying to pretend it is.

**Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** It's my pleasure to rise here today to address this issue. I think what we need to do is remember a little bit on how we arrived at this situation in the first place. We all know that 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour is not sustainable within the context of a \$5.6-billion deficit. We all know that. So how did we get here?

I'm sure the members from Toronto-Danforth and Kenora-Rainy River will remember that in the early 1990s, the then Liberal government had signed a great agreement, a terrific agreement with the province of Manitoba for a supply of energy that would have been on stream now at a very affordable cost to the consumers of Ontario. It would have been a great deal but it was cancelled by the NDP government in power in the 1990s. That's who cancelled it. We know.

Where are we on supply? The members on the other side of the House, in their eight years in power, did absolutely nothing to address the situation of supply. Why is that?

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. The member for Kenora-Rainy River, please come to order.

**Mr Mauro:** Why is that? Because the members on the other side of the House felt that privatization was going to be the panacea. For eight years they did nothing to

address the supply problems that were facing the province. That is why we are where we are today.

The member for Toronto-Danforth also probably remembers that in their five years in power, in the 1990-95 era, hydro costs to the consumers of Ontario increased by approximately 40%.

This bill is also good because it will help local distribution companies address the cost constraints that have been placed upon them since this cap was put in place. Thunder Bay Hydro faces serious financial issues as a result of this cap and I'm thrilled to see it removed.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member from Toronto-Danforth to wrap up.

**Ms Churley:** I could go on for hours in responding to all of those two minutes. First, to the member from Hamilton East, I'll tell you, what is irresponsible is making promises you can't keep. That's what is irresponsible.

**Mr Hampton:** And never intended to keep.

**Ms Churley:** And never intended to keep, because they knew, as Gerry Phillips, now their Chair of Management Board, said, there could be a \$5-billion deficit.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** Yes, you did so know that. Come on. That is disingenuous; and we're allowed to use the word "disingenuous," but you know what I mean.

I want to quote what Dalton McGuinty said, because the previous speaker mentioned that the NDP government didn't bring in more power from Manitoba, but we did bring in energy efficiency and conservation programs, which I will argue we need to focus on now. Here is what Dalton McGuinty had to say: "Does the minister continue to support the Manitoba purchase? We now know it's cheaper to produce this electricity in Ontario than it is for us to buy it from Manitoba. We now know that if we cancel the deal today, it's going to cost us \$82 million, but if we wait until the end of the environmental assessment hearing, it's going to cost us over \$200 million." Dalton McGuinty, April 30, 1992, "And when the NDP government launched an ambitious"—

**Mr Hampton:** Dalton McGuinty wanted the deal cancelled?

**Ms Churley:** But listen to what he said about energy efficiency strategies to reduce Ontario's power usage.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms Churley:** This is what Dalton McGuinty said about that then: "We are struggling under the weight of a recession and the government's policy of conservation is going to cause rates to go up, at least initially." Dalton McGuinty, in opposition, when we were the government, opposed energy conservation because it might make the rates go up. He opposed bringing on new power from Manitoba.

**Mr Hampton:** Dalton McGuinty is against energy conservation and energy efficiency? My, my.

**Ms Churley:** My, but that was then and this is now.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I enter this debate with some concern. It seems that in this debate the emphasis is on volume rather than facts or quality of debate.

**Mr Hampton:** Your consistency hasn't gotten any better.

**Mr Parsons:** That's a good point to raise on consistency. I can recall a firm commitment made during the 1990 election to have public auto insurance—the absolute cornerstone, keystone of it. We believe in traditions in this Legislature and within our parties, and evidently one tradition within the group is, every election, to promise public auto insurance. But it makes it somewhat not credible when you don't cost public insurance in your election platform. Very clearly you made a promise that, had you become government, you did not intend to keep. You knew you weren't going to keep it, so why bother costing it and putting it in the program? Shame on you.

I can recall a day quite some years ago when my wife and I were travelling to Toronto.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Parsons:** Speaker, I can't even hear myself.

**The Acting Speaker:** The discussion is interesting on all sides of the House. I know that everyone is going to be courteous and listen to one another so that when there are questions and comments, everyone can respond accordingly. Thank you.

1630

**Mr Parsons:** Thank you, Speaker.

And listen carefully. This is a homily; this is something you want to take with you when you leave here today.

Some years ago, when our oldest children were of course younger, we had made a promise to take them to the zoo in Toronto, and I don't mean the Legislature; I mean the real zoo out on the edge of town. While on the way there, our car quit, and we did not end up at the zoo that day; we ended up being towed back to my community. I suspect that day our children felt that I had broken a promise to them. We had committed on that day to going to Toronto and we didn't do it. We did eventually do it. We made up for it. We delivered on our commitment, but it didn't happen that day. To say that we're doing something differently and we've broken a promise is grossly wrong.

We've heard the statement yelled across the floor that we knew there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. Now listen: The Conservative government's cornerstone of all of their actions was, "We are superb financial managers." They said, "We may be a little hard on people at times; we may even be cruel"—no, I think it was actually we who said you were cruel—but the cornerstone for the previous government was, "We're superb financial managers." You can rest assured that if we'd known they in fact were running a \$5.6-billion deficit, we would have hammered it like crazy during the election. They said it wasn't, we had no access to the numbers, and our campaign promises and commitments were based on what we believed to be correct information at that time.

For the past week we've been lectured from across the aisle on making a change, not doing what we said we would do, changing our minds, flip-flopping. This is perhaps an excellent opportunity to have a little history lesson on how things have unfolded in relation to electricity and unfolded over the last eight years.

Let's start off with: On April 26, the Premier at that time, Ernie Eves, said he was selling Hydro One. So on April 26, 2002, he's selling Hydro One. That was a decision, a pretty firm-sounding decision. But then, on May 2, 2002, he said that selling Hydro One was off the table. That was a second decision, which would infer was a flip-flop from the first one. On May 8, Ernie Eves said, "Hydro One is back on the table," and on May 15 he said he didn't really know what to do with it but he was asking Bay Street to figure it out. We're up to number four.

I'm sorry if this is hitting a nerve, but some of you may not have access to the number of flip-flops, and this actually is very informative for you so that you can learn from the mistakes in your past and start fresh on making new mistakes.

On May 16, he wanted to make it a public corporation. That was firm decision number five. On May 30, he introduced legislation to sell Hydro One. On June 7, he was going to scrap the public stock offering, so it's not for sale now.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** No, he wanted an income trust on June 7. On June 13, he decided to kill the whole public offering once and for all. That lasted from June 13—this is fascinating history—till July 6, when he decided to sell half, just half of it. That, by the way, was decision number nine.

On January 17, he said he didn't have to sell Hydro One at all. That was decision 10. Then, on November 3, after the election, Tim Hudak, a former cabinet minister, told reporters that there were secret plans to sell off Hydro One, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and pieces of Ontario Power Generation.

So, people across the aisle, do not raise the issue of people changing their minds, because your party has led the province in the number of changes on Hydro One.

**Mr Hampton:** What was Dalton's position on privatizing Hydro One?

**Mr Parsons:** I will not respond to you in any way, because you're simply looking at a cheap way to plug your book. I will not help you foist your book on the people of Ontario.

If ever there was a boondoggle in this province, it has been the handling of Hydro One. It has been the handling of electricity in Ontario. We have seen a multitude of actions take place in the last eight years that put the very health of our electricity system into jeopardy. I would challenge most of you to tell me simply the number of times that you're losing electricity, whether it be for an hour or two, or for a minute or two, in your house. We saw a system that was treated as a political football by the last government, rather than as the absolutely necessary service that it is.

