



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 October 2005

Jeudi 20 octobre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 October 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 octobre 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

FOODLAND ONTARIO

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise to move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should expand the Foodland Ontario program to explicitly state the standards Ontario foods meet before they are placed on the market and develop a campaign to educate the public on those food safety and quality standards.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Wynne has moved private member's notice of motion number 1.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Wynne, you have to up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Wynne: I rise enthusiastically today to speak to my resolution that we should, as a government, articulate the high standards observed by our farm community, our agri-food business, and to move then to educate the public on the benefits of those high standards. That, I believe, is our competitive advantage in Ontario.

This resolution is born of my conviction that all of us in this House, and in Parliaments across the country, must acknowledge the importance of agriculture to the well-being of Canada and must take direct action to improve the health of the agri-food industry.

There's a robust discussion, I acknowledge, between the agriculture sector and our Minister of Agriculture, our government. It's the stated goal of our ministry to improve the market returns of Ontario agriculture and food producers. In fact, we acknowledged in the throne speech of last week that we must work with the federal government to improve safety nets that support farm income, develop new branding and marketing strategies, and support research and development in agri-food.

Now, some of you may be wondering—as a downtown Toronto MPP, it may seem a bit of a stretch for me to be taking on this cause. Indeed, it would be easy to find many issues that, at first glance, have much more to do with the constituents of Don Valley West than the health of agriculture in Ontario. However, we all eat. Indeed, at the combined federal, provincial and municipal town hall meeting in my riding last week, the plight of

farmers and the state of our agri-food industry was not raised as an issue. But I believe that it is important, because all of us who live in this city already have access to safe, fresh food, and I would contend that we take that access completely for granted. Those of us who don't live near a rural community forget how our food is produced. I believe that the affluent among us, who have free access to this food, not only assume that we're going to have access to whatever food we want, but that we will have access whenever we want it. The expectation of strawberries in January, for example, is a world removed from the reality of our grandparents, who ate fruit and produce in season and in abundance, and then waited a full year to eat that produce again. We've moved very far away from that reality, and we assume that we can sustain that.

I believe that the Ontario farmers' Farmers Feed Cities campaign is a wake-up call to all of us who take our year-round abundance for granted. We take for granted that progressive, multi-billion dollar industry, and we assume that because it's in place, it will always be in place. We forget that it contributes to the health and well-being of Ontarians and to Ontario's economy, and that we need to support it, all of us across the province.

The other reason that it's critical for those of us in Toronto and in the GTA to pay attention to this issue is that we're living on some of the best agricultural land in the world. The GTA's geographic characteristics qualified as part of the 5% of the Canadian land mass that's classified as prime agricultural land, and a portion of that is part of the 0.5% of the Canadian land mass that qualifies as class 1 land under the Canada Land Inventory. There are over 34,700 jobs supported by GTA agriculture, with 4,621 farms producing over \$585 million in gross farm receipts. We have to remember that we're all here in this part of the country because of access to waterways and the abundance of great farmland. That's how we got here.

I just want to acknowledge Deb Lethbridge from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who has joined us in the members' gallery. Thank you for being here.

So the health of our agri-food industry and the quality and safety of our food are as critical, if not as immediate, to a downtown Toronto MPP as they are to my rural colleagues.

Now, there are many issues surrounding this current situation in which Ontario farmers find themselves, and I'm not pretending to put myself out as an expert, nor do I speak for my colleagues in this Legislature who have

first-hand experience and vast knowledge of the needs of farmers and the solutions that we must embrace.

My colleague the member for Perth–Middlesex has attempted to educate those of us in the Liberal caucus for the past two years. He has organized a farm tour for our caucus in an attempt to bring the city mice to the country. I've attended both of those events, and I've had the privilege to see the complexity of modern farming. That's made it concrete to me that we all have to take action. The motivation for bringing this resolution came from that process of thinking, what can I do as a city member?

Paul Mistele, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, points out in a recent speech that Ontario producers adhere to the highest production standards, that consumers want more information about their food, and that they want that information to be more specific. There are jurisdictions in western Europe where consumers can get extremely specific information about the fresh food they buy, including exact location of production.

I believe we should be doing everything we can to inform consumers about the vocabulary of food production. Does the average consumer know what's meant by terms such as "organic," "free-range," or "grain-fed"? What are the health and safety standards that must be met by Ontario farmers? How are those standards different, higher, than those in other jurisdictions?

1010

In Korea there's an interesting program that started in 2003 called Rural-loving. It's a campaign to support the farmers, and trade federations, industry and business are all working together. Under the program, farmers commit to producing safe agricultural products and consumers commit to buying domestically produced goods. We have the farmers' half of that equation in place and I think we need to get the other half of the equation in place.

My colleague the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who will speak shortly, is herself a farmer, and speaking in this House in May of this year she contended that consumers should not only prefer and demand Ontario products, but should understand why they want those products. That's what this resolution is about.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on October 18, in answer to a question about food safety, talked about the HACCP program, the hazard analysis critical control points protocol. That allows us to know that our farm producers and food processors are following mandated safety procedures. The point here is that the general public doesn't know about these standards, doesn't know what farmers are doing and how the benefits of what the farmers are doing affect us.

There are, of course, people who believe we should be holding farmers to even higher standards regarding pesticides and so on. We can't even have that conversation, I believe, in the general public before we understand what the standards are now and what we're doing now. I'm looking for the education that would allow us to have that healthy debate. Paul Mistele, again, observes the govern-

ment's need to ensure that consumers get the information they need to make informed choices when buying food.

My prime motivation in bringing this resolution is my belief that a healthy farming culture is important to Ontario economically, socially, historically and environmentally. Our roots in central Canada are in the ground, in the fields tilled by our grandfathers and uncles, supported by their wives, sisters and daughters. Many of us come from families that worked on the land before they came to the cities and many of the newcomers to this country come from agrarian communities. There are community gardens all over this city because there are people who have come to this country who understand working on the land. Our connection to our history can be traced through the fields of corn and wheat and the fences and barns that have defined this countryside for seven or eight generations.

I believe that people who work on the land and who are dependent on it to at least some degree and who are dependent on the elements and who take responsibility for preserving the environment because their livelihood depends on it are people we should cherish and support.

I hope all of you will support my resolution to encourage the government to develop a way to help Ontarians to understand clearly the benefits of buying Ontario food, benefits that go beyond some sort of romantic sense of civic obligation, but benefits that are real to our health, the health of our children, the cohesion of the Ontario economy and the long-term sustainability of our environment. Ronald Wright, in his ominous *A Short History of Progress*, warns us, "If civilization is to survive, we must live on the interest—not on the capital—of nature."

I believe that in this particularly fertile corner of the world we inhabit it is our responsibility to preserve our natural environment, that it is our responsibility to preserve our farming capacity. To that end, we need to understand more about the food we eat, the challenges of the farming business and the complexity of the rural economy. We are all in this together. That's why my little, yellow city car has a licence frame that poses the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's question: "Did you eat today? Thank a farmer."

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I wish to speak to this resolution on Foodland Ontario. I will reiterate that Ontario has an excellent reputation for producing safe and high-quality foods. OMAFRA's Foodland Ontario program already vigorously markets products aimed at not only increasing sales, but most importantly, increasing profits for fresh produce. They work closely with retailers and industry groups in developing the kind of multimedia strategies that are so important.

Make no mistake, Ontario foods do meet high standards and that message should be relayed to consumers. It seems like we're spinning our wheels a bit debating this resolution. There was an announcement at the plowing match a month or so ago. At that time, we in rural

Ontario were underwhelmed, if you will, and have no reason to see this resolution as maybe much more than a token gesture a month later. However, the estimates book—the estimates committee is sitting now—indicates that domestic recognition of the Foodland Ontario symbol will decrease by 8% in the coming year. This is reason for concern.

There are statistics out there that show that, on average, people across Canada are consuming fewer fresh vegetables than they were last year. In fact, vegetable consumption is now at its lowest level since 1992.

Art Smith, the CEO of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, wrote a public letter to Agriculture Minister Dombrowsky asking for Foodland Ontario to be enhanced:

“As you are aware, the Ontario fruit and vegetable industry is made up of over 125 different commodities with a total farm gate value in excess of \$1 billion. Many of the crops have some sort of regulated marketing system but the vast majority does not.

“The Foodland Ontario ... along with programs from both health and education should be used to educate people on the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables.”

That connection, the poor eating habits—we know the story on obesity, diabetes and certain forms of cancer. In his letter he goes on, outlining the millions of dollars that are spent annually on health care costs and that much of that could be ameliorated or prevented through a better diet. As he says, “The benefits to all from healthy eating must not be overlooked and ... Foodland Ontario can play a critical role.”

Just to put this morning's discussion in context, Craig Hunter, who is also with the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, indicates that we've had a bad year with many of the commodities. Weather has ruined thousands of acres through hail, drought, floods in some cases, disease and insect pressure. This is an ongoing problem for orchardmen. Late plantings have an obvious effect on yields. In the Niagara area, very low temperatures in the past winter really hammered the grape and tender fruit area. In some cases, we're seeing some of the lowest yields in over 30 years, although I can personally attest that the Porteus farm just north of me had excellent apples for sale. Apples did very well on many of their orchards and I brought some of those apples into this building this week.

Growers face a double-edged sword, not only harsh weather but the unfair trade game played across our border. There is another issue with respect to the United States. Oftentimes red tape, rules and regulations get in the way of farming. We certainly heard that from Ron Bonnett, with the OFA, at our meeting with John Tory at the plowing match.

Pesticide licensing, for example: The National Farmers Union indicated to us their concern that the Wayne Easter report not be shelved. There is one recommendation in the Easter report that I quote: “Harmonization of licensing and registration with the US on

pesticides.” I hope the federal government goes forward on this, and Ontario has a role to support this kind of harmonization. This would apply to veterinary drugs as well.

I feel an awful lot of work needs to be done with respect to PMRA, the pest management regulatory agency. Our horticulture producers are in a very competitive environment. They are at a competitive disadvantage. They do not have access to the latest herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, and we suffer for that.

As we know, farmers in most sectors are in a crisis mode right now. They are looking to this government for some support on that risk management side. Our fruit and vegetable, our horticulture guys are losing SDRM, the self-directed risk management program. They have put together a replacement that's called self-directed production insurance, something endorsed by edible horticulture, by the OFA and by the Canadian federation. I hope the government will work with these farmers on this new production insurance program.

1020

I have a question from Adrian Huisman, again with the fruit and vegetable growers: Where is the provincial government on the tender fruit, apple and grape growers' revitalization plan? This is a plan—we see this in British Columbia—to assist orchardmen to haul out trees producing varieties of fruit that are not as popular with the consumer. It's a strategic replant program. The fruit and vegetable people have a \$300-million proposal before this government to be split three ways between the producers and the federal and provincial governments.

I want to mention a new organization that has been formed, the Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario, the FVGO. I look forward to their work. Their mission is the development, sale and export of our agricultural products. Their mission also includes education, the kind of consumer education that is so important, through Foodland Ontario. There are several members on the board—I'm very proud to say this—from my riding, including Mary Shabatura and Martin Streef, up north of Burford. The FVGO has been established as a not-for-profit association that looks after the specific needs of the unregulated vegetable producers, primarily the fresh market vegetables.

I leave this House with some questions. We have two other speakers on the docket this afternoon. Again, what about the availability of production insurance? What about plant disease, the health issues, that need for harmonization? New kinds of products are used south of the border, the newly researched and developed products for which there is such a delay for us to access. Why do our growers—our apple growers, for example—have to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to attempt to get a fair NAFTA ruling on dumping? Again, there's that concern about the buying power consolidation at the retail level, which puts the farmer at quite a disadvantage. Many fruit and vegetables—certainly Niagara is very concerned about this government's greenbelt policy.

I'll just leave us with some words from Len Troup, president of fruit and vegetable. "For too long Ontario farmers have been seen as providers of cheap, safe, nutritious local food.... We have been taken for granted and managed by near monopolies that distribute and process our produce.... If society expects ... healthy food," all they're asking for is a healthier financial picture for their growers.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): It's certainly my pleasure to rise today in support of the resolution that has been brought forward by the member for Don Valley West. When the member from Don Valley West talks about the fertile corner, it would behoove me to not talk about the fertile corner that I represent. As many of you have heard me speak, the riding I represent is the largest agricultural producer in the province of Ontario and alone produces more than three other provinces.

One thing I do want to say is that Foodland Ontario is a consumer branding program and it reinforces the advantages of buying fresh, quality Ontario-grown food. This resolution is asking that Foodland Ontario explicitly state the standards Ontario foods meet before they are placed on the market. I believe this is an excellent idea and that we should not only consider it but should adopt it.

For me, when we talk about Ontario product, that means buying my apples where I have always bought my apples, where my parents bought theirs and where my grandmother and grandfather bought theirs. For me, that's Ontario product. I buy my apples in the same place that I have—our family has lived in the Huron–Bruce area for seven generations—I guess for all those generations. We grew them for six generations; now we buy.

When I look at the meat that I eat, be it lamb, pork or chicken, I know where I'm buying all of that.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): And beef.

Mrs. Mitchell: Yes, and my beef; I know where it comes from.

For me, that's local product; that's Ontario product. When we come from a rural area, that's our understanding of what the local product is. So when I walk through the grocery stores in Toronto, it must be very difficult to understand where that food comes from; not only that, but to also understand what goes into growing that product. This is one way of overcoming that, and with the understanding that people know what they are buying when they buy Ontario.

One of the ways that we can assist farmers is to promote the excellent, high-quality food they produce on a daily basis. That's very important. We must remind people in this province and around the world where our food comes from. We also need to let them know of the very strict food standards that are applied, and the Foodland Ontario brand should bring it to mind. When we see the Ontario brand, we should understand what that stands for. If there is standardization, then people know that's what they are buying.

This government has taken a number of measures to enforce food quality and safety in this province. Justice

Haines was asked to report on Ontario's meat regulation and inspection. As a result, he has made recommendations, and this government is following through on them. We have hired 61 more full-time meat inspectors and 58 part-time inspectors in June 2004. We introduced a new food safety system for small and medium-sized food processing plants in Ontario. We also announced a new food safety research program that is designed to enhance the safety of food that is produced and processed in Ontario.

I think this resolution gives us a wonderful opportunity to promote these initiatives through an already well-established Foodland Ontario program.

The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex brought forward a resolution in the last session that the government of Ontario should promote a framework for the promotion of Ontario-grown goods. I also supported that resolution. It's important for us to always remember that food produced in Ontario comes from very hard-working people who are excellent stewards of the land. When people purchase goods and see the Foodland sign, they should know automatically: highest quality, safest food produced in the world. Goods produced in Ontario are the best in the world, and I think it's time that it was recognized. Farmers and people in rural communities spend many hours in a day working to give us our food. We as a government should not only support them, but have the tools to help them promote their products.

If you ate Ontario food today, the agricultural community thanks you.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): It's a pleasure to join in the debate today. I commend the member from Don Valley West for introducing this motion today—I wish it was more into legislation, but I hope that's coming down the road—and recognize that an urban member and the Liberal government, which is predominantly urban members, are beginning to look at the fact that farmers feed cities. She recognized the campaign going on out there.

I have a farmer in my riding who always tells me that people in the city don't understand where food comes from and the importance of it until they have to eat their carpet. So I will bring this to his attention, that we have been debating this today.

We can never lose the ability to feed ourselves, and there is a huge education component involved here in educating the people, especially in the cities, about the importance of growing our own food. The fact is that farmers in Ontario have been in a crisis for two and a half years now; the farms are closing down as we speak. So action is needed now.

Foodland Ontario, a program under the Bill Davis government, was brought in in 1977. This program, the Foodland Ontario ad campaign, is a reannouncement. As my colleague for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant had mentioned, it was reintroduced at the plowing match. But it's encouraging. We support Foodland Ontario, but we're concerned they don't have the resources or funding to

address these new duties. We need to impress here that we need to do more to promote Ontario-grown produce.

1030

In my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Kawartha Farm Fresh continues to connect and liaise among the local farmers, branding and labelling. The city of Kawartha Lakes has \$73 million of farm gate sales annually, and it's the third-largest agriculture employer in the province.

The member from Peterborough rightly recognized the Kawartha Choice Farmland Food works and that they received an award in September in Prince Edward Island at the chamber of commerce annual meeting. The Kawartha Choice Farmland Food initiatives, in competition with all communities, took home the gold in the national award for leadership. So I highly commend them for that local initiative. I think the whole province can learn from that initiative and their award.

We've been speaking a lot with agriculture reps in our area, and I just wanted to mention a few of their comments. Joe Hickson, Dale Mountjoy and Dave Frew from the grain and oilseed producers say they need restoration of funding in the provincial budget to agriculture and restoration of agriculture as a priority ministry. It used to be that health, agriculture and education were the three most important ministries. We see agriculture slipping and farmers must not be expected to continue subsidizing the cost of food production.

The fruit and vegetable growers, Charles Stevens and Ted Watson, say there's a need for more provincial support for agriculture in the areas of research and development, consultation with farmers, and promotion of locally grown fruits and vegetables as essential to health.

From the municipalities: When farmers embark on value-added enterprises—for example, the roadside markets—they should not face higher taxation and red tape. There should be greater promotion of Ontario food, including larger logos on Ontario-grown produce, and Ontario content rules that require more Ontario products to be made available in stores.

I'm happy to see the motion today. I encourage the government to put legislation in place so that this can be taken further and that Ontario produce and products can be more visibly seen in stores and we can have more education to buy locally grown.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to speak this morning on this motion put forward by my good friend and colleague from Don Valley West, who has been a real advocate among urban members to really push forward the "farmers feed cities" concept. I commend her for that leadership.

Some time ago, when I was a young lad, I remember being at an agriculture forum in Peterborough. The Hon. Eugene Whalen was there in his role as the federal Minister of Agriculture. I remember a lady at the back asking a question of Mr. Whalen. She said, "Mr. Whalen, I'm concerned about the price of Florida orange juice." Well, we know Mr. Whalen. He adjusted the green Stetson slightly and made his response to that lady. He

suggested to her that a good substitute for Florida orange juice, at a cheaper price with better quality, was tomato juice processed from those tomatoes grown, Mr. Speaker, in your riding, in Leamington in Essex and processed at H.J. Heinz.

There's a real moral in the answer Mr. Whalen provided that day, that Ontario-grown produce, whether it's fruits or vegetables, or cattle, lamb and chicken, is of a quality that is the best in the world. We have to take our time to keep promoting that concept, that Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables and meat are the best in the world.

My colleague from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock touched upon the Kawartha Choice program, which was an initiative of the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. It came out of the mad cow crisis, in that we had to go back and start rebranding and promoting locally grown produce and meats in the Peterborough area to reinforce the activity that goes on from Foodland Ontario. It has been a very successful program, recently winning the gold star award at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce annual event in Prince Edward Island.

I had an opportunity just recently, in my role as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, to meet with the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors. I think they have a great role and they're prepared to take on that role to promote Ontario-grown food. I just want to read from a note, as my time ticks down:

"Supporting Ontario-grown and healthy active living for Ontarians:

"We have several success stories in supporting Ontario- and Canadian-grown products and our members will be open to any proposal from an Ontario-based manufacturer or producer who wishes to supply products to our stores. Our presentation provided a high-level overview of these initiatives and the opportunity areas. We would be happy to speak with you" and your government further to promote those initiatives.

I think there's a wide net of individuals out there who are prepared to push forward with this initiative to provide Ontario-grown produce and foods every day to the plates of Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I think it's time we got a New Democratic voice in here.

I'm pleased to be here today to speak not just for myself, although it's private members' hour, but on behalf of New Democrats in support of this resolution and to talk a little bit about the issues facing the agricultural and farming communities today. Ms. Wynne, when she first introduced the motion, talked about the fact that it might seem a little strange that a city person is concerned about this issue, but as she said, we all have to eat and we all want to make sure that our food, and particularly our children's and our grandchildren's food, is safe to eat and that people are aware of safety concerns

but also of the quality standards. Certainly, who wouldn't support a resolution like this?

I also have to say, and I repeat this frequently in the House when we are talking about agricultural issues, that although I represent a downtown Toronto riding, I'm from Newfoundland and Labrador. I saw the tragedy of what happened in Newfoundland when the fish disappeared. I relate that story again, because when I was on committee traveling around this province, particularly around the greenbelt but on other issues as well, one of the things that the committee heard time and time again from the farm community, and particularly from the family farm, is that they see themselves at risk of disappearing, for all kinds of reasons that we're all aware of and don't have time to go into here today. Of course this motion is not about that, but I think it's important to set the table, to remind people that there are many, many issues, that I know we all have been trying to deal with in various ways, to save the family farm, because it's so important to our economy.

I do want to say that the sustainability of what Mrs. Wynne is proposing today does depend upon there being Ontario crops and markets for them. Last year, while on the greenbelt committee hearings—as you know, I've always supported the greenbelt and will continue to support the greenbelt, and at the same time will continue to talk to the government about my concerns around that greenbelt. We heard from a lot of farmers that large, large swaths of prime agricultural land, even more valuable than most of the farmlands that are being saved, were left out of the greenbelt. There were great concerns expressed about that and how the lines were drawn. But during the greenbelt committee hearings, we heard that protecting farmland is one part of the solution but that ensuring that Ontario farmers have a local market is equally important. The committee heard extensively from the agricultural community about the very difficult economic times they're confronted with right now. We heard time and time again that, with or without the greenbelt, these issues are there. They brought up all kinds of things: BSE, low commodity prices, US farmers dumping corn into Ontario markets at a fraction of the production cost. It was underscored that the crisis in the farming community is happening and that the government needs to take action.

1040

I'm pleased to say that there are times when we all do work together on important issues. I did put forward an amendment in the greenbelt committee that called for sustaining the economic viability of farming communities as part of the greenbelt, and I'm pleased to say that it passed. I'm really looking forward to that being enacted, because it hasn't been, months after it was passed.

These are the kinds of things we need to see the government address: the farm income crisis that's gripping rural Ontario, the farm income crisis that has spread into the farm supply sector, which is now carrying an increasing proportion of farm debt. I know there are issues around the trade agreement that we hear about, but

we have to stop hiding behind that and get provincial programs in place, like Quebec has done, that return Ontario farmers their costs of production. We all know about these issues. I know I'm painting a big picture here, but this resolution is an important part of this big picture. We have to look at the big picture to make sure that this works.

Another point I want to make—I mean, I'm not going to make an amendment, as it is a private member's bill, but it's a big issue with me as an environment critic: the concerns I have around GMO foods. I would have liked to have seen the expansion of this to include full disclosure about GMO foods, things like what the standards are, the research used in making decisions around GMO foods, if that research has been peer reviewed, disclosure that the current available research about GE foods does not currently include studies that look at how consuming GE food impacts people's health over the long term. I say this because it's an issue that has been generally ignored. We all do talk about the fact that there are some real benefits to genetically modified foods in terms of feeding a starving world, in some of the developing countries. We do look at some of the positive impacts of that, but when you have the Royal Society of Canada and its peer organization in the UK, Greenpeace, the Environmental Protection Agency, the World Health Organization, joined by New Democrats at the federal level and here—in fact, it was part of our New Democratic platform provincially in the last election. There have been many groups advocating for comprehensive, independent, long-term research, which needs to be conducted to learn what the health risks associated with eating GE foods are, particularly among child-bearing women, infants and children.

The Royal Society of Canada and the Ontario Public Health Association have strongly criticized the lack of regulations around GE foods and how the studies that are used in making decisions about it are from biotechnology firms. Some of the data and the studies may be quite legitimate and the results legitimate, but nobody can argue that they have a vested interest, and we do need to see some independent studies. There have been many calls for establishing an independent, transparent research capacity to study bioengineered foods.

Public opinion expresses similar sentiments as these bodies. They want to know if the produce on the shelf or bin has been modified. A recent poll found that 50% of Canadians are concerned about the potential dangers of eating GE foods.