One concern that I think every one of us should have is that not only do we have electricity in this province, but our children and our grandchildren will have electricity. We should not, as individuals or collectively, enjoy benefits that our grandchildren are going to have to pay for. The pricing that was put in place by the previous government was going to force our children, and potentially grandchildren, to pay for the cost of maintaining electricity. The premise for Hydro when it was originally founded—originally founded, I believe, by a Conservative government; I've read the book—was electricity at cost, but we got a swing in the last few years from electricity at cost to electricity at profit and then back to electricity at a loss, when we all know that it needs to be electricity at cost. Nobody wants to pay more taxes, nobody wants to pay more for electricity, but it is absolutely vital that the system itself remain healthy and viable.

For my house, for last month when I got my bill, had the new pricing been in place now, it would have cost me \$16 more for that month than I pay right now. But then I have a drive in the evening, and you know, folks, we do waste electricity in this province, particularly at this time of year when we've got the darkness setting in early. Right within the vicinity of this building we can look out and see literally hundreds of thousands or millions of electric lights that are on. The system put in place at a flat 4.3 cents provided no incentive whatsoever to conserve electricity. We know that about 60% of the households in Ontario use less than 1,000 kilowatts a month.

This system in Bill 4 will truly provide encouragement to people to reduce their consumption. It will also do something else. With the two-cost system that more accurately reflects the cost of electricity, there is a need to encourage both conservation and the development of additional sources of electricity. The fundamental problem is a shortage of electric generating power within Ontario. The fundamental problem is a shortage. We have seen no new generation come on line in the last 13 years in Ontario, while at the same time we are seeing this province grow. Industry and individuals depend on electricity and all we've seen are systems going off-line. In fact we've seen some water power plants sold; they've left the system. We've seen a nuclear power plant leased out for 19 years.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** Well, plant. I'm sorry if the word is wrong. We've seen a nuclear power plant leased for 19 years. I'm surprised you want to talk about that lease.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** Certainly, you'd have sold this Legislature if you'd thought it would have gotten you re-elected in this province.

We need more generation. Not all of it will come from water. Not all of it will come from natural gas. There are alternatives. We have alternatives such as—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** I think I'm getting to them, but I don't mind. I can sense their unhappiness in sitting over there,

but at least they're going to get comfortable shortly. I'm happy that we're seeing some progress made to ensure the future viability of electrical supply.

Windmills are eventually going to be part of the answer in the province, but when electricity was at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, windmills were not economically viable. If we are going to encourage other sources of electricity, we have to make it viable. I had the privilege to sit on an all-party select committee on alternative fuels. It was a fantastic report that the previous government put on the top shelf somewhere, but it needs to be reviewed and examined because it addressed the reality that we have a crisis coming. Natural gas is not an unlimited supply in this province, or in this country. We have to have alternative plans in place, but they have to be financially viable. At 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, there was no incentive whatsoever for industry or indeed for government to come forward with additional sources of generation, because there simply is no money in it. Now we have a pricing structure, the industry has said to us, that is such that it is of interest to them to develop some more proposals.

**1640**

Part of our future, no doubt, lies with natural gas. We know that coal has to be phased out, and I applaud our leader, Dalton McGuinty, for saying by 2007 it will be gone. In my experience as a school board trustee and as a board chair, when I was first elected to the school board in 1982 and I visited schools, schools would have one or two puffers located in the school office because there would be one or two children in their student population who required them because of asthmatic problems. Now you visit a schoolyard and you see a significant number of children who actually carry the puffer with them because there are now too many for the school to keep within the school office. So students have to self-manage their asthma.

We may have got what appeared to be cheap electric generation off the coal, but on the committee for alternative fuels, one of the questions that I asked several times was, "What is the real cost of electricity produced by coal?" If we look at the smog, if we look at the health concerns, if we look at the premature deaths caused by coal-fired plants, what is the real cost? It really could not be easily calculated, although I understand some other jurisdictions are trying.

So again, I applaud Dalton McGuinty for the commitment that they will be gone, but we need to have extra generation in its place. We need electricity, whether it be from within Ontario—and certainly I think the goal of everyone is to be self-sufficient, but we need electricity from outside. Unfortunately, I believe Bob Rae when he was Premier cancelled the agreement with Manitoba that would have provided us with substantial quantities of electricity at costs that now look like give-away costs. Connections were not physically built or maintained between Ontario and Quebec or Ontario and Manitoba. I find it of great interest that during the blackout last summer the lights didn't dim in Quebec. Here we have a

neighbour next door that has a great deal of surplus electricity, and the previous government made no attempt whatsoever to put an electrical bridge across the river and purchase electricity from them. Obviously that has to be part of the solution. We need the generation for it.

I talked about consumer protection. There were brief moments there a year ago when electricity got as high as \$2 a kilowatt hour, not for very extended periods of time but during the peak periods. What was going through someone's head to deregulate a product that's in short supply? We watched with great interest what was going on in California, we watched Alberta, we watched a number of other states and realized that there's a North American shortage of electricity. So we went from a regulated price to an open market? Someone wasn't really thinking as clearly as I would have hoped on that issue.

Consumers were forced to pay higher costs and were not able to budget—literally were not able to budget. Is electricity that is going to be shown on their bill purchased at four cents a kilowatt hour or is it purchased at nine cents a kilowatt hour? There was no ability to plan, and for small businesses that often experience cash-flow problems, it was a real crisis when a bill would come in at two or three times what they had expected it would be.

So certainly there has to be a requirement that we provide consumer protection, and this bill does that. It will protect residential and low-volume consumers, and it's going to be a regulated price, not the spiked price that was experienced there for a time.

It will be regulated not by politicians—and I think if you just look at the behaviour in this House over the last week or week and a half, you'd say, "I'm certainly glad it's not politicians that are going to control the prices." An independent body, the Ontario Energy Board, will set the price and has been mandated to have a very open and clean process as to how they set the prices. That should be in place by May 1 of next year so that there will be long-term certainty to the price of electricity in Ontario.

It's going to be regulated—not what's in the best interests of electricity distributors or the generators; it will be regulated on what is in the best interests of the citizens of Ontario. That should be a given, but it isn't. It is finally the Dalton McGuinty government that has said, "We will stand up for Ontario citizens, not big business, not just the wealthy, but we will stand up for everyone in this province equally." So it will be regulated on the basis of what is good for everyone.

Even after the removal of the cap, it is important our electricity prices be such that we can be competitive with neighbours. We will be competitive with New York, Illinois, Massachusetts and Michigan. Quite frankly, one of the criteria of firms looking to locate is not, should we locate in Ontario or should we locate in Texas? They're looking for an area that says, "We sell a lot of our products in this area, so we'd like to locate in an area that makes the shipping relatively cheap and fast to get our finished product out to the customers." The question they

would ask is not Ontario or Texas, but should it be Ontario, or New York state or Michigan? We're competitive on our taxes and we're competitive on our electricity prices, and will be. This should, in fact, encourage industry to come to Ontario.

We have made a commitment that if the interim price that is established turns out to be higher than the true cost, all eligible consumers will receive a credit for the difference, once the Ontario Energy Board implements their pricing mechanism. Notice that they'll receive a credit. They won't receive bitsy cheques that cost millions of dollars to write and send out in an attempt to buy re-election, which, by the way, didn't work. It will be a credit against the account, so that it is very quickly and efficiently applied to it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** Oh, not at all. I've got so much to say and I'm realizing I only have two minutes. I could go back to lecturing you, but I'm not going to.

I'm going to tell you that the government did something right last time. They actually did something right. They put in place a program that rebated the provincial sales tax. Just so you can go home and say, "You know, in the eight years we did do something right," this is the right thing you did. You may want to write that down, because most of the people in Ontario clearly forgot it in early October. They gave the sales tax rebate. Our Minister of Finance has already made the commitment that we will continue with the sales tax rebate to encourage people to buy more energy-efficient appliances.

If you look at people who have appliances that are 25 or 30 years old—I've been guilty of that. We had a refrigerator that we bought when we were married, and it still worked fine except it was wearing out the bearings on the electric meter outside the house. We calculated that it was actually cheaper to get rid of that refrigerator and purchase a new, more energy-efficient one. It seemed like a lot of money, but it's got a relatively quick pay-back that not only will save money for us but will save us having to build another generating plant. I think that's important. People don't realize how much energy we can save collectively simply by turning off lights, going to more energy-efficient appliances and making wilful, conscious decisions. This bill with the two-price structure, I think, will accomplish a lot of that. It will get the message to people that together we can actually eliminate the need for one entire generating plant in Ontario. That may not show up instantly for you, but that saves the people of Ontario a substantial investment in electricity and helps to keep the prices down.

I applaud Bill 4, the Ontario Energy Board Amendment Act. I think it deals with reality. It corrects the illusion that electricity actually costs 4.3 cents and acknowledges that the other costs in it need to be included. This is a bill that introduces openness and honesty to electric pricing.

**Mr Dunlop:** It's a pleasure to make a few comments on the speech by the member for Prince Edward-Hastings on Bill 4.

I certainly think he brought out some very interesting points on conservation. I didn't realize he was actually part of that alternative energy and fuels committee that did the touring across North America and, I think, Europe as well. I'm not opposed to that, because I think we certainly have to be looking at every viable option that's possibly out there.

He also talked a little about some of the environmental concerns. I think that's one of the areas I'd like to make a few short comments on, and that's this promise that the Dalton McGuinty plan had for the removal of the coal-fired generation by 2007.

**1650**

I don't know how much background has actually been done on that. I would like to see that happen, and I wish the government all the best, and good luck in seeing if they can pull that off. However, I'm not so sure that we have the capacity with natural gas to handle that type of additional load at peak periods. It will be very interesting to watch the design of those coal-fired generation systems. I don't think it's possible to do it by 2007. We looked into that in a fairly detailed manner and found that it would be 2012-14 before that could be done. Where you got 2007 from, I don't know, but it will be really interesting to see if you can fulfill that promise. I wish you luck in doing so, but I think it's an impossible task at this time.

Madam Chair, thanks for the opportunity to say a few words.

**Mr Hampton:** I listened intently to a speech by the Liberal backbencher that attempted to portray that this bill somehow creates an energy policy. I wish to inform him that I read this bill very carefully. There is no energy policy in it; there's no conservation strategy; there's no energy efficiency strategy; there's no strategy to deal with the coal-fired generating stations; there's no strategy here to deal with that debacle called Pickering. What there is, really, is a government which has essentially adopted the privatization and deregulation strategy of the previous government but now wants to, shall we say, polish it up a bit and give it a sugar coating.

For example, when I listened to the Premier and the Minister of Energy talk about how new supply is going to be brought on, it sounds very much like the same policy that the previous government was following. There will be some private sector gas plants, but private sector gas plants involve those same private sector companies that want the price of electricity to go up to around six cents a kilowatt hour—maybe 6.5 cents. When we inquire what's going to happen to the likes of Direct Energy, which don't generate electricity, they don't transmit electricity, they don't distribute electricity, they simply engage in speculation and add another 20% or 30% to the hydro bill, it seems like nothing is going to change.

So, while I appreciate the member's attempts, please don't try to pretend that this bill is an energy policy or an energy efficiency policy. It's simply exchanging a Liberal rate cap for a Conservative rate cap.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** The days of using energy as a political football are over. We owe it to

the people of Ontario to ensure our government looks to the long term and ensures that Ontarians will have sufficient base-load capacity and also peak capacity during weather that's both hot and cold in our province.

With the proposed legislation, our government is taking an approach to energy pricing that better reflects the true cost of electricity. Through this plan, we are delivering on our commitment toward fiscal responsibility and fair and responsible government to the province of Ontario.

Consumer protection will be the hallmark of this government's electricity policy. The proposed legislation will ensure that Ontario electricity consumers have fair, predictable and stable rates that better reflect the true costs of this vital commodity.

The proposed plan will protect residential and low-volume consumers—and that includes most people in Ontario—from the volatile price spikes we saw in the summer and in the fall of this year when the Tories were in power.

Should the proposed legislation pass, Ontario will have stable and predictable pricing so that our families, our small businesses and other low-volume consumers can better manage their energy costs.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Madam Speaker, glad to see you again. You're in the chair quite a bit lately, and I've got to imagine there is some reason for that. Nonetheless, I want to welcome you back to this assembly.

I find it's a little bit odd, as far as what's happening in debate as we go through this legislation. You'd remember, Madam Speaker, not too long ago we had an opportunity to debate this very type of legislation when the previous government, the Conservatives, actually had gone out and introduced legislation about two years ago that did essentially the same thing. The legislation that a Conservative government had put in place both opened the electricity prices to the market and allowed for privatization. When the government tried that, it was an abysmal failure. It really didn't work.

All kidding aside, all members of the assembly have constituents, from the retail customer to the large utility customers like Falconbridge to mom-and-pop operations, that are just fit to be tied. They said the government supposedly tried to do something to give energy consumers a rate cut, and what they got was a huge increase. Hydro prices went through the roof. I remember the Liberals were in this House and were just assailing the Conservative government, as were we, because we thought, and I imagine the Liberals thought, that the government had done something wrong. I had to believe that the Liberals thought, "Boy, if we only could get a chance to be government some day, we're going to be more clever than the Tories. We're going to be different. We're going to find a way to make sure that we roll back these changes that the Tories had put in place." Now they get elected and, my God, they're trying to do the same things that the Tories did. It's like the Oak Ridges moraine or the P3 hospitals stuff. They use different

language, but at the end of the day, what you're doing is essentially the same thing.

I predict, as we had predicted when the previous government tried to do this, at the end of your process, which is about a year and a half from now, energy prices will go through the roof in the province of Ontario. They say, "Don't worry, because we're going to send off the rate increases to the Ontario Energy Board." Aren't they the same bozos who increased the price of natural gas by 30% this year? I say, consumers beware. Liberals might say one thing before an election, but they certainly act quite differently. That's maybe why we call them "Fiberals."

**Mr Parsons:** I thank the members for Simcoe North, Kenora-Rainy River, Mississauga West and Timmins-James Bay for their comments. I would say that you really need to be less negative. Life's much better if you're less negative. Let's look at the pluses that exist in this bill.

The issue was raised about being able to eliminate the coal-fired plants by the year 2007. We absolutely believe it can happen. There may be the reality of not producing enough electricity internally within Ontario to do it, but electricity from Manitoba and electricity from Quebec works just as well in the lights and motors in this province as electricity produced here. After 13 years without new power generation being built, there certainly is catch-up for this government to do. Yes, we believe it is possible, and we believe it will happen.