I know that it's not included in this, and I'm still supporting the motion. I understand how private members' bills and motions are done; you can't do the whole package, and this of course is an important component. But I wanted to raise some of these issues, because I do think they're really important. This gives me an opportunity to talk a bit about it, because we don't talk very much about the implications of this.

I want to tell you, for instance, what the World Health Organization said: "Attention should be paid to the

particular physiological characteristics and metabolic requirements of specific population subgroups such as infants, children, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly and those with chronic diseases or compromised immune systems.”

The Royal Society of Canada said, “Early introduction of these (peanut, tree nuts, seafood and seeds) and other food proteins to the infant’s relatively immature immune system may encourage development of an allergy. Infants and young children therefore appear to be more susceptible to developing food allergies, resulting in a higher incidence.”

The Canadian government has been severely criticized for GE food safety regulations by numerous authorities, including the Royal Society of Canada and many others. So we have a lot of work to do on that.

As well, I would like to talk just for a moment about the issue of pesticides. I believe that it is an issue and we do need to have that debate now—we do. I know it’s a contentious issue within the agriculture and farming community. There are organic farmers, there are farmers who are trying to keep genetically engineered foods out of their crop areas, and there are all kinds of issues around that. But in terms of pesticides—and a Conservative member mentioned it—there are safer technologies and pesticides that our farmers do not or may not have access to. That is an area, again, where research shows more and more—we talk about imported strawberries, for instance. Strawberries, as I understand from what I’ve read, are one of the highest pesticide-laden fruits, berries or foods available in the marketplace. We’ve all learned, hopefully—and part of the education should be around washing our foods carefully before eating them or digesting them, to get as much of the pesticide residue off. But we know that some of the safety precautions and quality standards are not as high in other jurisdictions as they are here. That’s something that has to be dealt with in an international marketplace, and I understand that, but nonetheless, I think it behooves us, as the Ontario government, to make sure that education is provided more than it is now so that parents are aware that they need to wash foods. Sometimes it’s recommended with certain types of foods that you wash them in mild, soapy water.

Those are the kinds of issues we have to be concerned about now, because there are so many pesticides, so many fungicides, so many newer processes that I think farmers would be quite willing to use if it was economically viable and the regulations and regime were put in place that would make it easier for them to do that. There’s more and more evidence that some of the pesticides that are used are having a very negative effect, particularly on our children.

When the NDP was in government, Ruth Grier, who was the Minister of the Environment and then the Minister of Health, commissioned a study while Minister of the Environment on cancer prevention. I know Ms. Grier is still extremely involved and dedicated to that issue although she’s no longer a member in this place.

One of the components of that report talked about the impact and the connection between our environment, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat, and the pesticides that are often in that food. Those are the kinds of things that we’re seeing more and more evidence of.

The city of Toronto recently banned pesticide use on our lawns in the city. It’s very controversial and it’s not being very well enforced at this point, but it’s a start. I think that’s an important step forward.

1050

I understand, as I stand here talking about this, that farmers need to be in a position to compete with the US. There really are some unfair trade actions being taken, and I recognize that. I know that farmers have to do whatever they have to do to be able to compete in this marketplace. But there are all kinds of things that we can do as a government to deal with the economic crisis they’re in and also to help them bring in the latest and best technologies in terms of the best practices for growing our fruits and vegetables.

With that, I would say to the member that, as a fellow city MPP in this place who understands the importance of the viability of our farmers and the food we eat, I support the resolution before us today and would like the opportunity to further it and deal with some of those other issues that I raised today in a more direct way.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I only have a minute and a half left, so I want to place on the record an item of concern regarding agriculture in Ontario. I have a letter here from a constituent, Mr. John Doner, who is a farmer in Gormley. From his letter, I quote:

“Our provincial Premier has led us to believe that agriculture would become a lead ministry under Ontario’s current Liberal government. And yet support levels for the industry have in fact been cut, and additional costly legislation (greenbelt, nutrient management, etc.) has been passed that farmers must comply with.”

He goes on to say, “When will a grain farmer (for instance) be able to expect a fair return for their labour, risk and investment?”

He closes by saying, “With little to no returns to entice younger generations to begin farming, our governments should be concerned with the future sustainability of the nation’s domestic food supply.”

The reality is that we can talk about marketing food as much as we want, and in that regard we obviously support whatever initiatives are necessary to do that to help our agri-food industry, but at the end of the day we won’t have farmers if in fact this government does not see agriculture and conduct itself in a way to demonstrate a priority for the agri-food industry in this province. It is not doing that, it is falling down on the job, and agriculture in this province is at risk because of that.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It is my pleasure to speak this morning to support this resolution that’s been brought forward by the member for Don Valley West. I think I will skip ahead a little bit and

address a couple of the things that have just been mentioned by the member opposite.

This government supports its farmers and its agricultural community in a very meaningful way, in good times and in tough times—and very tough times recently. Just last year, there were some real challenges facing our farming community. There was \$549 million dedicated to our agricultural budget. We spent an additional \$628 million or more to support our farmers in crisis. In addition, our Premier met with the farming community. There was an agri-food summit. We responded directly to the concerns of farmers by restoring our research stations, by working with them in many areas and, may I add, by beefing up our Foodland Ontario ads—and let's get to that subject, because that's what we're here to talk about.

Foodland Ontario is a symbol that has become synonymous with freshness and excellence in food for a number of decades now. This year, we actually added a component, because we realized that times have changed and not every consumer out there actually knows how to handle fresh food. It used to be that we all took home ec—at least, all the females would take home ec, and the females were the ones who were doing the shopping—and we knew from our home ec classes what we were supposed to do with our food. But that's not the case any more. It is not standard that everybody knows that you should not put your tomatoes in the fridge because they won't taste as good—they really won't—or that you shouldn't soak your mushrooms. Not everybody knows that. So we added this feature to our Foodland Ontario ads this year to help educate our consumers about how to handle fresh food.

The other thing that a lot of people don't realize is that it used to be you'd wait all year long so you could have strawberries for maybe two weeks and you'd wait all year long so you could have wonderful fresh tomatoes for maybe three or four weeks. Well, now you can get these things all year round. Fresh Ontario tomatoes happen all year because we have greenhouses. Our agricultural community has changed, and our support of it has changed along with it.

Interestingly enough, we know by our senses that Ontario food is best. We know because we taste its freshness; we taste that it is best. We know through sheer common sense that we live in a corner of the world where high standards are a priority and where we can readily have this food. We know by common sense and by our senses that Ontario food is the best. But we are a society and a species—more so a society—that needs things empirically; we need to see it in black and white. When the consumer is reaching out for that piece of fruit and maybe has a choice between something imported and something from Ontario, they know intuitively that the apple from Ontario is going to taste better and be fresher and will have met a certain standard. But we, as a species, just seem to need to know these things in an empirical way in black and white. So our Foodland Ontario

symbol should go that extra step to spell out and recognize the high standard that Ontario food meets.

I want to talk a little bit about just how lucky we are in this corner of the planet. Quite frankly, I think everybody should be dropped by parachute into a Third World country, where growing food is nigh impossible, and then come back here. Your view of the world will have changed, and your view of your corner of the world will have changed so much.

We have the ability to grow our own food. We have the ability to grow excellent food and a wide range of food. That doesn't happen everywhere on the planet. We recognize that as a government; we need to recognize it more as a society. It is why we put the greenbelt in place; you cannot grow wonderful food if you don't have the land to grow it. So we have our greenbelt; we have been supporting our farmers, and will continue to do so, and work with them in a meaningful way; and we have our Foodland Ontario ads, which educate the public and celebrate the fabulous food we have. Bon appétit.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I want to thank my colleague from Don Valley West for bringing this motion forward. I know that when I stand up, everyone expects me to talk about farming and agriculture. But to have it come from an urban member, and to have her use her time as a private member to push forward that cause, gives it more impact, I feel. I certainly know that she brings a different voice and very important voice to this.

Ontario food is nutritious, safe and plentiful. As farmers, we need to promote those products and those qualities to our consumers. We need to make the linkage between what happens on our farms and what our consumers know about what's happening there.

Consumers have a great deal of power: They have the power to change their consumption habit; they have the power to change their buying habits; they have the power to change the buying procedures of their retailers. In all of that, of course, they have the power to increase farmers' incomes. Consumers also have the power to influence food production through what they buy and how they influence their retailers. They have that, and they need to use it wisely and be completely informed.

That is what we are trying to do under this motion. We want to make sure that a consumer goes into the grocery store, picks up a product, knows that it's an Ontario product and knows how that is different from anything else on the shelves. They can make those decisions; they can decide whether they want to buy a GMO product or not, if they know that's what happened there. At this point, most consumers have no idea where their food has been or where it comes from, and we want to have that happen.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all the members from all parties who have spoken to this resolution this morning.

I just want to follow up on something that the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex talked about: the power of the consumer. That really is what I am talking about in this resolution. Because consumers have a lot of power, they need to have information, and we need to make sure that consumers get that information.

The member for Toronto–Danforth illustrated the point I made in my remarks about the possibility of the extension of the debate, and I understand that there are people who want to go into a much broader debate about food safety and so on. I commend that and think it's a necessary thing to do, but we have to start from a base of information. Until we have that base of information and people understand all the great things that are happening now—we do have such a safe food base in this province, and until we understand just how safe it is, we really can't have that larger debate. I think that's what we need to strive for: getting that informed base. There's nothing worse than a debate that is fed by ignorance and panic.

On that note, there's timeliness to this discussion. Every day in the newspaper we're reading about the importance of food safety. When we talk about avian flu, we're talking about the way food is handled, the way food is produced. In Ontario, we have the capacity to be leaders in the world. Let's make sure that all the residents of Ontario understand what our farmers are doing. Let's promote that among ourselves, and then we can promote it in the world.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I move that in the opinion of this House, the government of the Ontario should urgently address the issue of violence, gang-related crime and the illegal use of firearms—as a matter of public safety and responsible government—by being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Qadri has moved private member's of notice of motion 2. Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Qadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you're aware, this issue is urgent, pressing and important. To highlight this, as members will recall, just yesterday I had the honour, duty and privilege of welcoming to this House, and asking you all to recognize, Mr. Mohammed Gilao, the father of a 23-year-old individual, Mr. Loyan Gilao, who was gunned down in the prime of his life. Mr. Gilao was accompanied by a number of family members, including his sister, and other supporters and one individual whom I've come to respect and know a great deal, Pastor Walter McIntyre. Pastor McIntyre has actually taken the trouble of itemizing and writing for me, I guess you could say, a kind of letter, but maybe it's almost a literary story, about violence to do with my riding of Etobicoke North. I'd like to enter that into the record.

I begin as follows: "Jamestown in north Etobicoke has been in the news a lot over the past few summers. Drugs,

gangs and drive-by shootings are a part of what our kids grow up with in Jamestown. A summer evening. There's an outdoor party on someone's front lawn. The news gets out that someone who owes a debt is at that party. And a car with tinted windows pulls to a stop. A window rolls down and there's a gun.

"That's just how it happened on August 3. Fifty Jamestown Crescent. Ten gunshots. And a 23-year-old lay dead in front of Greenholme school.

"I was behind Greenholme school. On the basketball courts. Overseeing the play of a group of about 30 children. It was about 8:30 in the evening. Ten shots. The kids said they were afraid. They wanted to go home. So we broke off play a little early.

"The neighbourhood was spinning with red and white flashing lights. The air was filled with sounds of sirens, police cars, ambulances, emergency vehicles, fire trucks.

"And the kids, five, six, seven, eight years old, some still holding basketballs, slipped under the yellow police tape and went home. No counselling ... nothing.

"That's just how it is in Jamestown, Etobicoke North. That's home. That's life. I worry that it seems so normal to the kids.

"It doesn't have to be that way. If we roll up our sleeves and work together ... we can make a difference."

"Actually, over the past couple of years we have made a difference in Jamestown. Because—at least in part—of the work of organizations such as the Etobicoke Strategy, a group consisting of faith leaders and police working together, the incidence of violent crime, in spite of August 3, has actually been driven down.

"Legislation recently enacted by the province has helped.

"It is now more affordable for churches and community groups to rent school gymnasiums and playgrounds. Like at Greenholme. That decision put billions of dollars of real estate to work in the fight against crime.

"And summer jobs are now available for young people in places like Jamestown. That brought genuine hope. Taxpayers' money well spent.

"Much remains to be done. Please know that there are many people praying for you all as you all work to create the good laws that we will need to take the guns off our streets."

That's signed,

"Many blessings

"Pastor Walter McIntyre

"Outreach Pastor, Kipling Avenue Baptist Church."

Not only would I like to recognize the sentiment that has driven Pastor McIntyre to compose that piece, I would like, in our future deliberations here, to honour his wishes. We, as a government, in this Legislature, must work together using all the various measures at our disposal, whether we're dealing with gangs, which now number, I'm told, more than 200 in the city; whether we're dealing with the number of homicides, which are now approaching 100 in the city of Toronto; helping to empower police, whether it's by increasing the number of officers who walk the streets of Toronto; whether it's

organizing particular task forces that are specifically designated to deal with things such as gangs or guns or organized crime; whether it's empowering our legal system regarding, say, sentencing or having dedicated crown prosecutors or mandatory gun reporting; and, of course, working in concert with our federal colleagues to enhance things like border security, therefore hoping to stem the tide of the illegal flow of firearms.

Along with being tough on crime, we, as Liberals, as people who are hopefully moving toward a just society, to echo the phrase of the great statesman Pierre Elliott Trudeau, we must also engage our youth and engage communities to offer them hope and a way out and avenues in which they will realize that violence is not the only pathway, the only answer to their needs.

We have, for example, engaged with the police services in a number of projects that have been very, very successful; for example, projects Impact, Pathfinder and Flicker. Ron Taverner, 23 division superintendent, by whom I had a recent briefing, talked to me about an eight-month project, Project Flicker, in which hundreds of police officers were involved with an investigation of more than 200 gang members, particularly based in Rexdale and the surroundings. Very recently, we had multiple arrests made in Etobicoke and surrounding locations. I would like to congratulate Police Superintendent Ron Taverner and, by extension, Chief of Police Bill Blair, on these types of initiatives, because we need to get at the sources of organized and criminal violence.

We must, as well, empower police. I'm pleased to say that here in the McGuinty government we have made some initial steps on, for example, empowering police not only with the task forces that I mentioned earlier, but also with new police divisions, which are arising as we speak, particularly in my own riding at Kipling and Albion, and also, of course, the funding allocation, close to \$40 million, for 1,000 new police officers. This is certainly welcome, it's needed, I might say it's overdue, and it's something that will, no doubt, positively affect the level of violence across Toronto.

1110

One of the questions I asked, had put on the record, to the Attorney General yesterday was regarding the legal system. One of the complaints I have heard from residents, from the victims' families and from the police services is that for too long under the previous administrations in this province, there seems to have been the revolving-door effect, meaning that individuals who are picked up for particular crimes, be they violent or gun-related, drug-related, mere theft, seemed to be able to get back on the street without too much restraint. There was, for example, recently in Etobicoke, reference to an individual who I believe I cannot name but who nevertheless actually had accumulated more than 200 criminal charges and yet was still able to post repeated and serial and never-ending bail to be back on the streets. Of course, the police officer with whom I was discussing this was a little bit despondent and a little bit disheart-

ened that if the police actually go and make the arrest, with proper accumulation of evidence to be brought forth in a trial, why is it that these types of individuals cannot be stopped? That's why we had, from the Attorney General, commitment to deal with this particular area.

I'm pleased to be able to share this resolution with other individuals from my caucus, particularly those who feel strongly about this issue, and they are MPPs Brad Duguid from Scarborough Centre, Kathleen Wynne from Don Valley West, Tony Wong from Markham, and Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti from Scarborough Southwest.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Dr. Martin Luther King, who spoke against violence and embodied some of the best traditions that we may learn from. He said, "Cowardice asks the question: Is it safe? Expediency asks the question: Is it politic? Vanity asks the question: Is it popular? But conscience asks the question: Is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic nor popular; but one must take it because it is right."

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I am very pleased to be able to take part in the debate this morning on this private member's bill. I want first of all to say that our caucus of course will be supporting this resolution. I do want to congratulate him and the members of his caucus who he has mentioned will be supporting this bill as well. I certainly hope this sends a strong message to your two justice ministries.

This has been one of the most horrifying years in the history of the province of Ontario, particularly in relation to the city of Toronto, in gun violence and gang violence. It appears that very little is being done as we speak. It appears that the government—of course, the member is a member of the government—has done very little. Mr. Kwinter is the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, whom we can refer to as the top cop in the province. It seems there has been very little action on this particular issue. I know that our own leader, from August 1 on—and that has nothing do with all the resolutions and all the press releases he had put out prior to that. Fourteen times since August 1, John Tory has called for action on illegal guns in the province of Ontario, and he's called for tougher sentences and input and leadership from our two justice ministries on this issue. What we've seen, really, is not a lot.

We're talking now about the parole board, and I know that Minister Kwinter says they're reviewing the parole board issue on whether or not to turn it over to the same people who allow their parolees to go to Wonderland. That's what came up the other day from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I know that Mr. Kwinter says he's got that particular file under review. What is disturbing is that we've learned in our caucus that existing members of the Ontario parole board have already been asked for interviews. The National Parole Board is interviewing them for positions.

We understand—and I hope this is wrong, to the members of the government—that in this particular issue, the legislation is prepared and the regulations are prepared,

so the government can actually introduce the bill this fall and have it passed in time for the end of the year, which would of course be March 31 of next year. That's how far we understand this file has gone, and yet the minister stands in the House day after day, saying, "No, we're reviewing it and no decisions have been made." I sure hope I'm wrong in the accusation I'm making here today, because I think it would be a terrible move to allow even more people onto streets under what we would call the soft-on-crime federal parole board. I think we've made that point a few times in this House, that in fact, of people who go before the National Parole Board, approximately 55% to 60% of those folks are released, whereas with the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board, less than 20% are released into the communities.

We on this side of the House think if there's one thing we can do to at least ease this burden, it's for all the members of the government side of the House to tell the Minister of Community Safety that this is the wrong decision and to lose that file and to bury it because we don't think that in any way it's a move that is tough on crime.

One thing that I did want to add to that while I'm talking about the parole board—and I could go on forever about the number of people the National Parole Board has released into their communities, but one thing that is really important is the cost of the parole board. A sitting member of the parole board today in the province of Ontario receives a per diem rate of \$135 to \$150 per day. A National Parole Board member receives \$600 a day, a little over four times the amount of money, to sit on the National Parole Board, and that's transferring a cost to taxpayers of approximately, we understand, a little under \$12 million. For the federal government to assume control of the provincial Parole and Earned Release Board, they need another \$12 million. It's only costing a little over \$2 million today to operate the provincial parole board and, as I said in the House yesterday, there is only one taxpayer, and I think it's important to say in this House that we have to respect all taxpayers.

We think that the oldest parole board in Canada, the Ontario parole board, has done a remarkable job. They have remarkable staff and they are not lenient in the way they allow people onto streets who have committed crimes. I'm asking the members of the government to please reconsider that decision. We don't want to see that bill brought before the House. We don't want to debate it, we want to leave the provincial parole board alone and let those folks do the good job they've been doing for many decades.

We talk about gun violence, and I don't know how many times we've sat in this House and the question's been raised, particularly by the Progressive Conservatives ministers in the past and the critics today, about how the federal government deals with harsh sentencing. Of course, we think the sentences aren't tough enough. We urge the government, Minister Kwinter and Minister Bryant to get together with the federal government immediately and have the feds draft some legislation that

allows them to be tougher on crime. We won't end up with a system like we have today where we've got this huge bureaucracy, a huge boondoggle with the federal gun registry, which has been a terrible disaster. Today duck hunters have to register their guns, but criminals don't register their guns. That seems to be a terrible move.

1120

Here we are today with all these shootings and I will be very curious to see, if they can find the people who have done the shootings and if they actually do find the guns, how many of those folks actually had registered guns. My guess is probably none. That's where the federal gun registry has let us down badly, at a huge cost. It has failed the citizens of Canada and it has failed the citizens of Ontario. We only have to look at the number of shootings that have occurred right here in the GTA this summer to understand how severe that has actually been. So we on this side of the House will be asking over and over again for tougher sentencing.

I am very pleased that the member opposite has had the courage to bring this bill forward as a private members' resolution. I'm not so sure how happy some of his colleagues would be about this, because we don't think the government has been very tough on crime and we don't think they've done a very good job in community safety. We understand that the justice ministries are trying to hack \$300 million out of their budgets. I don't know if this is a very good place to start. When a member comes forward with a bill that asks the government to be tough on crime, I don't know how the government can even think of slashing the budgets by anything at all, let alone a sum as astronomical as \$300 million.

It is important that all members of this House support this bill. I think what's even more important is that the government very quickly react to it. I think the resolution actually says that: "That in the opinion of this House, the government of the Ontario should urgently address the issue of violence, gang-related crime and the illegal use of firearms—as a matter of public safety and responsible government—by being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime." I think the key word there—and again, I congratulate the member for bringing it forward—is that it is an urgent matter.

I could read through a number of press releases from our leader since August 1: "John Tory Calls for Action on Illegal Guns—Urges stricter border controls, tougher sentences and more officers on the streets."

August 4: "John Tory Urges More Action to Battle Guns—Dalton McGuinty's words are not enough, we need real action and more police officers."

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): That's right.

Mr. Dunlop: Sorry, not one police officer has been hired; not one. Do you know what? You should have had 333 on the streets today. If you actually—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, just take your seat. I feel a little left out of the conversation, so if you would direct your remarks to the chair, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Dunlop: That is exactly the point. Their platform called for 1,000 new police officers over the term of the government. If we're lucky, we might have 500 in the final year of their term. But as of today, not one has been hired and we've got this gun violence occurring. So please don't stand there and show how little you know about community safety.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I shouldn't have to call more than once or twice that you come to order and we listen to the speaker. Member.

Mr. Dunlop: Well, the truth hurts, and that's what's bothering these people. They don't know anything at all about what's happening in community safety, other than what we've told them again today, that \$300 million has been slashed from it. If they think they're getting 1,000 cops, good luck, because it has not happened yet. As I said earlier, we should have had at least a third of those police officers on the streets today, and none are there today. We understand that some of them are in training. Maybe a few of them might have been allocated once the municipalities, at 70% of the cost, actually put the police officers into effect.

But I will go on and read some of the headlines from Mr. Tory's comments.

August 9: "Not Enough Action on Gun Violence: Tory—McGuinty dragging his feet on more police, tougher sentencing, effective youth strategy."

August 12: "McGuinty Promises More Officers Once Again—John Tory asks how can we trust the McGuinty Liberals this time to deliver?" That was the fourth time they announced it, that day.

August 15: "More Shootings=More Urgent Action Needed—Tory urges McGuinty Liberals to implement broader strategy to battle gun violence."

August 17: "McGuinty Liberals Still Don't Get it on Crime—John Tory calls on McGuinty to recognize urgency of problem and take action on gun violence."

August 17 again: "Tory Pushes for Tougher Sentencing—Tory calls on federal government to support tougher minimum sentences for gun crimes."

August 18: "More Support Needed to Fight Gun Violence—Tory calls on all levels of government to support work of police and community leaders."

August 23: "John Tory Supports Call for Gun Summit—McGuinty shouldn't have ignored call for summit on youth violence nine months ago."

September 1: "Where Have the Liberals Been this Summer?—33 gun murders: time for McGuinty Liberals to finally realize there's a problem."

September 8: "Tory Calls for Action Against Violent Crime—John Tory urges McGuinty to end his silence on crime, take action to make streets safer."

October 17: "McGuinty Must Stop Ignoring Gun Violence—Tory calls for action as shootings continue and McGuinty Liberals do virtually nothing."

Just Tuesday: "McGuinty Must Pay Attention to Crime File—Criminals getting day passes to Canada's Wonderland, parole board to get more power."

So you can imagine how shocked we are to actually see a motion coming from a member of the government calling for tougher sentencing and for the government to get tough on crime.

I commend the member for bringing it forward. Our party will be supporting this and we will certainly be supporting the government if they actually follow through on this. It looks like it's probably just an opportunity for a little bit of media on it, but we want to see real action on this file, not just motions and not just support of the party. We want to see the government coming forward and actually introducing something, showing us a plan and showing exactly what they're doing with the federal government and how they're communicating with the federal government so we can get tough on crime and avoid the ridiculous, unnecessary deaths that we've had across this province.

I thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to the debate and to the full support of everybody in this House for this bill and for the government to act on the resolution that's before you today.

Mr. Duguid: I want to begin by thanking and commending the member for Etobicoke North on something completely different, on the leadership he's shown in closely working with the Premier and the Minister of Citizenship in ensuring that Ontario's response to the recent earthquake in Pakistan was significant, substantial and meaningful. I want to thank him for that effort—fantastic work.

I also want to thank him for the leadership he's shown in his own community. It's very difficult when a community is going through these difficulties, these challenges, these shootings. I want to thank him for the leadership he's shown in his community in assisting the victims in his area in dealing with these very difficult issues.

Finally, I want to thank him for bringing this issue before us today. This is a very important issue, and I want you to know that, as the member for Scarborough Centre and as somebody who has been elected for over 10 years now, there is no issue more important to myself and my constituents than the issue of community safety and, in particular, youth crime and violence.

I have been immersed in this issue for over a decade. In fact, it's one of the passions that I think I brought to politics when I first got elected and one of the reasons I originally put my name on the ballot. If I was going to talk about my life's work so far in politics, this would certainly be the issue that I've probably done the most work in.

As a city of Scarborough councillor, I had the privilege and opportunity to found and chair the special committee on crime prevention of Scarborough. We put

together the strategy for the city of Scarborough back in the mid-1990s. I followed that up after the amalgamation by being the first chair, and the only chair during the time I served on Toronto city council, of the task force on community safety, where we put together a crime prevention strategy for the city of Toronto and a strategy for Mayor Lastman, at that time, to deal with youth crime and violence. I'm proud to say that they were strategies considered as models not only across Canada, but around the world. It's something I was very proud to have had the opportunity to work with a number of people on.

1130

Being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime is more than just a motto; it's an approach, a passion that the McGuinty government is bringing and implementing across the province. It's a balanced approach that recognizes that, while it's essential to do everything we possibly can to prevent our young people from choosing a life of crime or choosing to go in that wrong direction, it's just as essential that we move swiftly and strongly to bring strict enforcement against those who do fall through the cracks and who do choose that lifestyle.

This has been a tough summer, with 41 deaths caused by firearms and 61 homicides to date. It's probably the worst year on record in term of the firearm homicides in Toronto's history. What's required now is an all-out assault on crime as well as the causes of crime. Frankly, the hardened gang members, many of whom are involved in these particular homicides, may be considered beyond our help in terms of preventive efforts. The only way to deal with those gangs, frankly, is to bring them down. That's why the McGuinty government's efforts to bring forward 1,000 new police officers in areas that target things like guns and gangs is so important to our city and to our province.

There's no playing nice with these guys. For the most part, they're hardened criminals, they're organized gang members, and as I said, they must be brought down. That's why our investment in guns and gangs units is so important. That's why we have to look at enhancing those investments. I look in the future, as we move forward in trying to resolve some of these issues, to see enhancements in that area.

I'm pleased to see our Attorney General boldly calling on minimum sentences for crimes committed with a firearm. If you use a firearm for anything, if you have a handgun on you, obviously you have it on you for some kind of sinister reason. It's very important that there be a severe consequence for even having a handgun on you. I don't believe there's a need for handguns in Ontario, frankly, and I think we should be considering banning them altogether. You don't need a handgun to go hunting and you don't need a handgun to protect your farm from predators. Handguns really have no useful use in our society, and I think we should consider banning them.

You have to be tough on enforcement, but we've got to think of the next generation as well, the next generation of young people growing up through that cycle of

poverty and of teenage pregnancies occurring at an alarming rate. We've got to think of those young people coming up through the next generation. That's why it's so important that we focus as well on the preventive side, on preventing teenage pregnancies; providing young single mothers with the help they need to help them and their children break through the cycle of violence and poverty; intervention at preschool and intervention during the early years in school; recreation programs for young people, but not just fighting with a basketball on a court, but with the outreach component that's so important to go with it, so we can intervene with those young people before it's too late; a pre-charge diversion program, something we've had some good success with to date, but we need to invest in further; and post-charge diversion.

These are the kinds of things we also have to concentrate on. It has to be a two-pronged approach if it's to be successful. If you have one without the other, we're bound to fail. This government is committed to a balanced approach. We will be successful. We will tackle these issues.

That's all I have to say for the moment, but I thank the member for bringing this very important issue to the floor. It's an extremely important issue for all of us here in this province. Let's get on with it.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this resolution before us today, and I congratulate the member for bringing it forward. It's very important, although it's brief and it's a private member's bill, that we are having this discussion this morning.

I think we would all agree that something has gone terribly wrong. We have to acknowledge that, stop wringing our hands and agonizing, and do something about it. There are all kinds of people from the communities who are telling us what to do and organizations telling us what to do, there are recommendations galore telling us the things we need to do as governments to make the changes, both on the security side, the criminal justice side, and on the community infrastructure side. The blueprint is there: We just have to take action.

I want to say that although my community of Toronto-Danforth is not one of those, fortunately, where there has been a lot of gang violence and shootings, although there has been some, and I want to at this point acknowledge a young man who was shot a few years ago in my community named Kempton Howard. Remember Kempton? He was killed close to Christmas. He was shot just outside his door in his apartment building in the Riverdale area. He was a pillar in the community. He was known as a youth leader, a role model.

I became friends with his mother, Joan Howard, who is an incredible woman, who's strong. She's continuing to deal with the aftermath of the shooting and raise her other son without his brother. They're just now, several years later, in pre-trial, where she's now facing the young men who are accused of murdering her son. I certainly want to pay tribute to her, Joan Howard, and all of those

mothers, fathers and relatives who have had to deal with the aftermath of mostly their sons' deaths, though sometimes young women have been caught in the crossfire as well, and tell them that this is an issue that we all want to do something about and work with them on.

I attended a press conference here recently by a coalition of people from various black organizations who gave a powerful press conference and told us that they view this as a crisis in their community, and they want action and told us what to do. I recently attended the report by the Toronto Community Foundation. As you know, they conduct an annual check-up on Toronto and they publish it in their Vital Signs report. I attended this year's report last Friday, and its findings spoke to this summer's headlines. It found that while the city's overall crime rate continues to decline, the number of people between the ages of 18 and 24 who are perpetrators of violent crime was on the rise.

The authors urge readers, particularly decision-makers, to look beyond the headlines and address what factors were happening to cause this disturbing trend. They talked about factors—and again, this is not new to us—like more youth living in poverty. Young people have been particularly impacted by the increased prevalence of poverty in Toronto over the past two decades. There has been a 100% increase—100%—in the number of children living in high-poverty neighbourhoods, and a 60% increase in the number of youth living in higher-poverty neighbourhoods. The scarcity of programs and services that give opportunities to these youths to increase their prospects, break the cycle of poverty and reduce their risk to be drawn to street life—this scarcity is both a product of funding cuts made under the previous Tory government and the changing location of poverty.

Not only has there been a dramatic increase in the number of poor neighbourhoods in Toronto, but they have moved to the inner suburbs like Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke. Historically, social services and community centres offering resources and recreation have not been concentrated in those areas. It has been pointed out by the United Way report recently, *Poverty by Postal Code*, that there is this real and serious issue in these outlying suburbs. They do not have the services that we have in downtown Toronto.

Many parents and youth have expressed anxiety over the lack of facilities and programs for youth. During community consultations in these areas—and I want to tell you that although it hasn't been in the media, it's been happening quietly. I'm sure many of us are doing it. Howard Hampton has been meeting with many youth groups across our communities, and I have joined him in some of the tours and some of the meetings. We met just the other night with some Tamil youth in the Scarborough area who talked about what's happening to them and their friends in their schools and communities. We're hearing from youth, in every location we meet with them, the same stories over and over again. There is a pattern here and that's what we're speaking about today.

1140

They talk about the lack of constructive learning, recreational activities and employment opportunities. Those were their main concerns, coupled with the fear of getting caught up in growing gang violence. The Toronto Community Foundation has, in successive reports, been calling for reinvestment in youth programming and community spaces that they feel are their own. The same recommendation has been made by the city in its community safety plan and by organizations like the United Way of Greater Toronto.

I want to underscore here that youth programs cannot exclude those who are already in the cycle of violence. There's a really dangerous trend taking place in funding social services that is seeing government withdraw from funding programs to help people who are facing multiple barriers; simply put, the hard cases. Programs for gang intervention and exit programs cannot be left as concepts on paper. They need to be implemented.

We heard from youth in schools that the Safe Schools Act is a disaster. We heard it over and over again. It means throwing out some of those hard cases and sometimes not-so-hard cases who get caught up in the Safe Schools Act. They're thrown out on to the street. It's causing all kinds of domestic problems in their homes. They're not getting an education. They can't get a job. There's nowhere else for them to turn. It is not the way to deal with young people who are having to make difficult choices in their lives, who may be having problems at home. The interventions in the schools are no longer there. The social workers and the guidance counsellors thrown out by the previous government: We need to put those services back. That's what these kids are telling us.

I know some people might dismiss what I've mentioned in terms of dealing with some of these so-called hard cases as a big hug, and that that's not the way to deal with it, that it won't deliver and won't reverse the trend.

I want to read a testimonial from someone who has been there, and I don't know if I'll pronounce his name right because I don't know him personally. Kardinal Offishal is one of the country's best musicians. In an interview he gave this summer, he weighed in on this debate about what is needed to stop the violence, and here's the quote:

"There's a lot of lost kids on the streets right now—that's the real issue.

"They need guidance and something to do that will keep them out of trouble."

Offishal learned first-hand how beneficial government-backed social programs can be back in 1993 when he participated in the Toronto Arts Council's Fresh Arts program, part of the NDP government's Jobs Ontario Youth, called the JOY initiative. He goes on to say:

"In the aftermath of all the kids rampaging downtown, following the Rodney King verdict in '93, the Bob Rae government stepped in with some funding for youth-oriented programs like Fresh Arts. That's really how"—he mentions—"Saukrates, Jully Black, Baby Blue Sound-

crew and I got our start. It gave us something useful to do.

“We were able to go into radio stations and recording studios and see how engineers and producers worked behind the scenes. Many of us had never been inside a studio before, let alone recorded a song in one. Through that program we also got to promote our own events, from making the flyers to doing radio promotion, everything. I can’t begin to put a dollar value on what I learned.”

That’s a testimonial from somebody who felt his life going the other way and a government program specifically for youth was able to help him and many others, not only not to go down that road but to lead to very successful recording careers.

To respond to crime as it happens, we need the resources there in place. That’s become increasingly clear time after time.

I should say as well that I was very pleased to hear John Tory, now the leader of the official opposition, when he went out on a tour after a whole array of shootings over one weekend. I was very pleased to hear him say to the media—I’m sure not everybody in his caucus supported him on that—that we needed to put some of those programs back, the programs that they took away. And we do need to put them back. The Liberal government needs to make it a priority to put them back, because they’re not back yet. I know it takes time. When Mike Harris took away all these programs and cut the funding out of the education system and programs for kids to finance a tax cut for the wealthy, we said that once you tear down these things that took our parents generations to build up—these safety nets and social programs—it takes time to put them back in. We have to get our priorities straight here and we have to put these programs back in. We have to make sure there are enough social workers and guidance counsellors in the schools and these kinds of youth programs to help not only the kids who are not in trouble, the good kids, but the kids who are going down that road.

In my few minutes left, I want to talk about the need for more police officers on our streets. On this one, I have to agree with what the Conservatives said. I’m glad the member is going to be an advocate within his own government on this, because I’ve heard the announcement and the reannouncement of the reannouncement of the reannouncement of the 1,000 new officers over the past couple of years. I went a few months ago to the last reannouncement of the 1,000 new officers. Not one of those officers has been hired. I hear that apparently they are in training, but they are not on the street yet. Originally, they were supposed to be community-based officers who would be visible and become part of the community, and that is no longer the case. That’s where we really need these officers to be.

I also want to say very strongly to the member, and I’m sure he would agree with me on this, that the cost-sharing arrangement in order for municipalities to hire these police officers puts cash-starved municipalities in a

position to make it, if not impossible, almost impossible—and for some, impossible—to hire. The province is approving only a third of the cost, but they’re not uploading any of the other services.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Public health.

Ms. Churley: You know what? You talk to the municipalities about that. I know the government wants to defend its actions. I know that; I understand that. But I’m saying here today that municipalities cannot afford to hire these police officers. I know it’s a sore point with the government. We have a resolution before us today that’s forcing us to look at all these issues in an honest way, because if we don’t, we’re not going to be able to stop this. So let’s admit that there is a problem with the announcement of getting 1,000 new cops on the street. You need to look at that, because it’s not going to work the way it’s framed now, and municipalities are telling us that.

I welcome the resolution before us today and, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, we have the answers before us. We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we just need to read the reports of the Toronto Community Foundation, the United Way, the city of Toronto and all of the groups out there from the communities that are working hard and have recommendations and are telling us exactly what we need to do. If we do it, if we follow up and do what they’re telling us to do, we can put an end to this youth violence.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I’m very happy to rise to support this motion. It’s interesting for me today. I’ve spoken about issues of agriculture and I’m moving into a very urban issue, but I think in the same way that issues for our farmers affect all of us, these issues in our urban centres, particularly in Toronto, affect the whole province, and we have to work together.

I want to talk about two aspects of this that are close to my heart. The member for Etobicoke North in his motion points to immediate remedies that are needed and longer-term remedies that are needed. The issues of community mobilization and public education are the two things that I think we need to talk about and focus on.

Community mobilization has to do with individuals in communities taking responsibility and taking action, and working with our police officers. In the same way that the government can’t do everything—and there are certainly government programs, and I’ll talk about those in a second vis-à-vis education—police officers can’t do everything, and have to be able to work with communities that are willing. I know that the communities in Toronto are willing to work with police officers to change the culture, but there’s work to be done there.

1150

In the riding that I represent, there has been violence over the summer, and I’m very concerned about the community reaction. Jane Jacobs, the urban thinker, talks about “eyes on the street” and the need for communities to be paying attention to what’s going on around them and to be willing to talk about what’s going on around them, with each other and with the authorities. Last night

I was at a town hall at 53 division, and the programs the police officers were talking about at that event—police officers like Heinz Kuck and Peter Henry, people who get to know the community and the young people so that when they're in uniform, the young people know who they are when they're walking in their communities. I think that those community mobilization initiatives are extremely important.

This Sunday at Yonge-Dundas Square, from 3:00 to 6:00, the United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere are going to have a rally. It's not insignificant that those kinds of city-wide events are starting to happen. But at the same time, at the local level, Chief Bill Blair will tell us that it's extremely important that community members talk to each other, that we as MPPs, and working with our city councillors, pull together community leaders and talk about what the gaps are and where the community can come together to help itself and to work with the authorities.

Public education I think is an absolutely prime mover in terms of creating a safe community. Some of the things we're doing in this government—the community use of schools, opening up the doors of the schools that have been shut tight over the last eight or 10 years when the previous government was in place—those schools are the public spaces where people can gather, and they can create their own links and provide opportunities for their youth to take part. That is an absolutely critical piece, and I certainly am a voice in my caucus to push for more of that, as much as we can do in terms of creating those community hubs—that and Learning to 18, keeping kids in school and giving them hope. Those are the kinds of long-term things, along with the more immediate community mobilization that we are moving on and that we have to do more of.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I am also happy to speak in support of this motion. First of all, I want to thank my colleague the member from Etobicoke North for putting this forward.

I want to start by saying that as a former member of the York Regional Police services board, I certainly understand the complexity of gang-related crimes and violence. Unfortunately, in my own riding of Markham and throughout York region there have been a number of events related to violence and gang-related crime in the last couple of the years, so there's no question in my mind that no one community has a monopoly over this subject matter.

I want to say that this does not, in my mind, reflect in any negative way on the police services undertaken by York Regional Police. In fact, I know these folks well. Under the leadership of Chief Armand LaBarge, we have Inspector Rouse of district number 5, which oversees the police services in my riding, also Superintendent Kalinsky and former Inspector Eric Jolliffe. These, in my mind, are certainly the most fine and dedicated professionals, but they need help. They've actually done a number of programs in respect of community policing, including the VIP program in elementary schools, the

street beat program, as well as Neighbourhood Watch. These are effective but this is not enough.

I want to maybe speak to the aspect of being tough on the causes of crime. I think it's equally important for us to be as tough with crime as we should be tough with causes of crime.

My colleagues from Scarborough Centre and Toronto-Danforth have alluded to the issue of poverty. Yes, definitely they are closely related, but it's much more than that. It's also education, health and many other aspects. That's why I think it's important for us to take a comprehensive approach to tie various causes into our strategy.

There's been extensive research with respect to the funds that a government spends on prevention of crime as opposed to incarceration and rehabilitation. The research basically shows that it's a 1 to 3 ratio, meaning that every dollar we do not spend on prevention will lead to an expenditure of more than \$3 subsequently. But it's not just a matter of money. I think it's a matter of trying to be responsible, to help our youth, to help our residents to lead a good life and to be able to enjoy the quality of life they deserve. We have said, as a government, a number of times that diversity is our strength, but with that also comes responsibility that we must deal with and take on.

I want to speak to one aspect of organized crime and again related crime, and that is on some of the new immigrant youth. It is one thing for us to say, "Gee, now we have Russian gangs, Sri Lankan gangs, Chinese gangs," and so on, but a lot of these youth did not come into this country, day one, as a member of organized crime. It is basically because the system has failed them. I think we must address the roots of the problem. In respect of that, we should really deal with issues of education, health, poverty, as well as settlement.

That is why our government has been so strong in chasing after the federal government to be fair to us on the \$23-billion deficit. In order for us to help immigrants to help their children, we need the resources. It is unfair for Ontario residents and their children to be without the funding they're entitled to.

It really is important for us to deal with the roots, especially for the youth, so that they do not become prey of organized crime as of day one. They become prey after they have not received the support and services of our government and the federal government.

That is why I believe that this motion will actually highlight some issues related to causes of crime, and we should deal with them as effectively and expeditiously as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Etobicoke North, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Qaadri: First of all I'd like to welcome, honour and appreciate the remarks made by my colleagues in this Legislature: the MPPs from Simcoe North, Toronto-Danforth, Scarborough Centre, Don Valley West and Markham.

In reply specifically to the MPP from Simcoe North: There is much more than just media on this file; there's

blood on this file. The issue of public safety and violence is urgent, important, imminent, pressing, and also, to borrow some medical terminology, life-threatening.

As I've mentioned previously in this chamber, I had the unfortunate duty of attending three funerals this past summer of young individuals, young men who were gunned down in the prime of life. Just as a case in point, the sum of their ages was 63.

That's why we as a government must move forward on a multi-pronged effort to be both tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, whether we're dealing with the flow of firearms, more specific measures to deal with gang-related offences, invoking the powers of the Attorney General regarding sentencing and empowering the criminal justice system, whether we're forcing the medical and health communities to do mandatory gunshot reporting, and of course engaging our federal colleagues.

But at the same time, with the punishment aspect we must also upgrade and elevate society and move toward the Trudeauesque just society, whether it's engaging youth and creating programs for community activities, sports or, ultimately, as my colleague from Don Valley West said, education, because that truly is the holistic cure for a prosperous and non-violent society.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all members. The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

FOODLAND ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Wynne has moved private member's notice of motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members for a vote on this after we have dealt with ballot item number 2.

CRIME PREVENTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Qaadri has moved private member's notice of motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members on this as well. I remind the members that this is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

FOODLAND ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Wynne has moved private members' notice of motion number 1. All those in favour will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Prue, Michael
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Brownell, Jim	Kormos, Peter	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Chudleigh, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Van Bommel, Maria
Churley, Marilyn	Leal, Jeff	Wilkinson, John
Colle, Mike	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Oraziotti, David	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 37; the nays are zero.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion passed.

The doors will be unlocked for 30 seconds before we take the next vote.

CRIME PREVENTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Qaadri has moved private members' notice of motion number 2. All those in favour will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Prue, Michael
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Brownell, Jim	Kormos, Peter	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Chudleigh, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Van Bommel, Maria
Churley, Marilyn	Leal, Jeff	Wilkinson, John
Colle, Mike	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Oraziotti, David	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 37; the nays are zero.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion passed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been dealt with, I do leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise in the Legislature to bring greetings about Waste Reduction Week in Canada. It's intended to raise public awareness about the waste we produce and its environmental and social costs. Today, the Recycling Council of Ontario hosts their Waste Minimization Awards to recognize those contributing to a cleaner environment. The previous government's Waste Diversion Act is vital to the promotion of recycling, reducing and reusing waste.

Ontario's recycling effort is focused on the blue box program. However, the Coalition for an Efficient and Rational Blue Box has questioned this government about the blue box system and has not received a response since they published their report in August.

Ontario households generate approximately 4.1 million tonnes of waste per year; 35% of this is dry recyclables like plastic, paper, glass and metal. In order for the government to reach its 60% waste diversion target, the blue box system must be improved. Recovery rates for materials are far below what many Ontarians would expect. Newspapers fare well—they have a 75% recovery rate—but only 41% of aluminum cans are recovered and plastics are only recovered 16% of the time.

Ontarians are seriously disappointed to learn that materials they put in their blue boxes are ending up in landfills. There is no indication of this government improving the blue box program or making it more financially viable for rural and northern communities. This is just another example of this government's waste management strategy that is far from amazing. It is nothing more than smoke and mirrors and avoids facing the problem of responsible waste management.

SUPPORT FOR SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): The countries of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India are far from Ontario, yet the great tragedy that has occurred there and the response it has generated here make our communities seem much closer together. There are those of us directly affected, like Riaz Ahmed from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, who was fortunate to confirm that his extended family members were lucky survivors. There are also the extended communities, and when I say this, I mean not only those Ontarians who can trace their family history back to South Asia but their friends, neighbours and colleagues as well.

Ontario is not a collection of isolated ethnic groups, language groups or religions. We are, all of us, part of one community. What affects one of us affects us all, so when tragedy strikes one of us, we all respond.

It gives me great pride to see this province coming together to support our South Asian community. On October 10, Premier McGuinty announced an immediate donation of \$1 million on behalf of the people of Ontario to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Mike Colle, has demonstrated much leadership on this file, and I know he has been working diligently with my colleague Dr. Sheela Basrur to establish an earthquake response team.

Most impressive, however, has been the response from the citizens of this great province. I have been overwhelmed with the support my community has shown, and

this has been reciprocated across the province. This is what Ontario stands for. This is what we are all about.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Ontarians know the McGuinty Liberal government was elected on the basis of critically important promises that they have consistently failed to keep. One of these broken promises is in the nursing home sector. I'd like to read a motion recently passed by the board at Sherwood Park Manor, an outstanding nursing home in my riding.

"Whereas the Liberal Party promised during the 2003 election campaign to increase funding to long-term-care homes by \$6,000 per resident per annum; and

"Whereas funding for direct care and services to residents was increased in 2004 by \$3.49, along with an increase of 75 cents for 2005, with the expectation that homes increase the level of staffing; and

"Whereas funding for direct care and services to residents was increased in 2005 by \$1, an increase which falls short of inflationary costs for long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas these combined increases represent less than a third of the government's \$6,000 promise; and

"Whereas significant investment is needed now to meet the significant needs of residents;

"Therefore, be it resolved that this board urges the government to increase the per diem to residents of long-term-care homes in the fiscal year 2006-07 by \$4,083.75 per resident, thereby fulfilling its election promise."