The statement's been made that this bill contains no incentives for conservation. I had the opportunity this morning of being on a phone-in show as a guest for two hours while people phoned. Quite frankly, probably the biggest issue was electricity. An interesting comment from a lot of the people was, "Thank you for making the price realistic." There are very few people in this province who believed that the real price was 4.3 cents. They knew it was a political price. But with the breakdown in the prices, the question was, "What do you do to reduce your consumption to 750?" There was very clearly a financial incentive for individuals to lower their consumption. It doesn't require turning the heat off any more than the oil prices going up required it. What it requires is some thought and some planning.

When we heard a year ago that, thanks to these low prices, we can now turn on our Christmas lights, I thought that was a pretty flippant little attitude toward the issue of electricity in this province. It is very serious business. It is a very serious issue, as we found out in the blackout last summer. People need to be encouraged. This provides a financial incentive to encourage it.

The government itself is going to undertake some conservation. There are things that can be done within government operations, in the buildings. The people of Ontario are intelligent enough to know what to do.

1700

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Oak Ridges.

*Applause.*

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I want to thank the members from the Liberal Party for that applause; it's much appreciated.

It's my privilege to speak to this bill. I found the comments of the member for Prince Edward-Hastings interesting. It's interesting how they are able to rewrite history so effectively. It's interesting how they're able to forget what this world was like a few short months ago; in fact, about two months ago.

I would like to remind the honourable member that promises in an election campaign are what the government will be measured against in terms of its credibility. Regardless of how people may have felt about individual policies of our government, I would say that one of the things I took a great deal of personal satisfaction in was that people often would say, "I don't agree with what you have done as a government"—we know you can never please everyone, but one of things that consistently was said about our government in the course of the last eight years was, "I didn't agree with what you did necessarily, but I do respect the fact that you did what you said you were going to do."

I believe that over the course of time, over the last number of years, our government did a great deal to re-establish trust with people in this province, and I believe it was an example for governments across this country that you speak the truth, that you are straightforward with the people you represent, with the people in the province or in your jurisdiction. You agree to disagree on some issues, but at the end of the day what is important is that you do what you said you were going to do.

It's disappointing to me, as I know it is disappointing to people across this province who had high hopes about the promises that were being made by this government over the course of the election campaign and before, that they would be able to take the leader at his word, that they would be able to look at promises that were made and see those promises actually fulfilled. What is so disappointing, whether it be with regard to the energy bill that's before us today or whether it be on a myriad of other issues, is that this government, in a very short period of time, has probably done more to set back politicians and the credibility of government than any other government I can remember.

So we have a challenge, frankly, as a Legislature—all members, all 103 of us in this province have a challenge—of how we explain to people in our constituencies that they have reason to continue to trust what their politicians are telling them. The only word we have is that fortunately elections do come once every four or five years. And we'll see if this government keeps its promise with regard to the issue that they're going to set firm election dates—I would expect that if they do, it will be once every four years, which is the traditional way of doing it—or whether they will break that promise as well.

I think it's important that we set the record straight for people in this province when they hear the recurring theme of this government—whether it be the Premier, the

cabinet ministers or, as we just heard, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings—that the reason they justify not keeping a promise is because of the supposed deficit they found.

Speaker, you know the fiscal year-end of this government is not until March 31 of next year. That gives us a number of months to deal with the issue before us. The fact of the matter is that we realized when we were in government that as a result of SARS, mad cow disease and a historic energy failure that affected the entire northeastern seaboard of North America, there were unexpected costs that had to be incurred by the government of this province. At that time, those of us who were in cabinet were told in no uncertain terms by our Chair of Management Board and our Premier, “Go back to your ministries, do your program reviews—we have these challenges that we have to face—and do what has to be done.” Each ministry was given its responsibility to bring in their recommendations, their undertakings and their commitments to ensure that, come the end of the fiscal year, there would in fact be a balanced budget.

This government, while in opposition, knew full well the challenges this province had. They made reference to it. So they knew that would be their task as well, if elected. They chose to ignore that fact and now they continue to try to use that deficit story to justify breaking trust with the people of this province.

It’s not working. I’m hearing from people across the province who are saying, “This song is wearing thin. I don’t buy it any more.” People see through it. They know the truth, and it’s important that you folks over there get to understand that sooner than later, because you won’t be able to continue to play this theme and be in a position of trust with the people of this province.

Let’s talk about energy. Let’s talk about this bill now which is just one more broken promise in the string of broken promises of this government.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Klees:** You know full well, I say to the member opposite from Hamilton East, how many times in the course of the election campaign you said, as did the Liberal candidate who was on platforms with me, “We will not lift the rate cap.” How many times did you say it? The fact of the matter is that their leader said it. The fact is that the current Premier of Ontario said that many times, knowing full well what the fiscal challenges were. However, he broke that promise as well.

We have before us a new bill that outlines exactly what they’re going to do. What’s very interesting to me is that this bill is represented by the member opposite as the Liberals’ new energy policy—scary, I might say, as the leader of the non-existent third party indicated earlier. This is certainly not an energy policy. In fact, as I read this, many times throughout the course of this supposed bill that hammers down or gives us the parameters of the new Liberal energy policy, I see nothing more than references to regulations to be, regulations that will in fact hold the content of what is really going to affect the people of this province. Then I see references to the fact

that the minister will make most of these decisions. The minister will in fact direct what will happen. That’s scary.

I might add that in the course of the last eight years, whenever a bill was being discussed in the House, it was always our practice to ensure that at least the minister or the parliamentary assistant was present in the House for that debate. Perhaps there should be something in the standing orders that requires that, because it’s unfortunate that we don’t have that here today. The minister should be here; the parliamentary assistant, at least, should be here to engage in this debate, to hear what’s being said. We have a new Minister of Energy.

1710

**Mr Levac:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member opposite, in his speech, knows full well, because of his expertise and long-time standing in this place, that mentioning people’s attendance in this place is not appropriate, and on purpose indicates that they do not know what’s going on and being spoken of. I’m sure that he would like to withdraw that kind of comment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you for the reminder.

**Mr Klees:** Actually, I won’t withdraw the comment because what I was referring to was a practice of our government, that the minister or the parliamentary assistant was always there. I would strongly advise—

**Mr Levac:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: It seems the member continues to break the rules and I’d like him to be reminded not to do so.

**The Acting Speaker:** I believe it’s practice in this House, because we don’t know what personal circumstances individuals are in, to refrain from mentioning individuals being in the House. Thank you.

**Mr Klees:** By way of advice to the government of the day, I do think in future it would be appropriate, if at all possible, for the minister or the parliamentary assistant to be present.

**The Acting Speaker:** I’ll ask the member to refrain from mentioning that again.

**Mr Klees:** I will never say it again because I’m sure that the members have taken note that it would be most appropriate to do that.

I would like to say that what has been missing in this debate is the context within which this rate cap, which is now being lifted by this new government, was put in place. We had, as a government, made a decision to do hydro differently in this province, and the reason for that was that the status quo could in fact not be maintained.

We know—the record is clear—that the way that industry was being handled, was being managed in this province, it had accumulated a \$38-billion debt. This is in addition to the provincial debt. This was separate and apart and in addition to; \$38 billion of debt that in fact could not be sustained. Why? Well, there’s one reason that we accumulated that debt in this province under the hydro ledger, and that is that people in this province for years have not been paying the true cost of hydro. It was in fact being subsidized, and a pox on all of the previous governments that had allowed that to happen.

It is a fact that originally our system of electricity generation and distribution in this province was intended to be at cost, and it was a Conservative government that introduced that, and it should be applauded for it. Since then, governments of all political stripes had abandoned that and began to subsidize the true cost of electricity.