I implore the government to heed that request and keep its promise to the nursing home sector. To do otherwise is a betrayal of the frail and elderly residents of these homes.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Since coming to office, our government has moved aggressively to improve Ontario's transportation systems. These improvements are being realized in Willowdale. Just last month, Minister Takhar came personally to my riding of Willowdale to announce improvements to the Highway 401 and Yonge Street interchange, a difficult and congested exchange for many years.

Our government has also invested \$1.2 billion in our highway system. We have improved road safety. We have developed a construction strategy. This fall, our government will increase investment in the 105 municipalities that have public transit to 1.5% of the provincial gas tax, totalling \$214 million.

The residents in my riding understand our government's strong commitment to transit systems like the TTC. They understand this also represents our commitment to a strong city of Toronto. It means that my constituents in Willowdale, and indeed in the GTA, can rest assured that our government is providing the TTC with the investments that it needs to service this area.

When we came to office, we promised to create a new deal for municipalities. We are keeping that commitment. This investment demonstrates not only our commitment to municipalities, but it sends a clear message to the rest of Ontario. We are committed to public transport that people can depend upon. I'm proud to be a member of a government launching this initiative.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): Grey-Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor, and serves almost 20,000 residents from the communities of Markdale, Flesherton, Dundalk and the surrounding rural areas. The hospital serves a vital role in response to motor vehicle accidents and also responds to the seasonal needs of the area's dynamic skiing community. For the residents of Grey Highlands, the hospital offers 21 beds for in-patient care, an obstetrical service, general surgery and plastic surgery, and employs 89 staff members.

These services are provided in a building that is functionally obsolete. Parts of this hospital are over 50 years old and, without major repairs, the facility may only last two to three years more. Four accreditation surveys have recommended its replacement. Patient safety, patient confidentiality, operational efficiency and care delivery constraints are driving the need to rebuild this hospital.

A new structure is planned for the Grey Gables site. The Centre Grey General Hospital Foundation is leading the redevelopment campaign to replace the current hospital with a building that is efficient, will meet the current and future needs of the community and will serve to retain health professionals in the community. So far, the local campaign, led by Dr. Hamilton Hall, has raised \$13.1 million, well over their \$12-million target.

I want to thank Ministers Smitherman and Caplan for agreeing to meet with me and Bill Murdoch and the hospitals officials in the near future to discuss rebuilding the hospital. Today, I'm calling upon the Liberal government to do the right thing, the fair thing, and help us to rebuild our hospital—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

EDUCATION

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to discuss one of our government's great successes: the improvement of education in this province. As was noted in the throne speech last week, "The brains and know-how of a highly skilled workforce are the economic edge of the 21st century." We recognize that when we strengthen the education and skills of our people, we strengthen Ontario's economic advantage.

That is why I was thrilled to be asked by Mrs. MaryLou Smith from my riding to participate in a special educational module for 34 gifted students from the

Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board. These students have travelled to Toronto and are studying the media in our society. They come from Mother St. Bride, Our Lady of Sorrows, Corpus Christi, St. Hubert, St. Alexander, John XIII, St. Francis, Our Lady of Fatima, St. Theresa's and St. Joseph's. Today, they are visiting the CHUMCity station and have joined us here at Queen's Park.

I would like to thank Richard Brennan of the Toronto Star for taking the time to provide these students with some great insights into the media here at Queen's Park. I also want to thank Joe in the media studio for making it all possible for us.

It is programs like these that engage our young people and ensure that all of our students are meeting their potential. Congratulations to Mrs. Smith and her fellow teachers and the 14 supervisors who have brought this initiative here to Queen's Park. Best of luck to our 34 students, and a big "Thank you" to the Badger for his participation. A warning to you, Mr. Badger, and your colleagues in the press gallery: Take a good look in the public gallery today. You may be seeing the future.

1340

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): The people of Huron–Bruce were extremely pleased to hear that the provincial government and Bruce Power have reached an agreement to produce over 1,500 megawatts of electricity capacity. The refurbishment of Bruce A units 1 and 2 is expected to create 1,500 construction jobs. The people who work and live in the area have been anxiously awaiting this announcement, and I am proud to say that the McGuinty government has delivered.

The firm support from investors in Bruce Power, such as TransCanada Corp., the Ontario municipal employees retirement board, Power Workers' Union and the Society of Energy Professionals shows their confidence in the future of this energy source. This project will provide jobs not only in Huron and Bruce counties but throughout Ontario. Suppliers for this project will come from various cities across the province, such as Mississauga, Pickering, Oakville, Niagara Falls and Cambridge.

This announcement demonstrates once again that this government is committed to meeting Ontario's electricity needs, including a reliable supply mix of energy. If you drive down Highway 21 from Bruce Power, new wind turbines are being erected in Huron county. Further south in Middlesex county, new technology: anaerobic digestion.

I am pleased to be a part of a government that is committed to providing a sufficient supply—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): On sait qu'aujourd'hui il y a une conférence de presse ici à

Queen's Park avec les représentants des syndicats qui représentent bien proche de 100 000 travailleurs à travers cette province dans l'industrie forestière.

On sait que non seulement les travailleurs mais aussi les communautés, et je dirais l'industrie elle-même, sont franchement fâchés contre ce gouvernement pour ne pas avoir répliqué au désastre qu'on trouve présentement dans l'industrie forestière—pas seulement au nord de l'Ontario mais à travers cette province.

On sait, par exemple, que l'industrie forestière représente, pour les gouvernements fédéral, provincial et municipaux, près de 1 \$ milliard de taxes qu'on collecte de cette industrie directement à cause de ses activités.

On sait qu'il y a environ 275 000 travailleurs dans cette province qui sont employés directement ou indirectement dans cette industrie, et on sait que ce gouvernement, jusqu'à cette date, n'a pas répliqué aux problèmes de l'industrie. Franchement, ils ont laissé tomber cette industrie-là et ils n'ont pas répondu à ses besoins. On se demande, dans l'industrie, pour quelle raison. Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement décide que c'est important de répliquer aux difficultés de l'industrie automobile et des autres, mais qu'il n'est pas préparé à répliquer aux problèmes qu'on a dans l'industrie forestière?

Cet après-midi, on va avoir un débat sur une motion d'opposition de notre leader, M. Hampton, du parti néo-démocratique. Je demande aux membres du gouvernement de payer attention et de faire quelque chose pour aider—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Merci. Thank you.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): When we passed our greenbelt and Places to Grow legislation, we made the commitment to stop urban sprawl and encourage growth in regions other than the GTA. In my riding of Brant, we are experiencing first-hand the significant positive changes that the greenbelt legislation and the Places to Grow legislation is offering the residents of Ontario, particularly the constituents of my riding. Thank you to Ministers Caplan and Gerretsen for their leadership on this file.

We are in a great location to move goods and people all around southern Ontario. As Walter Gretzky put it, "Brantford is the centre of the universe."

The construction of the Ferrero manufacturing plant is close to completion, which will create up to 800 jobs in the first phase alone, further strengthening my region's economy. On October 8, municipal politicians from Brant and Brantford, accompanied by a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, travelled to Italy to speak with Ferrero's head office about further expansion and to find new investment opportunities for the region that they have shown an interest in.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Minister Takhar for his leadership in facilitating industrial growth in Brant by expanding the Oak Park interchange. This

will allow developers, businesses and industries to expand into Brantford and take full advantage of our location, access to post-secondary education and highly skilled and motivated workforce.

I don't know that there's anyone in this House who would disagree with the father of the Great One that Brantford really is the centre of the universe. I appreciate this opportunity.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would like to draw members' attention to the members' west gallery and introduce a friend and colleague, Larry O'Connor, who represented the riding of Durham-York in the 35th Parliament.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the visitors' gallery today are some of the brightest young people you are ever going to meet. They are students, faculty and family from École élémentaire Nouvel Horizon in Welland.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm very pleased today that we have a chapter of the Red Hat Society, a group that represents ladies from across the country and the world, and these are the Red Hot Mamma's on Georgian Bay. Please give them a warm round of applause.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask members to help me welcome to the Legislature today Councillor Bill Boston and his wife Elizabeth—Bill is on council in Adjala-Tosorontio—and their friends and my friends Patrick Oliver and Philomena Oliver.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: On a point of order. It's Thursday.

Mr. Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. With your indulgence, I would invite the House to recognize the South Asian Rexdale Sikh seniors who join us in the gallery above.

The Speaker: Welcome to everyone.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I rise in the House today to update members on the issue of extending daylight saving time in this province.

This past summer, the United States government passed a law in an energy bill that, among other things, extends daylight saving time by four weeks starting in March 2007. Because of this decision and because of Ontario's extensive and inextricable links with the United States, Ontario had to decide if we, too, should make such a move.

I want to make it clear that Ontario does not automatically move in lockstep with the United States on this or any other issue. The test is always what is best for Ontario.

To that end, back in July, we created an interministerial committee led by my esteemed parliamentary assistant, the member for Willowdale, David Zimmer. He led the group's investigation into the potential impact that extending daylight saving time could have on Ontario. Over the past three months, Mr. Zimmer and his committee have consulted with all levels of government on the matter. They have also met with and heard from the concerns of a broad range of stakeholders representing a number of sectors, including education, energy, agriculture, finance and capital markets, trade and manufacturing, industry, public safety and transportation. They did a lot of work and they did a great job.

The results of the consultations were overwhelmingly supportive of taking action to ensure that Ontario's daylight saving time regime remains synchronized with that of the United States. Representatives from finance and capital markets, trade, manufacturing and industry unanimously urged us to harmonize daylight saving with the US. In fact, they told us that any misalignment could have a very real and negative impact, namely trade disruption, as well as cost, coordination, delivery system, supply chain and border pressures.

1350

Coordinating daylight saving time with the US makes good economic sense. However, our government also examined what this could mean for individual Ontarians. For example, we heard from parents and educators, many of whom told us that they applaud the extension of daylight saving time as it will mean extended daylight into the late afternoon. They believe this could present an opportunity to better promote outdoor activity and exercise for Ontario's young and not young.

We also heard from the Canada Safety Council, which supports the move, saying that that extra hour of daylight in the afternoon could reduce pedestrian injuries and fatalities. Transport Canada research shows there are more pedestrian injuries and fatalities in the latter part of the afternoon—4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in particular—in the fall and winter as the days get shorter. An extra hour of daylight could present real safety advantages.

For a whole host of reasons, then, we are acting in the best interests of Ontario. So beginning in 2007, in Ontario, daylight saving time will start on the second Sunday in March and end on the first Sunday in November.

Thank you to Willowdale MPP David Zimmer for leading a comprehensive effort to ensure that we were, in fact, acting in the best interests of Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Zimmer, for that.

Making this change will allow us to maintain Ontario's competitive advantage by coordinating its time changes with its major trading partner, as well as improving day-to-day life for the people of this province.

Just to be clear, this has no effect on the upcoming return to eastern standard time on October 30, but come

March 2007, the daylight saving calendar will change and remain the same as our American neighbours.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I would like to take this opportunity first to acknowledge the South Asian Seniors' Club of Rexdale. They are here today and I want to welcome them.

I rise in the House today to talk about something that I consider to be of great importance, and that is the safety of our children, especially the safety of our children when they are on a school bus. This is School Bus Safety Week, and we are joined by Rick Donaldson from the Ontario School Bus Association, as well as Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League. Rick and Brian know first-hand why this week is so vital, and we are happy to join with them to bring awareness of this issue. I want to acknowledge the great work that both of these organizations have done to promote the safety of our children and to thank them for their efforts.

I am proud to report that school buses in Ontario are safer than ever before. Our government is doing everything we can to stop drivers from putting children's lives in danger by illegally passing stopped school buses. If a school bus is stopped and the red lights are flashing, drivers must stop. It is the law in Ontario now.

Some 800,000 children in Ontario ride a bus to and from school every day. About 17,000 school buses are used in the province. Drivers across Ontario need to know that they are putting children's lives at risk if they illegally pass a school bus, and they will not get away with it. As of September 1, owners of vehicles that illegally pass a stopped school bus can be charged, no matter who is behind the wheel at the time.

One of my first acts as transportation minister was to introduce Bill 73, making owners liable when their vehicle illegally passes a stopped school bus. This legislation was passed by the Legislature last year. The provisions in this bill will go a long way to promote the safety of our children.

Signs are required on the back of every bus in Ontario, warning drivers of the maximum \$2,000 fine for illegally passing a stopped school bus.

I want to talk a little bit about the safety features that we are introducing on new school buses. Every school bus has a safety arm to keep kids from walking in front of the bus where the drivers can't see them, more emergency exit windows and better mirrors to improve the driver's line of sight. All of these new features have been added to all buses manufactured since January 1 this year.

I'm also pleased to report that we are distributing a new reporting form for school bus drivers. If you see a vehicle illegally passing a stopped school bus, now you can report it.

A survey by Transport Canada suggests that one third of school bus drivers across this country see a vehicle

illegally pass a stopped school bus at least once a day. That is unacceptable.

I am sure all members will want to join me in urging drivers to take care and obey the rules of the road, and the rules are simple: Don't pass a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing.

Keeping kids safe when they're travelling to and from school is important to parents, and it's important to our government.

HYDRO REBATES

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I rise today to provide members with details of a one-time credit that Ontario's electricity consumers can expect to see on an upcoming electricity bill. To be clear, every single penny that consumers overpaid last year is being returned to them—period. The typical family in a detached home can expect a credit of approximately \$60 before the end of the year.

This government is committed to providing Ontarians with a responsible plan for electricity pricing that is consistent with the true cost of generating electricity. Our government is the first to put electricity pricing back on a responsible and sustainable footing, and this credit is part of that commitment.

Unlike previous governments, we've taken the politics out of electricity pricing and we are ensuring that prices are fair, competitive, stable and predictable. As a result, we are building an electricity system that is both affordable and sustainable.

Due to the moderate weather in 2004, the actual cost of power was lower than the cost paid by consumers, and I'm pleased to say that we are returning the surplus to the ratepayers of Ontario.

Bill 4, passed by this Legislature in 2003, is one of the first pieces of legislation passed by this government. It set the interim electricity price for 2004 at 4.7 cents for the first 750 kilowatt hours used and 5.5 cents for anything over this amount, based on predicted supply and demand under normal weather conditions. In order to protect electricity ratepayers, Bill 4 legislated that any deficit incurred would not be passed on to ratepayers. Likewise, any surplus would be returned in full to Ontario consumers.

Bill 4 was introduced to act as a bridge mechanism while the regulated price plan was being developed. I'm pleased to say that the \$495 million that was paid by consumers, covered by the regulated price plan, is being returned to them. As soon as we found the final amount owed to the Ontario consumers, we paid it—every penny. The credit will be provided to all residential and small business electricity consumers, schools, hospitals and others covered by the government's regulated price plan, and credits will appear on bills before the end of the year in most cases.

1400

As I said earlier, we took the politics out of electricity pricing by restoring the independence of the Ontario

Energy Board. Going forward, the approach this government has put in place will ensure that prices to consumers are fair, competitive, stable and predictable.

With this announcement today, we've kept our commitment to Ontario electricity consumers that we would return any money they paid when we began our transition to a pricing structure based on the actual cost of providing power. The energy pricing approach this government has put in place is fair for consumers and is just one of the steps this government is taking to ensure that our electricity system is sustainable.

Through such measures as the establishment of the conservation bureau, and the smart metering and conservation legislation I look forward to introducing shortly, we are giving consumers the tools they need to best manage their own electricity uses and costs. At the same time, these tools will help Ontario reach our overall conservation goal, help reduce electricity costs for everyone, and ensure our electricity system is manageable and sustainable long into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I'd like to respond to the statement by the new George Bush adherent, the Attorney General, on daylight saving time.

The timing of this statement is somewhat curious, since the Attorney General expresses concern about people misunderstanding the intent that it may go into effect this year. One has to ask, why did they not delay the announcement until we were into standard time? Be that as it may, he also referenced consultations conducted by his parliamentary assistant and mentioned the Ministry of Agriculture.

I have to say that if there is a major concern in the province of Ontario, it is in rural Ontario. That is a concern to families who have to send their kids out in the pitch dark to wait for a school bus. I would have had a greater level of comfort with respect to the minister's announcement if he had indicated extensive consultations with communities in this province that do have very significant and real concerns about this change.

I want to read into the record something written by Robertson Davies in 1947:

"I don't really care how time is reckoned so long as there is some agreement about it, but I object to being told that I am saving daylight when my reason tells me that I am doing nothing of the kind. I even object to the implication that I am wasting something valuable if I stay in bed after the sun has risen. As an admirer of moonlight I resent the bossy insistence of those who want to reduce my time for enjoying it. At the back of the daylight saving scheme I detect the bony, blue-fingered hand of puritanism"—could have said Liberalism—"eager to push people into bed earlier, and get them up earlier, to make them healthy, wealthy and wise in spite of themselves."

Despite those reservations, we support the initiative.

HYDRO REBATES

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

I'm pleased to respond to the statement by the Minister of Energy. I was at that press conference earlier today. You know, if the minister could have found a chimney on the media studio, I'm sure she would have descended by it, because she sauntered in there like she was Santa Claus. She thought she was doing such a wonderful thing. Do you know what she is doing? She is telling the hard-working people of the province of Ontario who pay electricity bills, "After 16 long months, we're going to give you your money back. However, we have been pleased to treat you as a new lending institution in the province of Ontario. Thank you so much for your money, but it's paid back without interest."

I wonder, if those hard-working Ontarians were 16 months late paying their hydro bill, if they'd fare so well as the minister, who can simply say, "Here it is. Sorry we're late. You're lucky to get it. I'm Santa Claus."

She says she's removing the politics from electricity. What justifies this kind of announcement? You're paying back the money you owe. You're not giving anybody anything.

Even the minister of revenue doesn't stand up on April 30 and say, "Ladies and gentlemen of Canada, I want to tell you that starting tomorrow I'm sending out your income tax refund." It's your money, you are entitled to get it back, and this minister makes it sound like it's coming out of her jeans.

Good Lord, show some respect for hard-working Ontarians who have seen their livelihoods hurt by the policies of this government: higher taxes, punitive taxes, higher fees and energy costs, and getting less in the way of services from this government.

So what do we do? We have a media conference to tell you, "What great news. The money we've been keeping"—they must be keeping it in a can or a mattress, because, "We have no interest to give you. We've kept it for all this time, but lucky you. Here, in late October, just about when the winter heating season is coming, we've got a little cheque for you in the mail."

Thank you very much, Minister, but please, next time, pay the money you owe on time.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I'd like to respond on behalf of New Democrats to the announcement made today by the Minister of Transportation in regard to Bill 73. I want to remind the minister that in this particular bill, what you've effectively done is download the cost of much of these measures on to the school bus operators and school boards across this province.

I'll remind you, for example, that as for one of the things in this bill—which is not a bad thing, to ask that new school buses meet certain safety conditions in terms of more windows etc. to make the buses safer—you've

downloaded the entire cost on to the school bus operators.

I talked today to Ron Malette, owner of Tisdale Bus Lines, who tells me he went out last year and bought seven new buses in order to keep his fleet up to standards, and he's had to pay an additional 1.5% on the purchase of these buses—no extra money from the province of Ontario. It's another example where governments do things, don't think about the consequences to those people who have to pay, and pass the cost on to the end user.

I'm just saying to the government that you should have at least adjusted the funding formulas through the Ministry of Education to offset that particular increase. On that point, I would also like to say that the Minister of Education, in opposition, promised they would put in place the full Rozanski report in terms of the transportation funding formulas to school boards. Here we are, two years into the mandate, and they're not even halfway to where they need to be and school bus operators have to keep the price of wages down in order to afford to operate. Why? Because the government has not responded to the Rozanski report, they've not done what they promised, they have not met their commitment when it comes to the funding levels that school bus drivers and operators need.

I remind the minister, if he hasn't noticed, that the price of fuel has gone up. There are no funding formulas to adjust for those costs to school bus operators. I say to you, you should think about what you do in terms of the effect on those who have to drive. I call on this government to do what is right and keep its promise when it comes to funding levels.

HYDRO REBATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Energy, and I want to respond in three ways.

First of all, I'd point out that initially the government said they had overcharged consumers by \$535 million. Then, as it gets close to the day when they have to send back their money to hydro consumers, it suddenly becomes \$495 million. People may be wondering how this happens. Let me tell you how it happens with the McGuinty government. In February of this year, the McGuinty government tells people across Ontario, "Oh, the deficit is \$6 billion—terrible. We can't afford money for the lowest-income; we've got to continue to claw back money from them." Then suddenly, 60 days later, when they present their budget, the deficit comes in at \$3.5 billion. And then 90 days later, suddenly the deficit, when they want to make it sound like good news, is only about \$1.3 billion.

1410

This hydro rebate is the way the McGuinty government conducts its budget: The numbers change according to what kind of spin the McGuinty government wants to put out in a given day. Today, when it's time to pay the

money back to the people to whom the money belongs, suddenly it's a lesser amount. Not only that, but if you were to go to Canadian Tire and they overcharged you, and then you found out six months later, you would get the money back, plus you'd get the interest. Are the consumers of Ontario getting any interest from the McGuinty government despite the fact that the McGuinty government overcharged them over a year ago and has been holding on to the money for eight months? No interest. I suspect the interest was probably \$20 million or \$25 million in that time; the McGuinty government banks that.

That is the people's money. It should be going back to the hydro consumers. It doesn't belong to the McGuinty government, and if you were being fair and honest with people, it would be returned to the hydro consumers.

The minister referred to hydro prices as "fair and reasonable." I've been looking at the Bruce deal: You're going to pay them a 40% premium on the price; you're going to give them an inflation premium; you're going to give them a cost-of-uranium premium; we're going to cover half the cost overrun, if there is one; and you're going to reduce their lease payments by \$60 million a year, which works out to about \$1.2 billion over the course of the contract. Those kinds of gifts to a profit-making private company: Is that what the McGuinty government calls fair and affordable electricity? No wonder this company is proud of this contract; they're laughing all the way to the bank vault, thanks to the generosity of the McGuinty government, but that's all going to appear—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Premier, on a day when you're handing hydro ratepayers a one-year-late, one-time \$60 credit for energy that you've overcharged them for, do you think it's appropriate that taxpayers should be forced to pay for a \$70 steak expense by one of your Liberal ministers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm sure that the member opposite has more detail, and I look forward to learning more about it.

Mr. Runciman: Given the Premier's past rhetoric, I think he would have had a comment on appropriateness. But in the course of just over a week last September, your former Minister of Energy racked up \$49,262 in expenses on a five-star European adventure—four aides were along for the ride. One lunch in Brussels alone cost taxpayers \$789, this on a day when you're issuing a one-year-late, one-time \$60 credit to energy ratepayers to

make up for your government's mishandling of the energy file.

Why should taxpayers be forced to pay almost \$50,000 in travel expenses for your former Minister of Energy when he presided over an energy system that overcharged consumers for the energy they used? Why?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Well, I can tell you that the former Minister of Energy was exceptionally diligent, energetic and active when it came to getting hold of the energy file. I know that he was particularly active when it came to securing new investment so that we would have a reliable supply of electricity for the people of Ontario. Again, if the member opposite has a particular concern with respect to expenses, he knows there is a route available in that regard, and I would encourage him to place any requests he has with the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr. Runciman: Again, you have to wonder about the Premier's past history on ministerial expenses.

Premier, also included in the \$49,262 of travel expenses filed by the former Minister of Energy and his entourage was \$1.69 for a Twix chocolate bar, \$2.99 for a Tutti-Frutti candy bar and \$4.10 for a bag of almonds. Apparently your former Minister of Energy, promoted by you now to oversee the books of the province, feels entitled to charge taxpayers for chocolate bars. Yesterday, former Liberal minister David Dingwall defended his outrageous expenses and his claim to a half-million-dollar severance by saying, "I'm entitled to my entitlements."

My question is simple: Do your Liberal ministers follow David Dingwall's lead, thinking they are entitled to charge taxpayers for chocolate bars and bags of almonds? Is that your standard?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member opposite may not recall, but when they were in government they insisted that these kinds of expenditures be reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner. In fact, that is exactly what has been done. The expenses have all been approved by the Integrity Commissioner.

Our former Minister of Energy, like this Minister of Energy, are both seized with the issue before us, which is to ensure that during the course of the next 15 years we replace, renew or refurbish 25,000 megawatts of energy. That is exactly the job they have taken on, and they will be most aggressive in pursuing that particular responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is also for the Premier. Apparently these Liberals here are no better than their cousins in Ottawa. Incredibly, disgraced former Liberal minister David Dingwall, forced to resign from his patronage post at the Canadian mint, feels entitled to his expenses and a half-million-dollar severance. Now we see, given your answers today, that your standards are regrettably the same. All Liberals seem to read from the same book: The David Dingwall Guide to Ratcheting Up Expenses. What

else could explain your former Minister of Energy's gall in feeling entitled to charge taxpayers for six \$70 steaks at one lunch? How can you possibly justify these expenses, Premier? How can you do it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's important to again understand the nature of the challenge before all of us. We're talking about 25,000 megawatts that need to be replaced, renewed or refurbished over the course of the next 15 years. It would have been nice had this work begun some eight or 10 years ago, but it did not. So what we have undertaken to do is tackle that head-on. We already have brought on 2,200 megawatts of new energy; there are another 9,000 megawatts in the pipeline. We are in the process of expanding capacity at Niagara Falls, we recently entered into a new agreement with Bruce Power and we are doing other things to ensure that the people of Ontario can rely on a decent electricity supply.

Mr. Yakubuski: You know, if we could build the right kind of generator, Premier, we could probably fire it for a while just on the table scraps from that minister's lunch.

My supplementary: First, former Liberal minister David Dingwall says he is entitled to his entitlements. Now we see your Liberal ministers living large by the same rule. One expense claim by your former energy minister's top political aide shows he charged \$4.95 for a magazine listed as "for the minister." Premier, at a time when energy customers are struggling to pay their hydro bills and receiving a too-little, too-late one-time credit from you, do you think it's justified that your former energy minister, now your most senior minister, feels he is entitled to have taxpayers pick up the tab for a \$5 magazine?

1420

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think what is important here is that Ontarians understand that they have a government that is prepared to take responsibility for expanding capacity and supply of electricity in Ontario. By way of specifics, we are bringing 9,000 megawatts on-line. That's in the pipeline at present. Pickering A, unit 1, will provide us with 515 more megawatts, and Bruce A, units 1 and 2, 1,540 more. Niagara tunnel will give us 200 megawatts of additional supply. We have in excess of 1,500 megawatts coming from renewables. We've got co-generation to the tune of 1,000 megawatts. We have demand-side management and demand response initiatives that will result in 250 megawatts being saved. Now, I think that is very important information for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Yakubuski: I saw the former Chair of Management Board mouth to the Premier, "People don't care about that stuff." Well, they do care about that stuff. They care deeply about that stuff. You know, in my riding most people have never been and will never be able to go out and afford a \$70 steak. It does matter to them.

Premier, the culture of entitlement that exists among Liberal politicians is truly shocking: David Dingwall, Dwight Duncan, dining delectably. Your former Minister

of Energy racked up \$49,262 in expenses for just over one week in Europe. He traveled with a four-person entourage; that works out to \$5,500 a day for 9 days. Included in that is a magazine for \$5, a \$1.69 Twix chocolate bar, a lunch that cost—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not sure it was a question, Speaker, so much as a rant.

I think the important thing here is that the Integrity Commissioner is charged with the special responsibility of reviewing expenses submitted. Those have been submitted and they have been approved. The member opposite is, by nature of his responsibilities, necessarily partisan and I appreciate the way he places the argument that he makes today, but I think Ontarians are entitled to rely on the judgment of an objective, impartial third party; that is, the Integrity Commissioner. He has reviewed these expenses and he has deemed them to be appropriate.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. I think everyone in Ontario is concerned about public health, so when the director of infection control of the University Health Network and Toronto emergency services officials warn that there will be a pandemic, that one in 100 could die, that we will be using arenas as morgues and running crematoria 24 hours a day, people are rightly concerned. Premier, can you assure the people of Ontario that your government has a plan to protect front-line health workers, and in particular, can you assure Ontarians that the McGuinty government is 100% committed to public health protection programs in the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): For the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Not only do we have a plan; it's called the Ontario health pandemic influenza plan, and for interested individuals, it's available on our ministry's Web site. I think this is an important element of disclosure. Obviously, in an environment where there's lots of discussion about a pandemic, with a lot of uncertainty, frankly, about what the toll of that will be, it's important to provide people with timely information. We are making that transparent and it's on the Web site now. We're operating on the basis that it should never be deemed as finalized. We call it an evergreen plan, which means that when we finish one draft of it, we instantly begin to work on the subsequent one.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): That's funny.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member from Trinity–Spadina thinks that's funny, but over here, we are dedicated to the view that the public health of Ontarians dictates that we constantly improve on the

work that has been done. In supplementary, I'll provide more information to the honourable member.

Mr. Hampton: Experts warn that an avian flu pandemic could kill one in 100 people in Ontario. I think what people would find troubling is that yesterday the minister basically admitted that this new agency specializing in pandemic response won't be up and running until some time in 2006. The people of Ontario need to know now that Ontario has a clear plan and that the McGuinty government can actually carry out that plan.

I want to ask the Premier again: Can you assure the people of Ontario that your government will provide unwavering support to local public health agencies that will be the front-line defenders, that will be doing the front-line work, should we have an avian flu pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Unlike the honourable member and the record of his party in government, we already have. We've worked hard as a government to make hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment in public health. We've worked hard to be a government that builds off the advice that's provided to us; as an example, by Justice Archie Campbell. In his second report, Justice Campbell acknowledged that the McGuinty government has undertaken the major changes to public health that he recommended. Here's a quote from him: "The government accepted the recommendations and committed itself to implement them in an ambitious three-year program. Improvements have so far been significant." Evidence of that is the same report the honourable member speaks of, that came out yesterday, with one of the co-chairs being Terry Sullivan from Cancer Care Ontario, giving advice to the government on the creation of a new public health agency for Ontario, the next step and a further piece of evidence of our commitment to underscore the value of public health again in our province.

Mr. Hampton: In response to the SARS crisis, Mr. McGuinty promised to make public health a number one priority. In fact, this government said you would fund 75% of public health costs, up from 50% of health costs. As the Premier knows, much of the public health work is established in mandatory programs. Public health units have no choice; they have to meet these programs. I want to tell you what's happened in the northwestern health unit. They went to the municipalities. The municipalities contributed the money to allow the health unit to do their job and then they asked the Ministry of Health for their contribution. The Ministry of Health said, "Oh, no, our contribution is capped."

I want to ask the Premier, does that sound like a full commitment on the part of the McGuinty government to protect public health in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member would be much more helpful if he brought some evidence to the floor. The reality is that public health budgets, the provincial contribution, beyond the fact that we're in the midst of uploading public health costs, beyond that—

Interjection: Uploading.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, uploading. That's a new word around here. We have a 9% increase of the provincial support for those public health budgets in Ontario. On the issue of confidence, the thing I would point Ontarians to the most is that there was a story yesterday about the federal government's distribution of Tamiflu to provinces. Some people ask, why was Ontario's contribution so low on a per capita basis? Long before the federal government and other provinces decided that it would be prudent to stock up on Tamiflu, Ontario had already bought and received those same supplies. Accordingly, rather than the federal government having to transfer a supply of Tamiflu to Ontario, they merely paid us for what we had already bought—prudent health protection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier again: Here's what's troubling. The chief medical officer of health in northwestern Ontario knows what has to be done to meet those mandatory programs of public health protection. He has established what the budget needs to be. The municipalities have made their contribution. He goes to the McGuinty government and says, "To meet your 55% contribution, this is what it will be," and he is told by the McGuinty government, "Oh, no, we're not going to cover that amount. We have capped what we're going to contribute."

What it means is they now have to lay off staff. What it means is they will not have the staff out there and the resources there to adequately protect people should there be a flu pandemic. Premier, can you square your promises that public health protection will be a number one priority with the unwillingness now of your government to contribute the money necessary to protect public health at the local level?

1430

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, I can give assurances to the honourable member of the commitment we made to the people of the province, in this province where 44 individuals lost their lives as a result of SARS, that we would be the government that fulfilled our obligation to the citizenry to learn and apply all of those lessons that could be learned and applied. Accordingly, we've operated on the direction that was provided by Dr. David Walker, the dean of health sciences. As a result, we've asked him to renew his efforts in looking into the situation at Seven Oaks because we want to build on the work that has been done.

The honourable member shows up every day, decides what's media-worthy and asks his questions. But every single day we wake up at the Ministry of Health and we rededicate ourselves to rebuilding the public health infrastructure that was allowed, over a 20-year period, to decline.

Operation Health Protection has several elements, and I'd be happy to speak about the issue of mandatory programs in my subsequent opportunity.

Mr. Hampton: When a foremost public health official in the province warns of a flu pandemic where one in 100 could die, I think it's a little more than just of media interest, Minister of Health.

Here's the reality. Joining us today in the visitors' gallery are representatives from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies. The agencies warn that local boards of health are underfunded, are unable to deliver their minimum mandated programs, like vaccinations and restaurant inspections, and are vulnerable to public health threats. They also say that the McGuinty government has reneged on its very public promise to fund public health units properly.

Can the Premier explain how he expects these boards of health to lead the fight against avian flu when you've deprived them of the resources to provide minimum mandated programs?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member, in seeking to contribute whatever it is he's seeking to contribute to the discussion, isn't bringing much factual information. The circumstances are clear, that a flu pandemic—any that affects us—will require that all hands be on deck, will require that we have a coordinated response as it relates to that. We've been working through the Ontario plan to be able to do that.

On the issue of mandatory programs, what the honourable member has not offered today is that there is currently a review of mandatory programs going on. Health officials, some of these very same ones he speaks to, are currently engaged across the province, working to make sure that there is consistency in mandatory programs, because before our government began to upload the costs related to public health, municipalities with various levels of taxation capacity were asked to deliver these programs. Accordingly, we seek to ensure that all Ontarians, no matter where they are in this vast province, have the same level of mandatory programs. Our commitment is clear: It's hundreds of millions of dollars. It's a significant investment in human resource to enhance our capacity—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Here is the reality for public health units, and it is the public health units who will be out there on the front line. It's the public health units who will be doing the work.

They were told by the McGuinty government that the McGuinty government would meet their costs of providing mandatory programs. The municipalities have contributed their money, but when they come back to the McGuinty government and they say, "Honour your promise. This is what we need to provide these mandated programs," what they're told, after the microphones have been turned off and the television cameras are no longer there, is that the money is not going to be forthcoming.

Let me ask the Premier again today: We've heard your promises, Premier. Will you commit that you will keep those promises? Will you commit that these public health units will get the money you promised them and that they

need in order to protect Ontarians from a potential flu pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: As I had the chance to say earlier, public health budgets in the province of Ontario, beyond that portion of the budget which we are in the midst of uploading, are going up by 9% this year.

The honourable member likes to speak about employment reductions. Maybe the member in the back row from Toronto could help to get him some intelligence from Toronto Public Health that during the discussions in the preliminary efforts to build the city of Toronto's budget, Toronto Public Health was indicating—I'm going by memory here—additional hiring to the tune of 326 people. This is evidence that the investments we're making on behalf of the people of Ontario are delivering the results required.

Do we have concerns around a pandemic? Of course we do. Accordingly, we're building a health care system that brings the elements of the system together—everybody working together. That's why we have a pandemic influenza plan as part of Operation Health Protection. That's why we're building a public health agency in this province. I believe all honourable members should go on our Web site, take a look at that plan and—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Premier, in the absence of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Gun violence and gang-related crime have reached an epidemic here in Ontario. Today, we unanimously passed in this House a resolution from the member for Etobicoke North, asking the government to urgently address the issue of violence, gang-related crime and the illegal use of firearms. Premier, can you inform the House exactly what actions your government has taken to date to convince our federal government to get tough on crime and the penalties associated with crime?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Attorney General would like to speak to this.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Last January at the federal-provincial-territorial justice ministers' meeting, I think it's fair to say that Ontario led the charge with other provinces to obtain the kind of changes to the Criminal Code and sentencing rules that would see, for example, mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes. In addition to that, this coming November we are pursuing another federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting. I have now spoken with every provincial attorney and the federal attorney, as we are gathering a consensus to get the changes that need to be made in Parliament so that we can have meaningful, effective punishments for these horrific crimes that are a scourge to a civil society.

Mr. Dunlop: It's disappointing that a member of your caucus has to bring a resolution forward on this, but I wanted to ask you if you can inform the House today

exactly what meetings or actions you are planning in the immediate future to convince our federal government to get tough on crime.

Interjection: He just told us.

Mr. Dunlop: No, I'm talking about the kinds of questions you are going to ask, the kinds of answers we expect in this House. We are following what has become an epidemic here in Ontario. This is a serious issue. You can laugh and heckle all you want in here, but we're talking about people who are being shot with guns every day. I want to know exactly what you're planning, and will you report those actions to the House as soon as possible?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Absolutely nobody in this House is laughing and heckling about this matter. This is one of the most serious matters we could deal with in this Legislature. It was in the spirit of that seriousness, it was in the spirit of representing his constituency, it was in the spirit of being an active member of this House that the member for Etobicoke North brought that resolution to this House.

I believe that in addition to the efforts by the Ministry of the Attorney General and the government, this Legislature needs to send the message to parliamentarians at every opportunity that we understand there are challenges in a minority Parliament but this is a serious matter and we are doing everything within our power, through intergovernmental mechanisms, by talking to Attorneys General, by talking to the federal government, to send the message loud and clear: mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes. Let's start getting—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

1440

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. On Monday, you told the press that any new money you receive from the federal government would go to business tax cuts. This is at a time here in Ontario when seniors are facing whopping property tax increases. It's at a time when working—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Stop the clock. The member for Beaches–East York has the floor. He's the only one entitled to speak.

Mr. Prue: It's a time when ordinary working couples are paying between \$1,200 and \$1,800 more because of your regressive health tax, and it's a time when record profits are being made by the big banks and oil companies that will surely be the largest beneficiary of your largesse. How can you justify these priorities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm sure the member opposite will not be surprised to hear me say that I never said any such thing. We have a real issue with the federal government and I want to thank the member for his

support and the support of his party in this regard. It's the \$23-billion gap. This year the people of Ontario will send \$23 billion to the federal government for distribution in the rest of the country. We are proud to support everything from surgeries in Sydney and St. John's, to training in Moncton and Montreal, to post-secondary education in Winnipeg and Whitehorse, and we will never abdicate our responsibility to lend support to good quality public services around the country. But \$23 billion is too much, especially given that that figure was \$2 billion just 10 years ago. What I was talking about was the \$23-billion gap.

Mr. Prue: Here it is, right here—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: No, I'm not going to apologize. I'm going to say that this has been reported in not one, but two Toronto newspapers and you have been—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. It won't surprise you that I'm having some difficulty hearing the member for Beaches–East York. I would like to hear his question.

Mr. Prue: I can just quote what the Toronto Sun has reported, that "he says he might consider reducing taxes if the federal government addressed a so-called \$23-billion gap between what Ontario pays Ottawa and what the province gets back." The truth of the matter is that, if that is your statement, you are totally out of whack with what ordinary, average Ontarians are expecting. These are the same Ontarians who are seeing double-digit increases in their hydro bills, it's the same Ontarians who are being hosed at the gas pumps, and it's the same Ontarians who are looking to you for relief. If you get the \$23 billion, can you give priority to these people before the banks and the oil companies?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: As I said yesterday, if we receive \$23 billion from the federal government, that will create all kinds of new options that are not on the table at present. I'm sure we will be able to address some of the issues raised by my good friend opposite, I'm sure we'll be able to address some of the issues raised by the official opposition, and we'll be able to address all kinds of issues raised by us on this side of the House. Until that day arrives, I would suggest to my friend opposite that we will remain very much focused on our plan. He understands that is found in our recent throne speech. We are continuing to build up this province by building up Ontarians, but especially by investing in their education, their skills, their health care, drawing upon their creative talents and making sure that we're getting the fundamentals right. That includes everything from electricity to ensuring that we're investing in infrastructure and to ensuring we are bringing real fiscal discipline to the management of our province.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This week we welcomed over 1,000 ethnocultural leaders and

organizations to Toronto, to the Metropolis Conference. I know you spoke about the importance of diversity at this conference and you pointed out, and I might add quite effectively, how diversity is important to Ontario and to the citizens of this city. Today at this conference, the Metropolis Conference, the Royal Bank Financial Group is releasing a report, *The Diversity Advantage: A Case for Canada's 21st Century Economy*. Minister, do you agree with this report and the conclusion that tapping into the skills and knowledge of our immigrants is needed to support Canada's economy, and certainly the economy of Ontario?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the honourable member from Davenport, who has been a lifelong advocate and a real pit bull when it comes to standing up for newcomers and immigrants. I would like to thank him for that.

The Metropolis Conference, which is taking place at the convention centre in Toronto, is bringing people from all over the world who have centred on the importance of leveraging diversity to an economic and social advantage. The Royal Bank of Canada report reaffirms that what the Premier did in asking for fair funding and fair investment for our newcomers here in Ontario in his \$23-billion gap campaign is the right thing to do. In other words, if Ottawa spends that money here in Ontario to help our newcomers succeed, not only do the newcomers help succeed, but the Ontario economy succeeds.

Mr. Ruprecht: We are joined today by a delegation from the Sikh community, the South Asian Seniors, and we would agree that immigration is Ontario's great advantage.

I represent a riding made up of people with diverse immigrant backgrounds. Every year, Ontario receives over half of Canada's newcomers, with the majority of them choosing to settle right here in the GTA. In fact, over the past three years—

Interjections.

Mr. Ruprecht: I hope they settle down and listen to my final supplementary, but if they don't, the pit bull is going to get them.

In fact, over the past three years, there has been a 52% increase in immigrants to the 905 area. What is this government doing to help ensure that newcomers are able to settle successfully, be it in the GTA, in Ontario or in Davenport, which is my riding?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member from Davenport knows full well that we welcome 125,000 newcomers into Ontario every year. That's the same population as the province of Prince Edward Island. Last year, 125,000 came, this year 125,000 are welcome and next year—that's why we have to give them that help in English-as-a-second-language, as we are doing, and in bridge training, so nurses can get that. Their success rates in applications for certification in Ontario have increased up to 70% or 80%, the same as pharmacists who get that help from Ontario programs.

We have to do more, and the federal government has recognized that. We will continue to get rid of those

barriers and make immigration integration a priority of this government.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. Your government's decision to shelve the \$70-million expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital for at least five years puts on hold the construction of 23 secure mental health schedule 1 beds where patients can legally be admitted involuntarily. If approval is not provided for the schedule 1 facility, not only will people like Ann Sheldon, a retired nurse, have to continue to be treated outside of their community in places such as London, but the psychiatrists have also indicated that they may leave.

I ask you, Minister—and don't give the question to the minister of infrastructure because we're talking about health care needs—why are you going to deny the people of Cambridge access to desperately needed mental health beds and services?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It would be well-known to the honourable member, because I was privileged to be able to make an announcement in her riding related to our government's very significant support for capital development in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Part and parcel of that announcement included support for development at the Freeport site of Grand River Hospital. That includes the transfer of 50 beds of a mental health variety back from London. I think that helps make the point.

While there is significantly more work to do, and we're the first to acknowledge it, our message to the people of Cambridge is we agree that that's a much-needed hospital. The Premier has been clear in saying that for us it is not a matter of if, but when, and I'm looking forward to an opportunity to meet very soon with the ministry and the hospital to begin to discuss possibilities. We've been open in saying that we want to be as creative and flexible as we can, albeit within the constraints we have that have been well enumerated by my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

We know that mental health is an important challenge. That's why we've already made this significant investment in your region. There is always more to do and we're going to get it done.

1450

Mrs. Witmer: As the minister knows, the beds he referred to in the announcement he made are not going to start to be available for at least two years, and probably much longer, because construction is not going to start for at least two more years.

I want to talk to you about another impact that your refusal to provide funding is going to cause: It's going to have an impact on ambulance service. John Prno, the head of our ambulance service, has said that because you're not going to increase emergency room beds from 19 to 48, it's going to slow ambulance response times,

delay the unloading of patients and result in more transfers to other hospitals.

Some patients are already waiting 90 minutes to be unloaded. It means that the ambulances are not available to do other calls and it slows down ambulance response times. I ask you, will you put the needs of patients in Cambridge first and reconsider your decision not to provide funding to the Cambridge hospital to the tune of \$70 million?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I know that the honourable member never likes the approach when she is reminded that she was the longest-serving Minister of Health in the previous government.

Mrs. Witmer: Actually, I'm very proud of that.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Well, you should have gotten a bit more done. The reality is that I'm pretty sure she had the opportunity to participate in announcements related to the very same capital project that she is speaking about. The point is that what we inherited from the previous government, which her leader is on record in Cambridge as acknowledging, is that they ran around all over Ontario and heightened expectations beyond those that could be matched, from a construction standpoint and a fiscal standpoint. We're working hard to address those.

With respect to ambulance off-load delays, I believe that our investments in the Kitchener-Waterloo community—family health teams, community health centres, an end-of-life palliative care strategy and a reinvestment in community-based care of an unprecedented variety—are going to have a significant impact on those challenges that are currently experienced in hospital emergency rooms.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. You have been announcing and reannouncing with much fanfare that you have a \$680-million strategy to help the forest sector in the province of Ontario. You have been announcing and reannouncing it since the spring. Yet tomorrow in the city of Kenora, Abitibi Consolidated is going to shut down their paper mill and lay off 360 people, which will be devastating to the community.

Premier, you announced this \$680 million. Can you tell me, why are these paper mill shutdowns happening if your forest policy and your forest response strategy is such a good one? Why are so many of these mills shutting down?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): As the local member knows, because Kenora is in his constituency, we have successfully completed discussions with Abitibi Consolidated in regard to the Kenora operation. They left, with the successful completion, that they knew they had a plan that they could run number 10

machine with low electricity rates and lower fibre rates, and decided to go to the workers to discuss how the workers could contribute to the future of keeping number 10 machine going.

I met with the union yesterday. Basically, their attitude is that Kenora is going to be their beachhead. I asked them, when they said that, "Do you not think there's going to be some transition, some change in this industry?" They said, "It's two machines or no machines." I think that's sad for the town of Kenora.

Mr. Hampton: We've heard the McGuinty government say that these are global forces. They're not global forces. Mills are opening in British Columbia, mills are expanding in Quebec, and Manitoba has put out a proposal for a new mill, yet what we hear from the McGuinty government in one breath is, "These are global forces." The latest chapter is, "Blame the workers."

Here is the reality for the Kenora mill. They've got a very good market. There are newspapers in the United States, in the Midwest, that want to buy their paper. They've got a very experienced workforce. They've got a wood fibre basket that other paper mills in North America would give their right arm for. Do you know what they don't have? They're paying \$80 a megawatt for electricity that is produced at \$10 a megawatt at power dams that are 20 kilometres down the river. That's happening not because of something that's going on in Europe or Asia; it's happening because of McGuinty government policy.

Let me tell you, it's shameful now for you to come in here and try to blame the workers. When are we going to see the McGuinty government address the real issue? You're forcing—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Of course, this is not the case at all, because under the arrangement they have with the Ontario government in building the cogeneration plant, they are going to have low, competitive electricity rates at that mill, and that's what's going to sustain them.

To say this is not an international situation, how come there are mills closing in Newfoundland with very cheap power, and in Quebec? In Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, which is always cited as an example of the cheapest delivered wood costs in the country, Weyerhaeuser announces 650 jobs down the drain, where Weyerhaeuser is today putting out paper in Dryden in northwestern Ontario. So that tells you something, that Ontario is adjusting to this, is reacting to this. We all have to work together to do that, and we have to work with the unions and the companies and the communities to make for a successful outcome.