Our government, although it had been debated by many other governments, took the issue on, had the courage to actually make the decision to do this differently, to do what had to be done, to get our system of electricity generation and distribution back into the realm of reality so that there would be a fair price and a stable supply. We took that initiative.

What happened was that there were in fact extraordinary circumstances that took place in this province, not the least of which was historically low temperatures and historically high temperatures, and we had outages of generation capacity in this province, which created a supply shortage. Economics 101 will tell us all that when you have a shortage of supply, the price skyrockets. That's what took place.

So although it was contrary to our policy that we should introduce an artificial rate cap in this province, we did so out of a response for consumer protection. There were people in this province who were on a fixed income. There were businesses which simply couldn't cope with the increases in cost of their electricity bills. We were called on to deal with that, and we did so through a rate cap.

That rate cap was intended to be revenue neutral and we, to this day, believe that in fact it would have been revenue neutral, not over one year, not over 18 months, but over the course from the time we implemented that rate cap until the projected date when it would be lifted, because we believed and had a strategy in place that would attract additional generation to the province, which would bring into balance that market strategy. There were a couple of months over the last six months, while the rate cap was in place, where the cost of generating, the cost of purchasing supply, was actually below that price cap. So we see that the marketplace, when it's allowed to work, does work.

Our concern now is that this new government has taken the step of lifting this cap without presenting a true strategy for protecting consumers. I have no concern about getting back to a market-based rate of electricity in this province—the sooner the better—on the assumption that we have the appropriate generating capacity in place, that we have the appropriate consumer protection measures in place to ensure that those people on fixed incomes and small and medium-sized businesses don't get crippled in the process of this tinkering with this electricity strategy that's being presented. I don't see it.

Our challenge to this government is to address that to ensure that we don't simply turn our backs on the very people for whom this cap was put in place in the first place.

This bill, we believe, is probably about three years too early, simply because what this government should be

focusing on now is to encourage industry to have confidence in the government of Ontario, to ensure investment in this province. I believe there are solutions, and they are market-based solutions. Whether that be with the retailers, whether that be with the distributors, whether that be with the generators of power, the way to get to the solution is not to try to drive people out of business; it's to ensure that while being in business they can exist, produce the product that is required, do so at a competitive rate, do so in a way that honours the public, and ensure that they will be long-term contributors to the economy in this province.

I would suggest that the new Minister of Energy has a responsibility to bring to the table all of the players in this industry and to ensure that he is very careful that every decision that is made as he goes forward enhances what the objective should be, and that is to ensure that Ontarians have stable supply at a fair and competitive rate to ensure that we can be competitive with our neighbouring jurisdictions on this issue of energy supply and that people who don't have the ability to deal with skyrocketing and spiking energy prices have options.

Again, this is where I differ with the remarks made by the leader of the non-existent third party, and that is the role of retailers, because I believe that retailers do have a role to play. They have the opportunity to give consumers choices of one-year, three-year, five-year guaranteed rates on their energy. That is very much, I believe, an important part of a functioning, effective and vibrant marketplace, whether it be in energy or other commodities. So we do have differences of approach to this industry.

I suggest to the new Minister of Energy that he's on the right track. I'm concerned that he's going about it in the wrong way. I believe that he should be looking at ensuring consumer protection while ensuring that there's an appropriate long-term strategy for stable and fair pricing for our energy in this province.

1720

**The Acting Speaker:** It is now time for questions and comments.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to congratulate the spokesperson for the Conservative Party, in that he does a very good job of pointing out that it was only two months ago that Liberals were saying, everywhere across the province, that the rate cap of 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour would be kept in place. It would be kept in place until 2006. That was a sure, a certain, a definite promise of the Liberal Party should it become the Liberal government.

Now, not two months later, this promise, this commitment, this written-in-stone promise of Mr McGuinty and the Liberal Party is suddenly going to be completely broken. The excuse that's offered up is that that rate cap, that 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, has cost \$800 million that is off-book.

We knew that last May; we knew it in June; we knew it in July; we knew it in August and in September. That knowledge, that it was costing \$800 million a year essentially to sustain the rate cap was known by all

Liberals, was known by everybody in this Legislature. So what's changed? If you knew that it was costing \$800 million a year when you made that promise, and it's still costing \$800 million a year, what changed? Now is after the election. Now what was a certain promise, this government believes they can simply disregard. I think Ontarians believe otherwise.

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** I find it very interesting that the member from Oak Ridges, in his remarks, has admitted to a number of the problems that we have with the electricity sector in Ontario. The Tories in fact knew from their advisers that the generating capacity in Ontario was dramatically reduced. They knew that we have problems with nuclear generators being out. They knew that the price of hydro fluctuates madly in the winter and in the summer. They knew that when we went into a period of a hot summer or a cold winter the price would fluctuate wildly.

Despite that, they went ahead and they turned the market open to market value prices. Guess what happened? The price fluctuated wildly; what else could it have done? Then they panicked and they brought in a price cap which, at 4.3 cents, was below the market value of electricity, and they thought they'd solved the problem.

We have come in and we have looked at the financial situation of this province, we have looked at the deficit, and the Liberal government has behaved responsibly. We will continue to cap prices, but at a rate which the auditor told us will be more sustainable. We will introduce the higher-level cap in May, which will give the consumers of the province of Ontario an opportunity to implement conservation. It will give them a chance to get through the winter while they think about how they can conserve. In fact, the Liberal government is the government with a responsible plan and which will be bringing in a long-term plan when the cap ends.

**Mr Dunlop:** It's interesting to hear the comments go around the room here. It's easy to point the finger at anybody in the world of hydro business, and more recently the member for Guelph-Wellington pointing her finger at our government. I think we've got to go back in time, and there's not a lot of time to actually do that in a two-minute hit. I think when we look at the Energy Competition Act and what led up to the passing of that bill in 1998—you and I, Speaker, were elected in 1999—we forget that hydro wasn't an issue. The bill had just been passed. That bill specifically was a result of the Macdonald commission, the white paper report, and it was to eventually open the market by sometime in May 2000 or 2001. That's what we were looking at doing under the Energy Competition Act. I think people forget how much work was put into the background of this. That was a result of some of the recommendations that came right from Maurice Strong and the New Democratic Party government when they were in power. They knew that we couldn't sustain the system the way we were going.

**Mr Hampton:** Maurice Strong was a Liberal; he was not a New Democrat.

**Mr Dunlop:** Maurice Strong was the chair of Ontario Hydro and had a lot of recommendations. The fact of the matter is, we can't simply point the finger at any one particular government and say who did everything perfect and who didn't, because everyone has a responsibility here. When we brought in the cap in 2002—and you Liberals agreed with it—we felt it would be revenue-neutral over the three- or four-year period in order to sustain hydro rates at a lower price.

I thank you for this opportunity.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** I've only been here a couple of years. I came in in a by-election. When I first arrived here, electricity seemed to be the number one issue and it continued throughout the whole second half of the last government. When I came here, electricity was around 3.8 cents a kilowatt hour to produce. Then we had all the mess of privatization. We had all the mess of a government that was in chaos, trying to figure out what to do with an electricity system that had never once failed the people of Ontario. Then, in a panic, they went in for 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour and capped it, and, in a panic, the Liberals joined them. One after one, I saw them stand up and say 4.3 cents was the answer, not to be outdone with that. All of us had to go on TV and radio talk shows, and on every one of those there was a Liberal and a Conservative, and sometimes me, sometimes Howard, sometimes someone else from the NDP, talking about how the price cap was artificial and would not work. It was only going to further drive up the price of electricity. The privatization would not work.