CONTAMINATED PROPERTY

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On January 30 of this year, you accepted my invitation to come to the town of Hawkesbury and

discuss an issue that is extremely important for the health and well-being of that community. During your visit, we toured the former CIP paper mill's industrial lagoon, which closed down in the mid-1980s, when the wet lagoon became the property of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Shortly after its closure, the CIP company received approval from the Ministry of the Environment to use the wet lagoon as an official waste disposal site for demolition material.

Minister, I was thrilled that you had committed to clean up the site of the contaminated wet lagoon. Just a few short days after your visit, ministry officials were already on the phone with the town of Hawkesbury. Can you tell the House today what has been done since your visit to Hawkesbury?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I very much appreciated the invitation from the member to visit Hawkesbury. Quite frankly, I was shocked by the situation that I had seen: basically nobody taking some ownership for mitigating the pollution in that lagoon. It stopped all waterside investment and development in that particular community. So I decided that MNR should take the lead in that, and we're working with our colleagues in the Ministry of the Environment. Just the other day, we secured the funding. We have a team leader in charge of the project now, and I would say we'll have a successful conclusion to the cleanup of this waterfront area.

Mr. Lalonde: This is great news for the town of Hawkesbury. The CIP lagoon cleanup has been my number one priority ever since I first got elected. Subsequent governments had not given any attention to this utmost important issue to the town of Hawkesbury. On the other hand, the McGuinty government understands that cleaning up the industrial site located along the Ottawa River will lift a barrier that has been hindering Hawkesbury in the development of its waterfront.

Minister, this has been a long time coming. You understood immediately the strategic location of Hawkesbury, which is located at the most eastern tip of Ontario. The community is excited, and you can surely understand their surprise that it's now actually happening. Can you please reassure this House what your ministry is doing to ensure that we are fulfilling our commitment to the town of Hawkesbury?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I'm very pleased to be working with the local member on this situation. I think it's interesting to note that this polluted lagoon has basically frozen any development in the area. I know on the island just offshore there was an opportunity there for some recreational and condominium developments, but of course that particular project didn't get off the ground if they didn't have assurance that the mainland wasn't polluted. What we've done is to act as a catalyst in this situation. By starting to clean up the lagoon, we're starting to add value to all the property in the area. I think, through the added value of the property that the town has assumed, it will now start to pay for the

mitigation. In the end, I think we're going to be able to do this where the added value in the property will generate the revenue to do the clean-up. In the end, I don't think there'll be very much taxpayers' money having to go into this at all. It's really going to be a win-win for all concerned.

1500

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. The forest industry is in crisis. All over northern Ontario, entire communities are being affected. Norampac, in Red Rock, is shutting down a machine. Abitibi Consolidated workers have been here at Queen's Park all week fighting for their jobs. Their last paper machine is scheduled to shut down next week. I could go through a long list of other closures.

Our delivered wood costs are the highest in the world at \$55 US a cubic metre. So far, your response, your two announcements, will lower delivered wood costs by \$1 US per cubic metre. That's not much help for northern communities fighting to survive. Minister, when are you going to get serious about the crisis in the forestry sector?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I would have to say to the member that it is a more complicated issue than just the cost of delivered wood, which is an impact, no doubt, on our companies. But the example that was always given to me in the competitive council report was Saskatchewan, which actually has very inexpensive delivered wood costs of around \$35 a cubic metre. It was just two weeks ago that Weyerhaeuser announced the closing of their paper mill there in Prince Albert, putting over 690 employees out of work. And yet there's a jurisdiction with average electricity costs and very low delivered wood costs. So it's a very comprehensive and complicated problem. I spent Friday going around to all the different forest companies in Ontario to have discussions with them about how we can work together on a one-on-one basis with our new program. I wanted to make sure they understood the program and that they would be participants in using that program to restructure this industry.

Mr. Miller: Minister, in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, employees of Tembec are in fear for their livelihood. In fact, in recent weeks, I've had 50 letters from different workers there. Tembec needs its \$300 million tied up in softwood lumber duties freed up, and I would ask you to lobby the federal minister to do just that.

But today I'd like to talk about your response to the crisis in the forestry sector, Minister. The municipal council of Timmins has passed a resolution because this is such an important issue. They call your announcement a baby step in the right direction, but they also point out that the \$28 million for primary road maintenance does not even cover the recent escalation of fuel costs.

Minister, are you going to take the advice of your expert council on forest sector competitiveness and fund 100% of primary roads and 50% of secondary roads costs, as they suggested?

Hon. David Ramsay: I would say \$680 million is some baby. That was one heck of a step we took with that. It's the largest sectoral contribution the McGuinty government has made to the economy and the development of the economy in the province of Ontario.

I say to the member that we are continuing to work with the industry to make sure this transition happens as effectively and as efficiently as possible and to make sure with as little disruption as possible. I thank the member for the support in lobbying the federal government, which I have been doing. I'd ask him also to send letters to the federal government, because our sawmillers in particular need a loan guarantee from the export development corporation that the federal government can make happen just like that, to make sure that they can now borrow against those duties on deposit in the United States. That is a very important issue, or we're going to have some real problems right across this country. I thank the member for that support, and I'm making sure that the federal government hears that message also.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. On September 30, Peter Hyde, director of Hamilton Specialty Bar, told you in an urgent letter that without direct and positive action from your government, the company and its 400 steelworkers are about to hit the wall. In the first five days of October, your exorbitant hydro prices forced the company to stop production for a full 24 hours. In the last six months, the furnace was off for 214 hours. That's a 500% increase over 2002 and 2003. That's lost production time.

Premier, while your government does nothing on this hydro crisis, everyone pays the price: the company, the workers, the community and the rest of the province. Have you taken the time to schedule a meeting with Hamilton Specialty Bar, and if not, why not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): We're talking to Hamilton Specialty Bar through my ministry. We're talking to a number of people in the steel industry. There are ongoing difficulties in the steel industry, and we'd be happy and delighted to continue these discussions. The fact of the matter is that the steel industry continues to go through a restructuring, even though steel prices have gone up at some point. With respect to restructuring, it is an ongoing matter, and we will continue to monitor what's taking place.

We appointed Jim Arnett, the Premier's special adviser for the industry. He is going to be reporting back on a number of fronts, including Stelco, with respect to

what's going on in the steel industry. We continue, as I say, to monitor and look forward to discussions.

Ms. Horwath: Premier, your minister is obviously not aware of this critical situation. The people of Hamilton and of the province are hurting financially from your lack of action and your broken promises on hydro. That tiny hydro rebate that you announced may send some small message, but it won't be helping the workers in the mill, who are not going to be able to begin to cover the hours they've lost just this month in terms of their wages.

Your broken hydro promises have put Hamilton Specialty Bar and manufacturers across southern Ontario at risk because they simply can't afford the power. When steel mills in Steeltown can't fire their furnaces because they can't afford the electricity, we've got a problem in this province.

Premier, when is your plan for Hamilton Specialty Bar going to come to the forefront, and when are its workers and the community going to be able to understand what is going to happen with Ontario's hydro policy?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: With respect to electricity prices, in fact electricity costs for large industry and commercial users in Ontario are in line with neighbouring Great Lakes states such as New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan. In fact, we're almost two cents per kilowatt hour lower than California, so I don't know what you're talking about with respect to manufacturing. We have to compare to our peer jurisdictions; that's really being competitive. The Great Lakes states are our competitors, and we're being very competitive when it comes to electricity costs.

There is no doubt that electricity costs have gone up for large industrial users. But we were subsidizing electricity costs, and we have to move forward. We do need additional power. The Minister of Energy is doing everything to ensure that we have new supply coming on stream. That way, we can remain competitive with other jurisdictions, and I think they're doing a great job in energy.

1510

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you've already said that approximately 800,000 kids travel to and from school every day on buses in this province. I know all the members of this House understand how terribly important it is that they remain safe.

I also want to take just a moment to acknowledge the work of the MPP for Chatham-Kent-Essex, Pat Hoy, and the MPP for Prince Edward-Hastings and their dedication in bringing this issue to the fruition we now have.

Research shows that Ontario has the safest roads in North America, yet almost 1,000 children and young people are injured or killed on these roads every year. Many of those accidents are preventable. What steps are being taken by the government to ensure that our children

and young people are safe when they travel to school or on school buses?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for her question and also for her support in this area. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the member from Chatham as well.

As the member mentioned, about 800,000 students take the school bus every day. What people sometimes don't know is that most of the fatal accidents do happen when the students are either getting off the bus or on the bus. So our government has taken a lot of steps to promote school bus safety, and I just want to talk about two of those measures that we have taken. One is that, effective September 1, we will have safety crossing arms mandatory on all new school buses. The other thing we're doing is that we wanted to make sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. I'm sure you'll get to it. Supplementary?

Mrs. Van Bommel: Minister, you have said that vehicle owners, as well as drivers, will now be charged if they pass a stopped school bus. I think it is essential that we as a government do all that we can to protect our children, and so by doing that, make it the responsibility of the public, as well as the drivers, to ensure that everyone stops for buses.

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I say it takes a community to ensure that we get our children around safely. Minister, how will the law make it legal for vehicle owners to be charged, as well as drivers, and what is the fine for passing a stopped school bus?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for her question. Let me say that in a recent survey of the drivers who drive school buses, 33% of them indicate that at least one person illegally passes the school bus every day. That is absolutely unacceptable from our point of view, and that's why we introduced the legislation that got passed last year.

As the member said, it takes a community to ensure our children are safe. That's exactly what we are doing by making the vehicle owner, as well as the driver of the car, responsible when a car illegally passes a school bus. Our goal is to significantly reduce the number of people illegally passing school buses and make everyone more accountable.

What are the fines? We have very stiff penalties. For a first-time conviction, the fine will range from \$400 to \$2,000, and for subsequent ones, it will go from \$1,000 to \$4,000. Drivers will also be subject to a maximum of six—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, Statistics Canada disclosed the fact that in August the number of American visitors to Canada fell to a 26-year low. Would the Premier not agree that this shocking fact demonstrates

the utter failure of the Liberal government's tourism marketing efforts?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I'm glad you asked that question. I'm glad you got it on, Ted, because you use the word "Canada," visits to Canada, and I agree with you. In terms of visits to Canada, there has been a significant drop in the month of August of this year, which had some very special conditions happening in the United States.

We, of course, throughout North America had very high gas prices that were arising. We also have the dollar increasing tremendously. But I want to tell the member that as late as yesterday I was at a conference with the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp., with all the key players in the field of tourism. We were developing some new policies to meet this new threat. Overall in the year, you would know there has been some significant improvement this year. But we are looking at that.

I called the federal minister just yesterday to convene a national ministers' policy conference, because I think it's a problem that confronts our whole country.

PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients" in Ontario "with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments" for cancer patients; "and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients" in Ontario.

This has been signed by Suzanne Aucoin, who was here at the Legislature on Monday. It has my signature of support and that of my constituent George Petrunas.

DRIVER PENALTIES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition here that actually was given to you, Mr. Speaker, in your capacity as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, which I would like to read into the record. It reads as follows:

“Whereas there currently exists an inequity in penalties under the Highway Traffic Act, whereby a driver causing death or grievous harm to another due to unsafe turn or other act may only see a maximum \$500 fine, and such is an inadequate penalty;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to pass into law the Highway Traffic Act amendment, as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, which calls for stiffer penalties for drivers involved in fatal accidents where their error caused fatality.”

I am in agreement and would affix my signature as well.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition here from my constituents and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the speech from the throne was delivered in the Legislature on October 12, 2005;

“Whereas our government has worked tremendously hard to reduce the \$5.6-billion deficit we inherited from the previous government down to \$1.6 billion;

“Whereas the government, through the throne speech and the budget, has committed to a record \$6.2-billion multi-year plan to fund our colleges and universities;

“Whereas the government has launched a five-year, \$30-billion plan to improve our province’s infrastructure;

“Whereas Ontario is seeing dramatic increases in the number of CT scans, cancer surgeries, cardiac procedures and MRI scans that are producing shorter wait times for these critical health care services;

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

“To support the McGuinty government’s plan for progress as outlined in the speech from the throne.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): This is a petition from a number of residents of Stratford, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 183, the Adoption Information Disclosure Act, 2005, is currently before the Ontario Legislature and, if passed into law, will give unqualified retro-

active access to adoption records, regardless of the wishes of the adoptee or birth parent, which were previously understood to be sealed in perpetuity;

“Whereas the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, along with every other Information and Privacy Commissioner in Canada, members of the legal community and many MPPs, have expressed great concern about Bill 183 as presently drafted and have called upon the government to amend it to include a disclosure veto provision and protect the legitimate privacy rights of thousands of Ontarians;

“Whereas the right to file a disclosure veto would introduce the element of consent for birth parents and adoptees, allowing them the same choice afforded to every other birth parent and adoptee in Canada, that being whether or not they wish to disclose their personal identifying information, without having to plead their case before a tribunal and justify their reasons for maintaining their privacy;

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

“Not to pass Bill 183 into law without the provision of an automatic disclosure veto.”

I sign that, as I am in full agreement with it.

DISABLED PERSONS

PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition that was given to you in your capacity as member for Algoma–Manitoulin, which I would like to read into the record. It’s a short one that reads as follows:

“Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

“We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special fixed permit, as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act.”

I am in agreement, and I’m going to affix my signature thereto.

1520

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is investing \$24 billion more on our health between 2003-04 and 2007-08;

“Whereas the McGuinty government is increasing the number of family health teams to 150 by 2007-08 so that each Ontarian can have access to primary care within their own community;

“Whereas waiting times are being reduced for cancer surgeries, cataract surgeries, cardiac procedures and MRI exams; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has banned for-profit, pay-your-way-to-the-front health care, and is ensuring publicly owned, publicly funded and publicly controlled health care in Ontario;

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

“To support the McGuinty government’s commitment to public health care, including improved access, increased funding and greater accountability.”

I agree with this petition and I’m going to sign it as well.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads:

“Whereas gasoline prices have continued to increase at alarming rates in recent months; and

“Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario’s drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation,” forestry and others;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario consider an immediate gas price freeze for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate, and

“That the provincial government petition the federal Liberal government to step up to the plate and lower gas prices by removing the GST on gasoline products and fix the federal Competition Act to ensure consumers are protected and that the market operates in a fair and transparent manner.”

I affix my name in full support.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas, in the interest of true democracy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs put the following question to the voters of the city of Kawartha Lakes: ‘Are you in favour of a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier and 16 lower-tier municipalities?’; and

“Whereas the voters, by a clear majority on a provincially mandated ballot, answered in the affirmative;

“The undersigned demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act to respect the will of the people as expressed in a democratic vote, and restore the former municipal structure as stated in the minister’s question.”

I am in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was kind enough to sit down here

and wait until the member had read his first petition. Then he got a second petition and now he’s getting a third petition. I’m just wondering when we are going to go in rotation here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): I recognize the member from Davenport. Do you want to start?

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make sure that this petition gets on today because of its importance.

The petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and reads as follows:

“Whereas Portuguese Canadians number 171,545 in the Toronto census metropolitan area, many of whom encounter serious barriers (language, culture and location) to accessing community and long-term-care services; and

“There are no long-term-care homes dedicated to the needs of Portuguese Canadian seniors; and

“Camões House for the Aged and Portuguese Community Centre of Toronto is proposing a partnership with a local long-term-care provider to purchase up to 160 existing beds in the Toronto area (for a nominal fee), to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto. This partnership is tentative and is dependent on the approval of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“We encourage the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, his staff, and members of the Legislature to support the Camões proposal, and to make the appropriate administrative and policy changes required to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto.”

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I’m delighted to sign it right now.

TUITION

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

“Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

“Whereas per-student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all

Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students.”

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty, MPP, as leader of the official opposition, made the following commitment: ‘I have committed that a Liberal government will ensure a binding referendum is held to allow local citizens to determine whether or not to dismantle the amalgamated city’; and

“Whereas, in the interest of true democracy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs put the following question to the voters of the city of Kawartha Lakes: ‘Are you in favour of a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier and 16 lower-tier municipalities?’; and

“Whereas the voters, by a clear majority on a provincially mandated ballot, answered in the affirmative; and

“Whereas the council of the city of Kawartha Lakes has demanded that the province of Ontario honour the results of the 2003 election as it pertains to the minister’s question;

“The undersigned demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act to honour the commitment made by Dalton McGuinty and to respect the will of the people as expressed in a democratic vote, and restore the former municipal structure as stated in the minister’s question.”

I am proud to provide this petition on behalf of the people of Kawartha Lakes.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I want to start off by apologizing to my colleague across the aisle, the member for Davenport, for taking the petition time up. Anyway, I have a petition here. I’ll read it quickly:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government has contributed \$301 million to the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program;

“Whereas this program will produce 5,320 new units of affordable housing and provide rent subsidies for up to 5,000 low-income households;

“Whereas the \$116 million allocated to the city of Toronto will assist several hundred families across the city;

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

“To support the McGuinty government’s commitment to affordable housing and to urge the government to keep affordable housing on the provincial agenda.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): This is especially for the former Chair of Management Board.

“Recommendations for the Frost Centre

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government announced the closure of the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre in July 2004 with no public consultation; and

“Whereas public outrage over the closure of the Frost Centre caused the government to appoint a working committee of local residents to examine options for the future of the property; and

“Whereas the working committee has completed their consultations and has prepared recommendations for the provincial government that include a procedure to follow during the request for proposals process; and

“Whereas the Frost Centre has been an important educational resource for the community, and continued use of the facility for educational purposes has widespread support;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should retain public ownership of the Frost Centre lands and follow the recommendations of the working committee regarding the request for proposals process.”

It is signed by people from my riding.

1530

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week:

On Monday, October 24, 2005, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 211; in the evening, reply to the speech from the throne.

On Tuesday, October 25, 2005, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 197; in the evening, third reading of Bill 183.

On Wednesday, October 26, 2005, in the afternoon, reply to the speech from the throne; in the evening, third reading of Bill 169.

On Thursday, October 27, 2005, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 197.

OPPOSITION DAY

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty

government must recognize that during the first two years of its mandate, thousands of jobs have been lost in the forest industries of northern Ontario; and

Recognize that communities are being devastated by the loss of jobs and the disintegration of local and regional economies; and

Recognize that as a result of the government's hydro-electricity policies, sawmills and pulp and paper mills in northern Ontario are forced to pay \$80 a megawatt or more for electricity that costs \$20 a megawatt or less to generate at nearby hydro dams, whereas paper mills in competing jurisdictions like Quebec or British Columbia are paying \$30 a megawatt for electricity; and

Recognize that uncompetitive electricity prices are placing Ontario's forest industries in a highly uncompetitive position; and

Immediately implement an energy strategy for northern industries and stop the electricity rate increases that put the entire northern Ontario economy at risk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day number 1.

Mr. Hampton: This is a debate that needs to happen because if you review the events of the past two years—I want to point to the Minister's Council on Forest Sector Competitiveness. What is clear from that report is that literally thousands of jobs have been lost. As the report makes clear, a total of 2,200 direct jobs have been lost over the past two years from northern Ontario forest-dependent communities, and further mill closures will be economically devastating on top of the losses to date. The report says, "Some 12 mills across northern Ontario have been identified at risk. The loss of these production facilities would reduce employment in the north by 7,500 direct jobs and 17,500 indirect and induced jobs." Further, "Southern Ontario would lose an additional 13,000 indirect jobs." Much of the engineering support work, the information technology work, the supply work and the financial services work is done in southern Ontario.

What is happening under the McGuinty government is devastating. It is devastating for communities when a paper mill is shut down and 200 or 300 people are put out of work. It is devastating when a sawmill is shut down and 100 or 200 people are put out of work. It is incredibly devastating when you consider the number of communities that have in fact been affected just over the last short while.

For example, Kenora has lost a sawmill; that was 30 jobs. Dryden has lost a sawmill—close to 200 jobs. Cascades paper in Thunder Bay has lost a paper machine—150 jobs. Red Rock has lost a paper machine—175 jobs. Neenah Paper in Terrace Bay shut down one pulp mill—150 direct jobs. Opatatika shut down a sawmill—85 jobs. Chappleau, another mill—close to 100 jobs. New Lisheard lost their mill—over 60 jobs. And the list goes on.

Why is this happening? The McGuinty government would have people believe that this is all global forces, that it is all global forces causing this. Well, yes, there are some global forces. Yes, the American dollar has

declined in value, and, yes, there may be some changes in the forest sector. None of that is new.

The American dollar rises and declines; you can almost put it on a graph. Because this is fundamentally an export industry, the paper sector, the pulp sector and the sawmilling sector know the graph. They can pretty well predict when the American dollar is going to ascend in value and when it's going to decline in value. The forest sector has been managing that issue for over 60 years. They don't consider that to be a fundamental problem. They actually have some coping mechanisms. They hedge against a declining or ascending value of the American dollar, and they can almost do it predictably.

For the McGuinty government to say this industry is changing—this industry has been changing since many of these mills were established 60, 70 or 80 years ago. If you look at some of these mills, they adjusted production, they sped up their machines, they put in new machines, they put in larger machines, they put in new pulping units. This industry has been changing for some time, and these mills, these communities and these workers have been among the most adaptable in the world in terms of meeting that change.

So when the McGuinty government says it's global forces—what nonsense. This industry has been adjusting to and dealing with and addressing global forces successfully since before most of the members of the Liberal cabinet appeared in this province. This has been a very successful bedrock industry. It is fundamental to the Ontario economy, fundamental to the northern economy and fundamental overall to the success of the Ontario economy.

But two things have happened in the last few years that literally strike at the heart of this industry. The biggest thing that has happened to them is that we now have a government that goes around the province and says that it's a good thing to drive up electricity rates. It even says that it's a good thing that we should sign a deal with Bruce Power for electricity that at base will be 6.43 cents a kilowatt hour and then we are going to subsidize them if they have construction overruns, and we're going to subsidize them if the price of uranium goes up, and we're going to subsidize them for inflation, and we're going to give them a reduction in their lease costs, all of which is going to drive up the hydro bill. But the McGuinty government says that's a good thing.

Part of this government's stated policy is to drive electricity rates through the roof. But that has repercussions, real repercussions. This is an industry—not unlike the steel industry, not unlike the mining industry, not unlike the chemical industry—in which the cost of electricity is really important. The cost of electricity will determine, in many cases, whether a mill or a production facility continues to succeed. This is an industry in which the cost of electricity can, in some cases, be 30% or 40% of your cost of production. So, literally, you have situations where if the price of electricity, the electricity rate, goes up by, say, 10%, that may be an annoyance in some places—it might be an annoyance for me in my hydro

bill; it might be an annoyance at an auto assembly plant—but the electricity rate going up by 10% or 15% will put a lot of these mills out of business.

That is what has been happening. The deliberate, intentional policy of the McGuinty government to drive electricity rates through the roof is literally putting mill after mill after mill out of business—thousands of jobs, community economies devastated, regional economies devastated.

What really rubs salt in the wound, though, for people in northern Ontario is that in almost every case where you've got a paper mill, a pulp mill, a sawmill, within 10 kilometres, 20 kilometres, 30 kilometres, there's a power dam. What are the reasons that these mills were established where they are? Well, there are two reasons: one, the best wood fibre in the world, and the second reason, the potential to produce hydroelectricity at a very affordable rate. That's why they were built where they were built.

1540

To this day, if you go to the mill in Kenora—which will shut down tomorrow if something isn't done—that mill is surrounded by no fewer than five power dams, some of them 20 kilometres away, some 40 kilometres away, some 50 kilometres away, all of which produce electricity for under \$20 a megawatt, yet as a result of McGuinty government policy, that mill and those workers have to pay \$80 a megawatt for that electricity. They say to themselves, "This doesn't make sense. We've got electricity right here, close to our mill, we've got transmission lines that will bring it here, and we know the electricity costs only \$20 a megawatt to produce, yet because of the McGuinty government policy, we have to pay \$80 for that electricity." Meanwhile, mills in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota might be paying \$40 or \$45 a megawatt for electricity, and mills in Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia are paying about \$35 a megawatt.

Here's the scenario for a paper mill in Ontario, and I can actually give you the price because Manitoba Hydro does surveys on this. On average, the monthly hydro bill for a paper mill in Ontario is about \$2.2 million a month now, under the McGuinty government. The same mill, if it's located in Quebec, would pay \$1.2 million a month; \$1 million less a month. In British Columbia, it would only pay \$1 million a month; \$1.2 million a month less than Ontario. In Manitoba, they pay a little over \$900,000 a month.

It's clear what's happening. The McGuinty government electricity policy, the policy of driving electricity rates through the roof, is literally making Ontario mills uncompetitive. This is not global forces; this is McGuinty government forces. This is the McGuinty government literally saying, "Here's the electricity policy, drive the price through the roof, and too bad, so sad, if dozens of communities across northern Ontario lose their economy and thousands of workers are put out of work."

Now, the other thing that's happening is every once in a while you'll hear the Premier or the Minister of Natural

Resources say that these mills are outdated. Ontario mills are not outdated. The mill in Dryden has one of the most recent paper machines that you'd find in North America; one of the biggest, one of the fastest. Not only that, it's just had \$400 million of new investment in the pulping process. The mill at my hometown, if you look at it over the last 10 years, has probably had half a billion dollars of new investment.

Other mills: A brand new sawmill in Ear Falls, a state-of-the-art sawmill, a high-technology sawmill, and under the McGuinty government electricity policy, they can't make money. Weyerhaeuser completed an oriented strand board, truss board mill, just outside of Kenora, state-of-the-art, some of the newest technology in the world; because of the McGuinty government electricity policy, they can't make money—exactly the kind of mill that you hear the McGuinty government promote and say is what we need to do. But I'll tell you something. If they have to pay \$80 a megawatt for their electricity, while competing mills elsewhere in North America are paying half that or a third that, they can be as modern, they can be as high-tech, they can be as razzle-dazzle as you want them to be, and they won't be able to make money.

Now, the McGuinty government has tried to finesse this issue. We hear the McGuinty government boast that they have made \$680 million available for the forest sector. They're throwing all this money. The forest sector doesn't want money thrown at it. They're not interested. This is a problem that cannot be solved by throwing money at it. What they are saying is, "Look, we've got two fundamental problems here. You've driven the price of electricity so high, and you continue to drive the price of electricity so high, that even if you gave us all this money, it would be gone within two years to pay for the electricity."

So all the announcements of the McGuinty government—"Oh, we're going to give you loan guarantees," and "Oh, we're going to give you a grant"—the industry simply looks at it and says, "Look, you missed the point." Actually, to be fair, the McGuinty government is deliberately missing the point. They know what the problem is. They know the first problem is that electricity rates are too high to be sustainable for this industry. Second, they know that the delivered cost of wood is too high to be sustainable for this industry. But they think they can somehow finesse those two fundamental issues by talking about, "Oh, we're prepared to throw \$680 million at you." All the money—\$680 million or \$60 million or \$200 million—is not going to make a difference if those two fundamental issues are not addressed, and so far there is a reluctance by the McGuinty government to address those fundamental issues.

Let me say very directly, if those issues are not addressed within three or four years, we'll be lucky if we have even a couple of paper mills, a couple of pulp mills, across northern Ontario. That is how severe this situation is. Companies are simply not prepared to invest in Ontario given the electricity policy and the wood fibre policies of this government. They will invest in Quebec,

and they are investing in Quebec. When Cascades announced they were shutting down a paper machine in Thunder Bay, they simply said, "We're moving the production to Quebec." When Abitibi has talked about shutting down the mill in Kenora, they are part and parcel of that, trying to move the production out of Ontario and either into Quebec or British Columbia. If Tembec, which has a newsprint mill in Kapuskasing and in Pine Falls, Manitoba, discontinues their investment in Kapuskasing and puts literally hundreds of people out of work, they'll be shifting production to their newsprint mill in Manitoba.

It's very clear what is happening here, and it's very clear that this game the McGuinty government is playing, "We'll announce this this week and we'll announce something else the next week" isn't addressing the fundamental problem.

The forest sector is not asking for money. They are not asking for subsidies. They're simply asking that they be allowed to pay the cost of producing electricity where they are located. If you can produce electricity 10 kilometres from the mill for \$20 a megawatt, they're quite willing to pay that. If you can produce electricity near the mill for \$30 a megawatt and transmit it to the mill, they're quite willing to pay that. But the McGuinty government policy of driving electricity rates through the roof and saying, "You must pay \$80 a megawatt for electricity that costs only \$20 a megawatt at a hydro dam near your mill," is unfair. That's driving this industry, these mills and these jobs out of the province.

The government situation for northwestern Ontario is even more absurd. Many people don't know this, but the electricity system west of Wawa is not even connected into the southern Ontario electricity grid. It's for that reason that when southern Ontario was hit by a blackout in the summer of 2003, the lights stayed on west of Wawa. It's a totally separate electricity system. And it's an electricity system that is dominated by power dams, by falling water electricity. It's an electricity system where, literally, you still have untapped rivers that can produce more electricity. It's an electricity system that actually has a surplus. Northwestern Ontario doesn't even use all the electricity that is available there, but they're forced, as a result of McGuinty government policy, to pay \$80 a megawatt for electricity that is produced in their own backyard for less than \$20 a megawatt.

1550

Let me tell you what's happening there, because that's where a majority of the job losses have come. That's where we're talking over 2,000 jobs lost in just the last year or so. The McGuinty government electricity policy could force the closure of the mill in Kenora, which is on the cusp now. It has put the mill in Dryden in danger. It has put the Bowater mill, the biggest mill in Thunder Bay, in danger. Abitibi is trying to sell their mill in Thunder Bay. Cascades is threatening to shut down their mill in Thunder Bay. Norampac is threatening to shut down their mill in Red Rock after laying off 175 people.

The mill in Marathon is touch and go. The mill in Terrace Bay, one of the pulp mills there, just closed down—150 jobs.

The McGuinty government, through its unfair and bizarre electricity policy, could close every one of those mills, and let me say that the McGuinty government is well along in this process—well along in this process—of closing every one of those mills and resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. Do you know what? That would result in a huge electricity surplus. But do you know what else? That electricity would just sit there, unused. It couldn't be transmitted to southern Ontario; it couldn't be transmitted to Minnesota; it couldn't be transmitted to Manitoba.

Somebody who came to Ontario from outside the province would look at this and say, "Well, this is crazy. Why would a provincial government follow an electricity policy that is resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, that is devastating local economies and regional economies?" Frankly, there's no upside. It's not as if you could take that electricity supply and move it to Toronto; you can't. It's not as if you could sell it into the United States and make money from it there; you can't. It's not as if you could sell it into Manitoba and make money off it there; you can't. Literally tens of thousands of jobs and dozens of communities are being shut down by a McGuinty government policy that has no rhyme or reason to it—none. Why would any government literally shut down a whole economic region as a result of government policy when there is no upside?

From time to time I hear some of the government staffers say things like, "Oh, this is a sunset industry." If this were a sunset industry, we wouldn't see the province of Manitoba actually putting out a request for proposals for another mill in Manitoba and companies going to Manitoba to put in proposals to build a mill. We wouldn't see, for example, a plan coming forward now in British Columbia to reopen a pulp mill that has been idle for over two years. But that is what's happening: A pulp mill is about to be reopened, one that's been idle for the last couple of years.

We wouldn't see companies like Abitibi, Tembec or Domtar planning to put literally hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment into their mills in that province, but that's what's happening. We wouldn't see, for example, Grant Forest Products going down to the Carolinas to invest in two mills there. So when the McGuinty government says, "Oh, this is a sunset industry," the only thing that is "sunset" is the thinking of the McGuinty government.

This is not a sunset industry. In fact, if we contemplate for a minute, we now have the largest middle class in the world not in the United States, not in Europe but in the developing country of China. We all know what middle-class people do. They buy books. They buy newspapers. They buy magazines. They read a lot. In other words, the largest middle class the world has ever known is about to start buying more paper, is about to insist on reading books, magazines and newspapers. Second, we have the

developing economy of India, which now has the second-largest middle class in the world, people who are about to start buying newspapers, books and magazines. So this is not a sunset industry. What it is is a government that doesn't want to recognize the irrationality, the wrong-headedness and the destructiveness of its own policy. That's what we have here. I could also talk about the delivered cost of wood, but I'm going to forgo that because I know other members of our caucus will want to engage in this debate. But I say to the McGuinty government, you can talk about throwing money at this, and you can even engage in your favourite game, when you run out of all other excuses, of blaming the federal Liberals. How absurd. Provincial Liberals go out and campaign at election time for federal Liberals, and then when they run out of excuses for their own misbehaviour here in Ontario, they turn around and blame federal Liberals for their problems.

You can ask the federal Martin government to contribute some money—I think they should—but that's not going to make a difference unless and until you address the two fundamental mistakes of your own McGuinty government policies: You've driven electricity prices sky-high in a part of the province where electricity is very inexpensive to produce, and you continue to drive the delivered cost of wood sky-high in a part of the province where this is important.

So I call upon the McGuinty government to stop the photo ops, stop the phony press releases, and actually get down to dealing with the two fundamental problems: the fact that you've driven electricity rates through the roof, and the fact that you continue to drive the cost of delivered wood fibre through the roof as well.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I will agree with the leader of the third party that it is good we're having this debate today, because this is a very important issue facing the province of Ontario, and rightfully, as he says, the whole province. This isn't a northern issue, and I must commend the Northern Ontario Municipal Association for bringing that message down to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual general meeting in August, to Toronto, where basically all the municipalities in Ontario really, I think for the first time, understood the importance of the forestry industry to their communities. There are hundreds of forestry jobs in Mississauga, hundreds of forestry jobs in Toronto, for example, as there are in communities in eastern Ontario and, of course, in northern Ontario. So this is a very important industry to the province.

It is sad, though, that the level of the debate is so simplified that the member of the third party is reducing it to an issue solely, it seems, of electricity rates and delivered wood costs. He knows it's a more complicated issue than that. There is a crisis in the forest sector and there's no denying that. That's why over a year ago now, I invited the participants in the industry—the companies,

the union reps, the municipal reps, some First Nations representatives and some technical experts in the industry—to come together and, in the competitive council report the member cited, to agree on what the challenges are facing the industry, and to advise government as to how we could participate in the changes that are needed.

I think that's where we part company with the member, in that we have to get our head out of the sand and realize that the industry is not going to look the same as it did five or 10 years ago.

I think in the end, as we transform this industry—it's transforming because of all the pressures, and we're going to talk about them, two of which the member has discussed—it is going to look different. I think in the end we will probably get the same number of jobs in our forest sector and maybe, eventually, even some more, but I think there are going to be some different jobs and they may be in different places across northern Ontario. That's what we have to work with. I think all of us have to be nimble and adaptable to these changes, to work together in partnership—the unions, the companies, with government—and to take a look at what that industry is going to look like.

When I look out ahead, what I see, whether you like this or not, is fewer but probably larger sawmills. That's the trend of the industry so that they can run efficient operations, and we have to remember that we shouldn't even call sawmills in Ontario mega mills, because our largest mill is still a third of the size of the large mills in the interior of British Columbia. So we really don't have large mills when it comes to the world-class scale, and there are lots of reasons to do with the nature of our wood compared to the British Columbia wood. We will have fewer sawmills. They will be larger. They'll be regional in nature rather than in every community like they used to be. They'll be running at three shifts a day. That's what sawmilling will look like.

1600

As we've seen from the transformation in the paper industry, there will be fewer paper machines producing less paper, because there is a reduced demand for both newsprint in North America and, as we've seen from some recent announcements in other provinces in this country, there is a reduced demand for a lot of office paper now that computerization is replacing it. So it is complicated, and the only way we're going to fix it is by working together.

Why is it that we have companies in other jurisdictions also closing, jurisdictions that you could cite as having very low electricity costs on the one hand, and jurisdictions that have very low delivered wood costs on the other? Let's take the current example—because it's the same company that does business in Kenora—Abitibi. They just decided to close their paper operation in Newfoundland. Compared to Ontario, Newfoundland has relatively low electricity costs, and yet they closed that plant. So you can't say it's just electricity prices that are causing these companies to reduce their operations.

At the end of his speech, the member brings up the delivered wood cost. That is a significant factor in the operation of our mills today in Ontario. In my council's report, they refer to Saskatchewan as having one of the lowest delivered wood costs in the country. It's as low as \$35 a cubic metre, compared to the Ontario average—which is high—of \$55. Yet, two weeks ago, when the resource ministers were in Saskatchewan, Weyerhaeuser announced the closing of their paper mill in Prince Albert—over 600 jobs. What is the reason for that? Why have they done that? I have to ask the member, what's going on here? There is obviously a transformation going on here—

Mr. Hampton: Mark my words: In three months, you'll be eating those words.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay:—and the only way we're going to look at this is that we've got to work together.

The Acting Speaker: Leader of the third party, can you allow the debate to continue?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): It's very hard to take, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: But I'm sure you want to hear it inside the chamber.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm only citing these examples because that's the reality of the day. I would hope and pray that something does happen in Prince Albert within the next few months so that those displaced workers in Saskatchewan get their employment back and survive the blow that that community has had. I don't want to see any of this happen in any jurisdiction in this country, but the reality is that it is happening, so what we have to do is work with the community.

I have a very good working relationship, for instance, with the mayor of Kenora, Dave Canfield. We have spoken about what the future would look like in Kenora. What we're going to see with this transition is one machine rather than two paper machines. We're going to see an increase in sawmilling jobs. I've committed to the mayor that we are going to work with him and the proponents who are coming forward for other value-added operations in the Kenora area. He is in discussions with a company that has got a very exciting modern idea called House-in-a-Box. The timing couldn't be better, with the destruction that the hurricanes have caused in the Gulf States of the United States and the need for such a portable type of modular housing operation.

With computerization today, you can basically order a house from any jurisdiction in North America. The building code goes in for that particular state—say it's Nebraska—and that house can be produced in Kenora, put in a box and shipped to Nebraska, exactly up to code for that jurisdiction. That is the new type of thinking that we have to start to employ in this industry, and so it is going to look different. It's not just going to be lumber and paper. It has moved on, as it has in the last few years now, into things like oriented strand board and particle board. Some of it is not competitive with China, but

some of the more medium-density board is, so we need to add value to that. The thing is, what we have to do is to work together. That's what we have to do.

What the council said to government is, "Because of the tough problems that we have here, it is tough for us to raise capital." People don't want to invest in this industry right now. But I would have to address right now what the member said. Nobody on this side of the House, nobody in the McGuinty government has ever said, "This is a sunset industry." I don't know where you're getting that from. I surely hope that's not what you believe in, because forestry has a great future in this province, and it's going to do that.

We responded to the council's report to say, OK, one of the biggest challenges the industry has now in making these changes, these transformations, is access to capital. We will basically guarantee a pool of capital up to \$350 million so that they can get loan guarantees for up to 50% of the project costs, to go ahead with many of the investments they need. But in talking with the industry, we understood that isn't enough, so we came up with our forest prosperity fund, which at the moment has \$150 million basically in grant money, very much like the auto sector fund that the industry compared this to, and the needs to, to lever these investments, to make these improvements. This is what the companies need. This is the type of operation we've done, the program we've brought in place.

There are also ongoing costs that obviously the report has identified. Interestingly enough, and very ironic, is that the last two governments had created these costs by downloading these expenditures to the companies.

I'd like to read a letter that was signed by the Honourable Bud Wildman when he was Minister of Natural Resources—this is dated 1991—responding to, at that time, the E.B. Eddy company in Espanola. The company was very concerned about the changing of the contribution the government was making to forest access roads. Minister Wildman said, "I appreciate the implications of eliminating forest management agreement road funding. However, the ministry has determined that funding for forest renewal is our highest priority." Therefore, the decision was made back then to download the cost, both construction and maintenance.

The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines had a development road program called the NORT program, which was very small. It basically supplied money for new development roads to mines, and some new roads for other activities in northern Ontario. But the main funding for those roads declined. That had happened at that time. Then the previous government downloaded the cost of the forest inventory. This is a big concern. This is a concern of the unions and companies in northwestern Ontario, that they no longer have a handle on what's out there in the forest. That is a serious problem and a serious concern.

When that responsibility was downloaded to companies, the companies did not have the resources to carry out modern, sophisticated forest inventory work to give

some certainty as to what and where the wood is, but also to help in the planning of how you would access that wood. We're going to adopt the most modern technology agreed upon by industry to make sure that we bring the forest inventory for Ontario up to speed, so that the companies have world-class mapping of the resources and are going to be able to plan exactly how they access that wood, and know where their water crossings are so they can plan for that and not have to send people out on the ground.

Also with this technology, in some of the demonstrations I've seen, this new technology is able to identify wood that the old stereoscopic aerial photography was no longer able to see. I've seen in some demonstration patches that all of a sudden 26% of the wood we see now is in cedar. That just wasn't available before because you couldn't see it. We're going to get a better handle on what's out there in the bush. That's going to help with the delivered wood cost, in the planning.

These are some of the aspects we're doing with our program. I would say to the member that I would hope he would work with us in making sure we all work together to make sure this transition is beneficial to the people of Ontario. What I want to say is that maybe the member needs to go out, as I have done recently again, and talk to the companies and really find out what their needs are.

I'm going to give you an example. I spoke to one of the major companies that operates in this province the other day. This person is about to take over the running of the operation and wanted to go back in the company's history, in the last 24 months, and try to find out what were the increased costs that were affecting the bottom line of the company. My guess was—because this is a company that has sawmills and has pulp and paper—that maybe it was natural gas. The person said, "No, that's not what it is. When we went back over the last two years, it was actually petroleum products that was the highest factor." In fact, what this person said to me was that in the last 24 months their total petroleum product bill, which is not only the fuels but many of the chemicals that are derived from petroleum, exceeded the total of natural gas and electricity costs. So it is not—

Mr. Hampton: David, you go try and peddle that.

1610

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: That's just the facts. I suggest to the member, maybe you need to sit down with the company officials and really understand how complex a challenge this is. If it was as simple as just changing one policy here, it could be done, but it's not that simple. It is very complex and it requires working with the companies to make sure we do this. That's why we're here.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I wish the member were more interested in hearing what I think are some of the solutions to this. He likes to talk when it's not even his turn. I guess that's what's going on.

The member has to understand that the industry isn't going to look the same. He's stuck in the status quo. He thinks that everything is just going to be the same. I look

at other industries. I look at how the CAW has worked in the automobile industry and has understood how that industry has had to change over the last few years. Quite frankly, this industry hasn't changed all that much over the last 20 years. Because of the cyclical nature of the resource industry, when the good times have been there, they were usually very good, and it derived enough revenue and cash to withstand the troughs when they were down in the bottom. But we're no longer in that cycle, and I think that's what we have to understand here, that this is a major transition, and to get through that transition we're all going to have to roll up our sleeves and work together. Our contribution is to help incent some of those investments that will make that industry competitive, and that's what we have to do.

I would say to the whip, wherever the whip is, that he needs to let me know how much time I have left. I know we have other northern members who want to speak and I never made a count of the time.

Mr. Speaker, this might be an appropriate time to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the members for Nipissing, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay—Superior North in the next few minutes.

It is good to have this discussion. We need to have the discussion.

I would say that today in Kenora the five other unions have returned to the table in those discussions with the company. I think that's good news. I would hope that all the unions will be back at the table so that we can resolve the situation in Kenora, to make sure that Kenora is a sustainable community, as it should be, and that we can all work together in finding, which I know we can, more resource industry jobs for that town and then we can start to make it grow. But first we have to stabilize the primary industry, make sure we've got a strong, sustainable paper machine running there, a larger sawmill, with 50 more jobs in that community, and then start working on these value-added businesses that are eager to share in that wood basket in the Kenora area. I think Kenora can be a very strong, resource-based industry for years to come.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound—Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon on the opposition day motion put forward by the third party.

Mr. Bisson: You'll be voting with us, right?

Mr. Miller: I'll just reflect on that for a moment.

"That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must recognize that during the first two years of its mandate, thousands of jobs have been lost in the forest industries of northern Ontario;"—no argument there.

"Recognize that communities are being devastated by the loss of jobs and the disintegration of local and regional economies;"—certainly that is true.

"Recognize that as a result of the government's hydro-electricity policies, sawmills and pulp and paper mills in northern Ontario are forced to pay \$80 a megawatt or more for electricity"—and it goes on talking about

electricity costs. I think it is self-evident that the forestry sector in Ontario is in crisis.

Last spring, as the northern development and mines critic I had the pleasure of doing a seven-day trip around northern Ontario. I drove 3,700 kilometres. The thing that struck me more than anything else on that road trip, as you go from community to community, was how in just about every northern community the mill is the feature. In many cases, it's the sole industry in the community. There's no one industry that has a more significant impact on the north and on specific communities and people than the forestry sector. Maybe it's just a coincidence that the crisis has been brewing over the last two years, when we've seen some of the significant cost factors in the forestry sector go up dramatically just in the time period that the current government has been in power.

I'd like to emphasize the crisis. I was talking to a mill manager, and he listed some of the different mills that are in trouble.

Of course, this week we've had the members of the United Steelworkers union from Kenora's Abitibi Consolidated mill, as their one paper machine is scheduled to shut down next week, October 23, I believe it is, of the two machines that are there. That's 355 jobs.

Norampac: When I was on my trip around northern Ontario last April, I stopped in Red Rock and I met with people from the mill there. At that point, they were talking about how concerned they were about electricity prices. Now I see that one machine is being shut down, 175 jobs being lost in Red Rock. And that mill is the only business in town, really, for all the people who live there.

In Terrace Bay, Neenah Paper shut a line down earlier; Opasatika; Chapleau; Bowater in Thunder Bay, one machine shut down; Cascades paper in Thunder Bay, a machine shut down; Tembec, a newspaper machine shut down, 65 jobs. The pulp mills in Marathon and Smooth Rock Falls are really just hanging on the edge. So there's no doubt there is a crisis.

After meeting with Glen Morrison, the president of United Steelworkers, 1330, Abitibi Consolidated, I asked the Premier in question period on Monday about this crisis and his response was, and I've got it right here, "The forestry sector is experiencing unprecedented challenges as a result of globalization of the industry. That globalization is leading to consolidations and it's leading to job losses...." Those were the words of the Premier on Monday of this week. Well, that's true to a certain extent, but you can't ignore the fundamentals of the industry. The fact of the matter is, we have the highest delivered wood costs in the world. What I've heard is US\$55 per cubic metre. I was speaking to a mill manager and he itemized that. Delivered wood costs are basically all the costs of getting the fibre to the mill. It counts reforestation, it counts planting, it counts road-building. If that cost is the highest in the world, it's pretty hard for your industry to be competitive.

Of course, we have just about the highest electricity prices in North America, particularly for pulp and paper mills. It's about a third of their costs. When I was in Red

Rock, they said that in their case roughly about a third of the cost at their containerboard mill was electricity. So electricity is a huge factor, particularly in these northern pulp and paper mills.

I was talking to a mill manager in northeastern Ontario who illustrated this situation. This was just when the minister was about to do his second response to his Minister's Council on Forest Sector Competitiveness. He said to me that if his particular mill, which used on average about 100 megawatts of electricity, was located in Manitoba, based on September prices, where he paid about \$70 per megawatt hour compared to \$30 per megawatt hour in Manitoba, he'd save \$30 million a year. That's one mill—\$30 million a year. In the case of that mill, that's the difference between being viable and not being viable.