Here we are today and we're debating the same thing, but no longer do we have the 4.3 cents; now we're talking about 5.6 cents, and I'm sure next year about six or seven cents, because the problem is not the cap. The problem is the privatization. The problem is that the profit motive is now infused into what was a public corporation that worked very well for the people of this province, going all the way back to Sir Adam Beck. I will tell you, that's the real debate: not the cap, but what you're going to do to end privatization.

**The Acting Speaker:** Finally, in response, the member for Oak Ridges.

**Mr Klees:** I want to thank my colleagues for their comments. I want, however, to go back to what I believe is at the heart of this bill, and that is a desire on the part of this new government to get us back to a market-based price for energy. I have no problem, and I don't believe anyone in our party has a problem, with getting us there. We truly need to have—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** At this point, I'm just going to ask the member for Kenora-Rainy River—I know this debate is very intense—to refrain from further discussion.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for Kenora-Rainy River is an authority. He's the provincial authority on the issue of Ontario Hydro.

1730

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order. Would the member please be seated. It is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member from Oak Ridges.

**Mr Klees:** I would request that I could have my time back for my two-minute response.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Klees:** I thank you for that.

As I was saying, the issue here is not that we take exception with the ultimate objective of getting the price of electricity back to a market-based mechanism. We believe in that. That's why we introduced competition in the electricity market to begin with. It is about an exit strategy that I believe is most appropriate in the longer term and an exit strategy that takes into consideration the fact that we have many vulnerable people in this province who simply will not be able to deal with the simplistic approach that this minister is proposing to get where we need to be. I wish him well. I will challenge him again to ensure that he engages the advice of all the stakeholders in this industry who I believe can give him some very good advice.

At the end of the day, there is a crisis in this province. There is a blackout. It is a credibility blackout that is happening with the government of the day in very short order. We have honourable members opposite, and I know that many of them are embarrassed to be looking at their constituents today knowing that they ran on a platform of promises and knowing that in a very short period of time they have to go back and equivocate and somehow try to justify that their leader is backing down, is flipping on promises made that he refuses now, for very shallow excuses, to honour.

The people of this province deserve better. They are taking note. They will remember. I believe that they, in the end, will have the final say on the credibility issue of this government.

**The Acting Speaker:** We now go into further debate, and these will be 10-minute segments. I now recognize the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** I always enjoy the member from Oak Ridges. On a good day, he's a pretty straight shooter. He says that the people of Ontario deserve better, and he's right, they do deserve better. And you know what? In the next four years, they're going to get a lot better than what they had in the last eight years.

I want to begin by suggesting that sometimes we sound a little bit like school kids here, as if things never change. This isn't the end of energy policy. Every journey of 100,000 miles—or whatever that proverb is—begins with the first step. This isn't the end; this is the start. This is the first phase of what surely will be a multi-phased policy, given the complexity of our energy situation here.

I've spent a lot of time in my constituency over the last couple of weeks talking about this and other issues.

It's helpful perhaps to remind the viewers that this government has only been in power for about a month. It would be interesting to look at all of the commitments we've kept. We've been a very activist government on that front. But I'm not up on my feet to speak about all of the other good things; I'm here specifically to speak about this issue.

It occurs to me—and it's almost an unarguable point, I suspect—that if you have really good, solid information, there is a much better chance that you're going to make really good, solid decisions. Conversely—and I think the member from Oak Ridges really highlighted this—if you don't have good information, if you have bad information, your opportunity to make poor decisions is dramatically enhanced.

The member opposite talked about his anticipating that this would be revenue-neutral. There was a point not that many months back, when we were then on the other side of the House, that we actually believed it when they told us that. We thought that made some sense. But as time would have it, that clearly was shown to be a distortion.

It's said that good judgment is based on experience, and experience invariably on bad judgment. If you want to do politics differently, it implies that you're prepared to offer up the straight goods, that when you mess up, when any government messes up and a subsequent government comes in, it's obligatory that you fess up, that you make the changes. Things don't stand still. You've got to move forward.

I could speak from the historical perspective about flip-flops on the part of many in this House. When I look at the previous government and some of its returnees talking about our government moderating its position, flip-flopping, whatever, it occurs to me that they make Flipper look like a goldfish—the simple reality given their experience.

The previous government's electricity price freeze, which they thought would be revenue-neutral—and some of us in this House initially thought that might be the case—not only did nothing at all to promote conservation but did absolutely nothing to enhance supply. It didn't go back to even looking at purchasing power from Manitoba and Quebec, which by the way are two jurisdictions with very good hydro rates at the moment. That was something the third party, when they were in power, were very quick to cancel. I think their position today is that they'd quite favour a diversification of our supply base by looking at Quebec and Manitoba. But again, I don't know that for sure. I try to listen intently to what they do have to say, and it's difficult. I won't go into all the quotes about, "He said," one day and, "He said," another day. That doesn't get us anywhere.

**Mr Hampton:** You don't want to hear Dalton's quote?

**Mr McMeekin:** I think the self-righteousness of many in this House, and particularly those from the third party, is pretty self-evident. You could look at public auto insurance as one, and the promise when they ran to freeze

tuition fees, which skyrocketed under their tenure. The minimum wage was going to go to 60% of the industrial average, I think. That didn't happen. The first thing you did was cancel the Quebec-Manitoba supply contracts. If we hadn't done that at the time, we would be in much better shape than we are now.

In addition to not doing anything—

**Ms Churley:** Poor baby; it's always somebody else's fault.

**Mr McMeekin:** I obviously touched a sensitive nerve, but that's what happens when you're on the side of the angels and you're trying to make things right. It's difficult for those who have been so self-righteous to stop and reflect for a moment, even on their own past. It's easy to be critical of everybody else.

In addition to not promoting supply or enhancing conservation, the price freeze did something really quite terrible: it added \$800 million, according to the retired provincial auditor, to our burgeoning debt. I suspect that had the voters in the most recent provincial election actually known the projected deficit was in the neighbourhood of \$5.6 billion instead of the \$2.2 billion that was being put out but even then denied by the party in power, we wouldn't be worried about a split rump today; it would be more like the New Brunswick situation in terms of where we would be.

If you look at it historically, this lack of prudence is all around us. Borrowing \$10 billion in their first year or so in office to finance tax cuts was certainly not the brightest thing to do. At least the feds had enough sense to get their house in order before they started making tax cuts.

You look at the move from \$87 billion to \$114 billion in provincial debt too. Trickle-down didn't work very well, but we sure saw skyrocketing debt.

1740

If we're honest about it, looking back and reflecting on it, the price freeze, as it turns out, was a bad signal from the get-go. It was simply unrealistic. The member from Oak Ridges—they say confession is good for the soul; not always good for the reputation, but good for the soul—confessed that the 4.3 was going to be revenue-neutral and it wasn't. So let's just own up to that and let's get on with what we have to do. What we have to do is to make sure that Ontario taxpayers don't end up being left holding the bag.

We believe it's wrong for taxpayers to continue to subsidize electricity consumption, especially in light of the almost \$40-billion stranded debt, because that subsidization puts other significant social programs like health care, education and real environmental protection at risk. If that's a flip-flop, so be it.

I recall a number of years ago when my middle girl was nine, she wanted a roller coaster ride at Crystal Beach. We stood in line for a long time and we waited, and when we got near, I think we were up next to go on the roller coaster, somebody came and said, "Sorry, you can't go on the roller coaster because it's broken and it's dangerous. We're afraid it's going to come off the

tracks." I had to say to my daughter, "Sorry, honey. I know I promised you I would take you on the roller coaster ride, but it's dangerous." She was tearful and not particularly understanding, but in the long run I did what I had to do as a responsible parent, and that was to protect my child.

I stand in this place today to do what I have to do and what we on this side have to do as responsible legislators, and that is to protect the people we are here to serve, the people of Ontario, who have trusted us. A bended promise versus a broken trust: I know where I come down on that scale every time.

**The Acting Speaker:** We now have questions and comments, and they are 10 minutes.

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** I'm hearing this debate about this price cap, and I recall a little more than a year ago my predecessor standing up in this House—I could never do it with quite the theatrics that he could—screaming across the floor, shouting, "What is the Premier going to do about hydro prices in this province?" Our government—the previous government, of which I was not a member—brought in the price cap. The party that is now the government supported that, and now they want to get rid of this price cap.

What really concerns me is the chicanery and sleight of hand that is going on here. They're going to get rid of this price cap, but it's not going to be enacted until April 1, 2004, after the heating season is pretty much over. They're going to get this debate done with before Christmas, and then when the heating season is over, by April basically, the price cap is going to be removed. Your bills are going to reflect it, but even if your price goes up, the usage goes down because we're into the spring season. People won't notice it until the summer rolls around and we're into the air conditioning season. They're going to see what is happening to their bills. But where is the government going to be? They're going to be on summer recess and hiding from the issue. That's one of the parts that really concerns me.

Of course, the biggest thing is: "We will not remove the price cap on hydro until 2006." And here we are, December 2003—gone. April 1 next year—gone. The price cap is gone. A fundamental promise of the campaign didn't mean a thing.

We can't accept that in Ontario. What about the farmers and the small businesses that are going to be affected so badly by the removal of this price cap at this time?

**Mr Hampton:** I listened intently to this spokesperson on behalf of the government's legislation, again looking for energy policy, again looking for conservation policy, again looking for an energy efficiency policy. I regret to say that once again I didn't hear anything. What I heard was a government trying to find some way to justify breaking another promise—a promise that they probably now admit they should never have made in the first place, that they never intended to keep, that they didn't have any intention whatsoever of even thinking about keeping. What I'm hearing is lame attempts at justification for a

promise they probably shouldn't have made, one they never had any intention of keeping and now have a hard time justifying taking the position in the first place.

They can continue to think up these lame excuses. I don't think the public will be satisfied with that. What the public wants to know—the public knows that their leader, Mr McGuinty, after touring the Bruce nuclear station, endorsed nuclear power. Is their solution going to be more nuclear power plants? We know they were advocating a lot of natural gas plants for a while. Is their solution going to be to build a number of natural gas plants; in which case, what happens to the price? We still haven't seen the energy-efficiency strategy. When are we going to see that, if ever?

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** I'm glad to add to the debate this afternoon and to the comments made by the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot—by far the longest name in this Legislature—followed closely by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and of course the member for Kenora-Rainy River.

I'm a business person. You deal with reality. You deal with the cards that you're dealt. We have to deal with the problem that is before us. We can spend all our time talking about what was going to happen, what should have happened, what the other party was going to do, is there really going to be a deficit? All I know is that we have run up in the last year, based on the policy of the previous government, something like \$700 million on the provincial credit card. What are we doing running up a deficit? I've been told that in future years we'll be making a surplus and it'll all go away. If I tried to pull that in my business, I'd be out of business pretty quick. I suppose that happens in politics too, because if you try to pull that stuff, you're out of government pretty quick.

Our job here is to deal with the reality we have been faced with. You have to deal with the cards you're dealt. What we have to do right now is take a very poor situation and make it much better. How are we going to do that? Simply by being honest with the people of Ontario and saying we're not going to put the price of electricity on the provincial credit card while at the same time we had a government that was running as \$5.6 billion deficit, which we inherited. Do you know how many hospitals, nurses, schools—how many programs will be cancelled in this province if we don't get a handle on this situation? That's why we're dealing with it.

**Mr Klees:** I'm pleased to offer my comments to those of the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. First of all, with regard to his comments relating to the revenue-neutral issue, once again for the record, and for people observing this debate, I want to make very clear, as I said in my speech, that it was never intended that this be revenue-neutral in the first year or in 18 months. There was a strategy that was put in place that over the four-year period of time, this would be revenue-neutral.

1750

That is for the record. That is what we said. So for this government to say, "Oh, we came along and we saw that

this was not revenue-neutral," is simply not giving the people of this province the straight goods. There was never a hidden agenda here about the fact that there would be initial costs.

To the member from Perth-Middlesex, I'm glad to hear of his business experience. What he would know, and surely anyone who is in business in this province, is that there is such a thing as making provision for spikes in prices. There are strategies that businesses that deal with commodities take. He may never have been in the commodities business and so wouldn't know about it, but these are issues that are dealt with on a daily basis by businesses across this province. You look into the future, you take strategies that will allow you to deal with the immediate challenges and you work toward a resolution in the longer term. That's what this was about. So I just ask you to keep that record straight. Once again, the fact is a promise has been broken. This government know what the challenges were. They refused to take that into consideration when they made those commitments to the people of this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** For a response, the Chair recognizes the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

**Mr McMeekin:** I want to thank all of the honourable members who took the time to offer their thoughtful comments and critiques on the brief remarks that I was privileged to make in this legislative chamber. I want to say, in closing, that I will be prepared for the member for Oak Ridges—he can write this down somewhere—to compare his projected four-year plan with what will happen in the four years that we anticipate being in power here. I say that prayerfully and carefully. I used to be an incurable optimist, but this place has cured me, I've got to tell you. I'm really hopeful that we can fulfill the kind of vision that the member from Oak Ridges articulated. On that front, he and I share much in common.

With the proposed legislation that finds expression in Bill 4, our government is finally taking a responsible approach to electricity pricing that will better reflect the true cost of electricity. The days of energy policy as a political football are gone. We as a government promise to improve health care, fix education and live within our means. This is a prudent and very responsible first step—well, second or third step. Other legislation was first and second steps in that regard. Our plan would take the politics and politicians out of energy pricing and give that responsibility to a truly independent regulator, which is where it belongs. Through our plan, we're delivering on the fiscal responsibility and the fair and responsible government that we promised during that 28 days of the election campaign that we would deliver. We intend to deliver on those promises.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Dunlop:** Could I have unanimous consent to finish the last six minutes here?

**The Acting Speaker:** Are you asking for unanimous consent?

**Mr Dunlop:** Yes, for me finish the last six minutes here.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member from Simcoe North is asking for unanimous consent to speak a second time on the bill. Do I have unanimous consent? I'm afraid I've heard some noes.

Further debate?

**Mr Yakabuski:** Again, we're on Bill 4 here, and I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to address this. We're back to the promises of this government that they would not remove the rate cap until 2006. Throughout the campaign in my riding, that was an important election issue, as I'm sure it was in every riding in this province.

**Mr Kormos:** And what was the Liberal promise?

**Mr Yakabuski:** The Liberals were promising exactly what we heard time and time again throughout the campaign: the rate cap stays till 2006. "Our position," they said, "was exactly the same as the Tories." We looked at that energy policy, because it seemed that we were writing their energy policy for them. Every time we would have an energy policy in the previous Parliament, the next day, the then-Leader of the Opposition would get up and say, "I actually support that," because when you are lacking any ideas of your own on the energy file, you'll just go with what you figure is the best position out there.

So when we were talking about privatizing the energy system and selling off Hydro One or OPG, the Liberals supported that. When it became apparent that the mood of the electorate was simply in strong opposition to that and that the timing wasn't right, they again supported us. Then in November, when the Premier, under intense pressure from small businesses, seniors, low-income people—because of an energy situation that had been exacerbated by skyrocketing prices throughout the summer because of unforeseen circumstances with regard to plants that had been down for maintenance and not brought back up to full operation—the spiking in the cost of hydro was so significant that something had to be done. Again I recall the previous member from my

riding—I'm not sure if he was the energy critic at the time or not, but he was certainly one of their most articulate spokespeople. He went on and on about how something had to be done.

So of course the government brought in the 4.3-cent-a-kilowatt hour cap on energy until 2006. Immediately, they supported that, made it part of their election platform. You know that fully-costed, independently verified fiscal plan for the next four years? It was part of it. So they were prepared to operate the energy system in this province for the next three years at that rate.

All of a sudden, they've done as the NDP have articulated so well and so often in this House on this debate. They took a different position after they were elected than the position that they had going in. That is simply unacceptable to the people of Ontario. I'm certainly confident that they'll not be forgetting that flip-flop.

Over the life of this price plan, they're talking about, "If you use under 750 kilowatt hours, the price will be 4.7 cents and will escalate if your usage goes beyond that." I don't think you're going to find too many small businesses and too many farmers who are, if they're active at all, not going well beyond that level of usage. These are some of the people in my riding whom I'm most concerned about, in a year when they've been hit with losses of revenue due to the SARS crisis that has certainly affected Toronto more than anywhere else, but has affected the whole province. So in the years when the tourism industry was badly affected, they're now going to be hit with a further tax—I know this government really likes the word "tax"—a further price increase on an essential need, electricity, in this province. The farmers, with mad cow having hit them this year, costing them millions and millions of dollars—

**The Acting Speaker:** May I ask the member to sit, please.

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

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling  
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers  
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller  
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman  
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	
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<b>Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher</b> (L)	London West / -Ouest	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	
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<b>Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J.</b> (L)	St Catharines	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Brotten, Laurel C.(L)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire au premier ministre
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael</b> (L)	St Paul's	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint
<b>Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V.</b> (L)	Scarborough East / -Est	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
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<b>Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph</b> (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
<b>Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin</b> (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Speaker / Président
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique

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Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Urban) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales (Secteur urbain)
<b>Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L)</b>	Windsor-St Clair	Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	
Eves, Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
<b>Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L)</b>	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	
<b>Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L)</b>	Parkdale-High Park	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
<b>Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L)</b>	York Centre / -Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
<b>McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L)</b>	Ottawa South / -Sud	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa-Orléans	
<b>Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L)</b>	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	

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Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron-Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Mossop, Jennifer F.(L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve</b> (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Peterson, Tim (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
<b>Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry</b> (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	
<b>Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra</b> (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children's Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London-Fanshawe	
<b>Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Smith, Monique (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
<b>Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George</b> (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
<b>Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg</b> (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	
<b>Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S.</b> (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Rural) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales (Secteur rural)

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L)</b>	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth-Middlesex	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wong, Tony C. (L)	Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général







# CONTENTS

Monday 1 December 2003

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Liberal campaign promises

Mr Tascona .....	235
Mr Prue .....	237
Mr Flaherty .....	237

### Trillium grants

Mr Craitor .....	235
------------------	-----

### Seniors

Mr Jackson .....	235
------------------	-----

### Hamilton city council

Mr Agostino .....	236
-------------------	-----

### Project Turnaround

Mr Dunlop .....	236
-----------------	-----

### Prostate cancer

Mr Fonseca .....	236
------------------	-----

### Education funding

Mr Hudak .....	236
----------------	-----

### Highway accident

Ms Smith .....	237
----------------	-----

## FIRST READINGS

### Pierre Elliott Trudeau Highway Act, 2003, Bill 10, *Mr Lalonde*

Agreed to .....	238
Mr Lalonde .....	238

### Michael Maxwell Act (Health Insurance Amendment), 2003, Bill 11, *Ms Martel*

Agreed to .....	239
Ms Martel .....	239

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### Minimum wage

Mr Bentley .....	239
Mr Chudleigh .....	240
Mr Baird .....	240
Mr Hampton .....	240

### Meat inspection

Mr Peters .....	239
Mr Hardeman .....	240
Mr Hampton .....	241

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Balanced budget legislation

Mr Eves .....	241
Mr McGuinty .....	241, 244
Mr Klees .....	244

### Provincial deficit

Mr Eves .....	242
Mr McGuinty .....	242, 243, 245
Mr Baird .....	243
Mr Hampton .....	245

### Beck 3 generating facility

Mr Craitor .....	243
Mr Duncan .....	243

### Osteoporosis

Mr McMeekin .....	244
Mr Smitherman .....	244

### Ontario drug benefit program

Mrs Witmer .....	245, 250
Mr Sorbara .....	245, 250

### Water quality

Mrs Mitchell .....	246
Mrs Dombrowsky .....	246

### Class size

Mr Flaherty .....	246
Mr Kennedy .....	246

### Minimum wage

Mr Brown .....	247
Mr Bentley .....	247

### Highway tolls

Mr Jackson .....	248
Mr Takhar .....	248

### Crime against seniors

Mrs Sandals .....	248
Mr Watson .....	248

### Taxation

Mr Hudak .....	249
Mr McGuinty .....	249

### Automobile insurance

Mr Lalonde .....	249
Mr Sorbara .....	249

## PETITIONS

### Provincial deficit

Mr Berardinetti .....	250
-----------------------	-----

### Tobacco tax

Mr Hardeman .....	250
-------------------	-----

### Optometrists

Ms Martel .....	250
-----------------	-----

## SECOND READINGS

### Ontario Energy Board Amendment Act (Electricity Pricing), 2003, Bill 4, *Mr Duncan*

Mr Levac .....	251
Mr Dunlop .....	251, 255, 259, 264, 268
Ms Wynne .....	252
Mr Ouellette .....	252, 256
Ms Churley .....	254, 256, 260
Mr Hoy .....	255
Mr Bisson .....	255, 264
Mr Agostino .....	259
Mr Hampton .....	260, 264, 267, 270
Mr Mauro .....	260
Mr Parsons .....	261, 265

Mr Delaney .....	264
Mr Klees .....	265, 269, 271
Mrs Sandals .....	268
Mr Prue .....	268
Mr McMeekin .....	269, 271
Mr Yakabuski .....	270, 272
Mr Wilkinson .....	271
Debate deemed adjourned .....	272

## OTHER BUSINESS

### Wearing of ribbons

Mr Smitherman .....	238
---------------------	-----

### Visitors

The Speaker .....	238
Mr Jackson .....	238
Mr Berardinetti .....	250

### Legislative interns

The Speaker .....	239
-------------------	-----

## TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Lundi 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2003

## PREMIÈRE LECTURE

### Loi de 2003 sur l'Autoroute

#### Pierre Elliott Trudeau, projet de loi 10, *M. Lalonde*

Adoptée .....	238
M. Lalonde .....	238

### Loi Michael Maxwell de 2003 modifiant la Loi

#### sur l'assurance-santé, projet de loi 11, *M<sup>me</sup> Martel*

Adoptée .....	239
---------------	-----

## DEUXIÈME LECTURE

### Loi de 2003 modifiant la Loi sur la Commission de l'énergie

#### de l'Ontario (établissement du coût de l'électricité), projet de loi 4, *M. Duncan*

M. Bisson .....	255
Débat présumé ajourné .....	272