There's no doubt that there's a crisis. Forestry is a huge industry for northern Ontario and for the whole province. It's \$19 billion in sales, \$4.8 billion in salaries and benefits for direct employees—and they're good jobs. The average wage for direct employees is \$68,000 a year. When you add up the indirect employees, there are 275,000 people employed—billions annually in federal, provincial and municipal taxes. It's \$240 million a year just in stumpage fees.

The minister has had an expert council go out and look at the challenges of the forestry sector—this is the Minister's Council on Forest Sector Competitiveness—and he's come back and responded to that. His first response was in June, and in that response he basically brought some loan guarantees forward. I happened to be up in Thunder Bay and I toured the Bowater plant at that point, which has since shut down one of their paper machines. The response of the manager of the Bowater plant to the minister's first response of loan guarantees was, "We can get access to capital in our case and there is no point in investing in our business if you're not going to make money, if the fundamentals aren't there." Why would you invest in it? The government has to address those fundamental costs.

1620

The minister responded in June basically with loan guarantees, and then recently he had a second response which was \$150 million over three years, and he also had a section about maintaining primary access roads up to \$28 million a year, and \$10 million toward making the inventory more accurate. To give you some perspective, first of all, the minister's council, which he put together, was made up of many experts. It was made up of municipal representatives like David Canfield, the mayor of the city of Kenora, but also the president—I assume he is the president, Frank Dottori, of Tembec Industries, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, many industry representatives, Cecil Makowski of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. They did a lot of work on this report, and they came up with 26 recommendations. The \$28 million toward primary road maintenance falls far short of what they asked for. They asked for

all the costs on primary roads to be covered, and 50% of the costs on secondary roads.

All that the minister has so far proposed will reduce the delivered wood costs, which are the highest in the world, by US\$1 per cubic metre. That is certainly not a very substantial step. In fact, Cecil Makowski, who sat on that committee, on that council, called the response “pathetically anemic.” Those were his words. The Ontario Forest Industries Association stated that the minister’s recent response “failed to address core issues,” and there was nothing to address energy costs. I know our energy critic will have something to say about energy.

Certainly in northwestern Ontario they have a unique situation where the connections to southern Ontario are small. When I was at the Bowater plant, they were watching the price of electricity across the province. When people turned their air conditioners on in Toronto and the price was high, they shut down the line in Thunder Bay, even though when they do that, that means either the coal-fired plant at Atikokan or Thunder Bay shuts down or they spill water around one of the hydro plants because they can’t get the electricity down to southern Ontario anyway. It seems like a bit of a silly situation and I think maybe the government should look at some creative solutions to try to deliver the real price of electricity for people in northern Ontario.

The province’s response has not really addressed—it’s a baby step. The Timmins council is very concerned about this issue. In fact, they passed a resolution and I’d like to read that into the record: “That council for the corporation of the city of Timmins does hereby request the province of Ontario to immediately provide funding to address the four key recommendations contained in the Minister of Natural Resources Council on Forest Sector Competitiveness report as follows:

“The government—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): You’re almost finished.

Mr. Miller: Thank you for letting me know that I’m almost at the end of my time. I appreciate that, whip of the day. I’m going to have to wrap up here. I’ve been instructed by the whip of the day.

I’d just like to get a couple of more things on the record. The city of Timmins is asking the government to provide 100% of the construction and maintenance of primary roads, 50% of the cost of secondary roads, and four other points that I think make a lot of sense.

I’m receiving letters from Tembec employees in my riding. I’ve received about 50 from the hardwood floor plant at Huntsville. They’re all concerned for their jobs. They are asking for some of the recommendations of the minister’s council report to be implemented. I have many different forestry businesses in my riding that are concerned about this, but it affects the whole province, it’s such a significant business.

I’m going to leave time for other members of my party who I know would also like to contribute to this debate.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I am pleased today to speak to this resolution and to speak about the

forestry industry, as it is such an important component of my riding. As many members of the House will know, a great many of my constituents work at Tembec in Timiskaming, as well as the Tembec site in Mattawa and, of course, Columbia Forest Products in Rutherglen, as well as some subsidiary industries related to the forest industry.

Today, again, we had some troubling news in our local media about 63 workers being laid off at Columbia Forest Products. Our area is definitely not going untouched by the troubles in the forest industry, and it is, therefore, very much top of mind for me and for many of my constituents.

I have spoken on numerous occasions with representatives of Tembec about their specific issues. I know that with respect to Columbia Forest Products, they are citing the weakening hardwood veneer and plywood markets and being squeezed by the offshore markets over the last two to three years as being incredibly important to the reasons that they’ve had some layoffs. As well, they cite the strong Canadian dollar as contributing to tough business conditions—again, referring to a number of the essential components of the perfect storm, as the minister has referred to it in the past.

I had the opportunity to meet with a representative of Tembec. Just a few weeks ago, I actually visited their mill in Timiskaming, which is such a major employer for many in my region. At that time, I met with the mayor of Timiskaming, the provincial member of the Legislature, municipal representatives from the city of North Bay, as well as representatives of Tembec, Charlie Gagnon, one of their vice-presidents and president Frank Dottori. It was an incredibly useful and insightful meeting for me. It was helpful to see exactly the magnitude of the operations that Tembec has in Timiskaming and the impact that it has on our local economy in both North Bay and northeastern Ontario.

Subsequent to that meeting, I was happy to be able to host a meeting between the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the vice-president of Tembec, Charlie Gagnon, who set out for the minister the concerns that the forestry industry has and specifically addressed some of the issues with respect to the federal government and its role in this situation.

Certainly everyone recognizes that the forestry industry is in a time of transition. Subsequent to my meetings and visits at Tembec, I have received a number of calls and correspondence from representatives of Tembec who want me to assist them in pushing the federal government to assist the industry. They recognize that the package that the Minister of Natural Resources has outlined is going some way to assist them in this time of difficulty. They recognize that it is a good first step and that we are continuing to work with them, but they see a primary role at this point in time for the federal government.

As you know, the McGuinty government is moving to enhance the competitiveness of the forestry sector and to contribute to the strong and prosperous communities in northern Ontario who rely on that sector. We have

committed more than \$330 million in new initiatives over the next five years in addition to what we had announced as \$350 million in loan guarantees. I know that the minister outlined for us some of the various components of those initiatives, which are significant.

At this point, however, the representatives of Tembec have outlined for me that they feel that the federal government has to come to the plate. Canada has won the NAFTA ECC ruling. As one of the representatives of Tembec outlined for me, that is the last appeal available in the process. By not complying with this ruling, the US is not only in violation of its agreement with Canada; it is also in violation of its own laws. To put it very specifically, Tembec currently has \$300 million on deposit with the United States in duties. The softwood lumber industry is now in a position where it is defending Canada's rights in NAFTA. Where so many other industries are affected by NAFTA rulings, the softwood lumber industry right now is at the forefront in defending our rights and ensuring that the United States adheres to the rulings of NAFTA.

What the softwood lumber industry is seeking from the federal government is assistance to the industry in the form of loan guarantees from Export Development Canada. They will recognize the duty deposits as accounts receivable. They could recognize those duty deposits that are sitting with the US—in the case of Tembec, \$300 million—as accounts receivable and provide loan guarantees to companies that wish to use them. Since the industry is confident that they will be getting those deposits back, the government has virtually no risk. It is for that reason that they are seeking this assistance from the federal government.

1630

The federal government has the ability, through Export Development Canada mechanisms, to provide this assistance to the industry in this time of need. It is the feeling of representatives from Tembec and the entire forestry industry that it is time for the federal government to come to the plate and provide them with this assistance, which is so readily available, as well as to continue with the battle that they have started to fight with the American government to ensure that this softwood lumber dispute is finally put to rest.

As you know, the forestry industry has been fighting this battle for some time. They have put gigantic resources into this battle and have won at every step of the way. They feel it's time for the federal government to step up to the plate and continue that fight at the international level, as well as to provide them with some support through these EDC loan guarantees that would allow them to whether this "perfect storm," as we've described it, and assist them through this difficult period of time.

We, as a government, have provided them with assistance. I have spoken with the representatives of Tembec and of various other forestry sector representatives in my riding. They know we are working toward solutions; they know we are committed to seeing those solutions. These

industries are so incredibly important to our various northern communities. I'm pleased today to stand up with the other representatives of the northern communities in my caucus and talk about all of the work we are doing to ensure their sustainability and their prosperity into the future, and to ensure that we have those good, sound, well-paying jobs in the north for all of our residents of northern Ontario.

I know that I'm sharing the time with other members of our northern caucus, so I will leave it at that, only to say that I hope the federal government is listening to us today and will assist our forestry industry in any way they can in this battle they have.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's a pleasure to join in on the discussion this afternoon on the opposition day motion of the third party with regard to the forest industry in northern Ontario. I would certainly like to make a few comments with regard to this issue. There is no question that the industry in northern Ontario is in a crisis: The leader of the third party recognizes that; all of our visitors in the gallery today recognize that; we recognize that; the people who live in northern Ontario recognize that; the people who write in the business sections of newspapers recognize that. It seems that the government of this province fails to recognize that.

Yes, they brought in a program, they say, to support forestry in the north, but again, it's just more of that Liberal spin and it's not going to do a heck of a lot. I ask myself, what good are matching funds to someone who simply cannot afford to operate under the current circumstances? They're not going to make an investment into their business if the climate that this government is responsible for creating simply isn't there.

Mr. Bisson: If you understand that, why don't they?

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, we're going to try to correct that in a couple of years.

Anyway, I support this motion and I recognize that it is extremely important. I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Steelworkers the other day, articulating to me the severity of this crisis and what it means to their mill, the Abitibi mill up in Kenora, 320 jobs that could be lost. I mean, the ramifications of that are huge to a community.

Mr. Bisson: Sunday.

Mr. Yakabuski: It's happening in the next couple of days, as the member for Timmins–James Bay just reminded me. That can have devastating effects on communities, so we're here to support it.

I also want to take this opportunity to speak about the forestry crisis in my own riding as well. Our mills—Murray's, McCrae's, Shaw's, Hokum's, Gulick's, Neuman's, Stein's—are all suffering from the same problems, not the same issues as the north, but the crisis in forestry is affecting us all. Logging contractors, such as Barry Verch with M.W. Miller, Lidtkes, Dombroskis, are all suffering because of the high cost of energy, and that's been brought on by the policies of this government.

There was a great story in the Eganville Leader a couple of weeks ago about Hokum's mill, Ben Hokum and his father, how they started the mill and how they have worked over some 50 years, bringing employment and, as much as we can expect or try to develop in areas such as ours that are constantly being harmed by this government's policies, some form of employment and prosperity to the people who live in my riding. What I found interesting about it—I didn't find it remarkable, because I'm not surprised—is the forward thinking, the determination, and the will to succeed in spite of the fact that there were tremendous obstacles that Ben Hokum and his father faced, and he faces today, along with his grandson, Dean Felhaber, who runs the operation alongside Ben Hokum. It was a wonderful story about people who—even though the cards can be stacked against them sometimes, and governments, through regulation and lack of support, make it very difficult for these companies to be successful—still forge on because this is their life, this is their livelihood, these are the people they care about, and they're going to do what they can to make it work. Those are the kind of people we have in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The leader of the third party talked about the power that is developed up in the north, the White Dog and the Caribou dams, places like that. That power, he's suggesting, should be used up in the north. I understand where he's coming from. In my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, on the majestic Ottawa River that borders my riding, we've got Des Joachims at 420-some megawatts. We've got Chenaux at 144 megawatts. On the Ottawa River—what a place. I mean, here's a river that is one of the world's greatest rivers. You might not know this, but they called the town of Deep River that because the water outside of Deep River is 300-and-some feet deep in the Ottawa River. But if you go up around Deux Rivières, you'll find spots where the Ottawa River is over 700 feet deep. I mean, it's so deep that they brought the Loch Ness Monster over there, it went down in the Ottawa River and it drowned. It's never been seen since.

Laughter.

Mr. Yakabuski: No, no. That's a true story, I'm telling you. So it's a tremendous waterway.

Also in my riding, we've got the mighty Madawaska River, and on that river, we've got the Barrett Chute, the Mountain Chute, the Stuartville, the Calabogie and the Madawaska dams. A total of 1,200 megawatts of power are being produced in my riding, and what are we getting from it? What are our mills getting from it? High hydro bills on the part of this government, because we don't get to take the benefits of that. Because this is falling water power, we also don't get the high-paying jobs associated with it. This is not a big fossil fuel plant or a nuclear plant where there are tremendous numbers of people working at it. These are falling water plants producing 1,200 megawatts of power.

But what do we get out of this government? We get a fat "no" when it comes to sharing gas tax revenue in this province. I have reintroduced my private member's bill. I

hope those people on the other side of the House recognize that ridings like mine that supply the power to this province need a fair shake when it comes to sharing their gas tax that they're paying to your treasury.

As a matter of fact, folks, when you look at the per capita amount of gas tax being paid, we're the folks doling it out, the rural people. We can't jump on a bus. I asked the Premier in my column back in September, what time does the bus go through Quadeville, Dalton? Well, it doesn't. You've got to get into your vehicle and pay high gas prices and drive on our roads that we're not getting the support for so can we can refurbish those roads, rebuild them, make them better, because you're putting all the gas tax into urban Ontario. We need to have rapid transit, we need to have public transit, but we need our roads too.

1640

Mr. Bisson: In my riding, there are no roads.

Mr. Yakabuski: I hear you.

Another thing I want to talk about is, you're hearing some stories these days about these groups that want to shut down logging in Algonquin Park. Well, that is not going to happen. That can't happen. Anybody who wants to shut down logging in Algonquin Park is going to be in for the fight of their lives, ladies and gentlemen. I remember in the 1970s when my father was a member here and there was talk about shutting down logging in Algonquin Park. As he said then, "Over my dead body." There are thousands of people whose livelihood depends upon the multi-use concept of Algonquin Park in this province.

The Minister of Natural Resources is on record as saying, "Logging in Algonquin Park is safe," but that's a Liberal promise. I want to be very clear on that, ladies and gentlemen: That's a Liberal promise. I want to be on the record today as letting you know, Minister of Natural Resources, that logging has gone on in Algonquin Park since before this Legislature even existed. It will continue, because that is a vital part of the livelihood of people in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

How am I doing for time, Laurie? OK?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Keep going.

Mr. Bisson: You're on a roll. Go, John.

Mr. Yakabuski: OK.

Let's get back to the hydro costs of people operating forestry mills in Ontario. I talk to people in my riding. Dean Felhaber tells me what has happened to his hydro bills this year. These are people who are employing hard-working Ontarians. Oh, but the minister said today, "Those hard-working Ontarians—good news." Actually, she was going to show up in a Santa Claus suit but they had made it for the previous Minister of Energy, before the cabinet shuffle—well, we don't even have to go there. So the suit wasn't used as a prop today, but she came out there like Santa Claus, telling all these people in Ontario—an epiphany for the cabinet in Ontario—"Here we are, folks. We've decided that what we should do is give you back the money we took from you in the

first place. We're not going to pay you interest. We've kept it for all these months, for 16 months, but now we're going to give it back to you, just in time for Christmas. And maybe you could remember that it was a Liberal minister at a press conference who did the spin on it." It's quite remarkable that they could have a press conference to give back to somebody what was already theirs.

I want to reiterate the importance of forestry in Ontario, the importance of forestry to northern Ontario, because without forestry there ain't going to be much there.

I guess I could ask the minister, what's the plan with the generating station at Atikokan? I know I saw something in the paper about him saying, "Up there, did you know, I think what we should be doing is converting that to peat and biomass and keeping it going," because the Liberals' plan here is just to shut down Atikokan. But, you see, it's all part of their plan. How are you going to shut down Atikokan if the people up there need the power? Well, what you have to do ahead of time is make sure all the mills close. Then nobody needs the power and we can shut down the Atikokan plant.

I tell you, they're pretty sharp, but they're heartless when it comes to the people in this province. And that's what you should be asking yourself: Has this government forgotten about the people we are supposed to be serving? Have they forgotten about people? Those people who live up there, the people who live in my riding, can't just up and go wherever they want. They've lived there all their lives. These are their homes. Goodness gracious, let's face facts and admit that this government has turned its back on everybody in rural Ontario, in northern Ontario and all across this province.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to join in the debate on opposition day. I do so from the perspective of a critic for economic development and trade. Although much of the debate so far has been about the forestry industry, and of course that's exactly what this motion is about, I think we all need to recognize that forestry is basically the first train in a major train wreck that's coming down the tracks in Ontario. It's actually the leading indicator of what the future has to hold if this government doesn't get a grip on its hydro policies and its energy policies in the province. It's basically the first line of defence, and it's being hit, and being hit hard, and the people are here today to tell you and the government that they support this motion that we're putting forward because somebody, gosh darn it, on your side of the House has to recognize that we have a crisis, that we have a significant problem. That problem is affecting these communities in a devastating way, and it's also going to be affecting the rest of the province very quickly. In fact, it already is.

I have to tell you that when you look at what the forestry industry means to the communities in the north, you'll hear a lot about that from the members who represent those areas. They're telling you exactly what it means to have a major employer shut its doors in their community, not because of anything that the employer

has done, not because of anything the workers have done, not because of any other factor, except that the government in this province is not prepared to deal with the crisis they're creating by doing nothing to make sure that the industry remains strong and viable.

But what is happening as a result? As a result, we are having an effect on local industries in southern Ontario as well. A lot of the supply industries that are supplying services to the forest industry are being affected. If those mills are closing, if that industry is no longer viable, then many corporations, many companies, in southern Ontario that supply to those industries are also going to be suffering, laying off, closing their doors and causing an economic downturn in the southern portions of this province. In fact, if there is a further closure of the 12 mills that are at risk right now in the province, 13,000 jobs will be lost in southern Ontario, 7,500 direct jobs are going to be lost in the north, and 17,500 indirect jobs lost in the north.

Furthermore, the financial impact on the lost business is going to be significant in the heart of Ontario's Golden Horseshoe. Records from just three forestry companies show that southern Ontario purchases of goods and services for their respective operations total well in excess of \$400 million a year. In Toronto alone, the loss of business will be well in excess of \$250 million annually.

The people around this side of the House across from us might be giggling and laughing at some of the comments that are being made today, but this is no laughing matter. This is an extremely serious matter. It's a serious matter for the north and a serious matter for southern Ontario as well. The cities of Burlington, Mississauga, Brampton, Ottawa all can be expecting significant financial and related job losses as a result of this government's inaction on the forestry file. The forestry industry has a significant impact on the rest of the province.

I could give you many more statistics, but I first want to quote to you some information. I was thinking about it, and there were warnings about this; the government had warnings about this not too long ago. One of those warnings came from an organization called AMPCO. You might know that organization. It's basically a collective of large power users in Ontario. Here's what they told the provincial government several months ago. In their report to the government on the government's hydro policies, they said:

"The industries that see the largest increase in costs are those that use relatively more electricity and purchase those products that use relatively more electricity for their production....

"The negative provincial economic impact will be exacerbated by the interlocking nature of business, affecting different sectors as costs are passed on between businesses, to the extent that they can be. Thus, for example, in addition to the automotive sector feeling the impact of higher energy costs directly, they could also feel the impact through higher prices for major suppliers in the primary metals sector.

"Further, reduced investment by other industries may also result in a reduction in activity in the construction

industry.... Finally, amongst the service industries, trade, accommodation, food, and education service (from a reduced population)"—all of these are going to be impacted.

"Clearly, the cost of electricity price impacts are pervasive. The impacts do not fall on any one customer group. They will be felt by all Ontarians."

This is not something that has been pulled out of the trees. This is in a report that was put together by well-established manufacturing companies in Ontario. Initially this organization, interestingly enough, came together in the 1970s over the energy crisis in the Golden Horseshoe, in the Niagara region. Now they're still up and running and are very concerned about this government's lack of action on the energy file and on hydro prices.

1650

I hope every single one of the members of this House is going to be supporting the forestry motion that's before us today, because if they don't, they are simply turning their backs not only on the forestry communities in the north, but also on their very own communities here in the south, for those members who don't represent a northern riding.

There is one last thing I wanted to say, and I think it reflects the sad situation here. When the energy policy came forward, one of the biggest criticisms of that very same organization of corporations that caught my eye was this: "The ICC is concerned about lack of informed dialogue on electricity issues. There is little evidence that stakeholders concerns are being recognized and acted upon. Nor does it appear that the full impacts of policy decisions are being communicated to the public."

I'm sure this public here would agree with that statement. I know every single person who's watching this debate today understands that this government has fallen down sorely and needs to get its act together when it comes to hydro policy.

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased to have the opportunity this evening to make some comments with respect to provincial forestry strategy and our government's efforts to reinvigorate the northern Ontario economy over the last number of years.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brought up his father and his effort in trying to ensure that logging was maintained, for example, in Algonquin Park. I think it's worth going back a few years to the Peterson government, as an individual in northern Ontario who is in a community where we have in the neighbourhood of about 600 direct forestry jobs with the Flakeboard Co. Ltd., St. Marys Paper and Boniferro Mill Works, which is a small mill that's competing, as many of the mills in northern Ontario and northwestern Ontario are, to survive and profit and do well. As a northerner and as a relative newcomer to the Legislature, historically, if we look back at what took place in northern Ontario under the past two governments, I can't see much evidence of much support for my community of Sault Ste. Marie and other—

Interjection.

Mr. Orazietti: I know this is going to hit a nerve or two because I guess this medicine is a bit difficult to swallow, but the reality is that for the NDP to come in here today and suggest that our government is not stepping up to the plate when it comes to the forestry industry with a strategy that's effective—I don't know. If the leader of the third party would expect us to implement a strategy like buying a Costa Rican rainforest or cancelling a hydro deal with Manitoba at a cost of \$150 million to taxpayers, that is not our idea of an effective strategy to support northern Ontario's forestry industry.

Your record in government was very clear when it came to the management of energy issues. No new power has been created for the past 13 years while the Conservatives and the NDP were in government. We have a huge hurdle to overcome as a province and as a government, as a number of communities in northern Ontario very well know, in addressing our energy needs for the province, for northern Ontario.

The Minister of Natural Resources, within the last week, was up in northern Ontario and broke ground on a new wind power generation plant that will produce 99 megs of electricity at a cost of about \$150 million as simply phase 1. Within the last couple of weeks, the Bruce nuclear contract was signed and we are going to be restarting Bruce nuclear to bring back additional power to the grid in Ontario.

I had the opportunity today to meet with a number of the union representatives from the Steelworkers union who are representing the Abitibi workers in Kenora. It was a pleasure to meet with them and discuss these issues. I certainly gave them the undertaking, as have all northern members and members of our government, that we're going to continue to work with them to do whatever we are able to protect those jobs in northern Ontario, to implement a strategy in northern Ontario that is effective for your livelihood and for the communities in northern Ontario.

As a northerner, nothing means more to me than protecting jobs in northern Ontario. There are many people and many members in our caucus here who certainly have other issues. The GTA members face different challenges here in Toronto. Obviously we all want a strong economy, but campaigning on jobs, job retention and youth out-migration is a major issue in northern Ontario and it's a very different dynamic than the members in the GTA face. But they obviously face equal and important challenges as well.

I just want to read an article that was in the Sault Star on September 30 with respect to the provincial forestry plan that the minister announced recently. It says:

"Don't include St. Marys Paper Ltd. and Boniferro Mill Works Inc. among the critics of the Ontario government's \$330-million, five-year aid package for the troubled forestry sector.

"While both Sault Ste. Marie manufacturers agree it was far from the industry's complete wish list, it did address immediate concerns.

“Some are criticizing it as too little, too late; we are just thankful a package has been announced,” said Jim Boniferro, president of Boniferro Mill Works.

“We are a small player in the overall scheme of things and we view the opportunities available through the package as a timely lifeline.

“It doesn’t address all our needs but it’s a definite step in the right direction,” said Marc Dube, external affairs spokesperson with St. Marys Paper.

“The important thing is that the government recognizes we are an industry in crisis.... They listened and came up with a package based on industry recommendations of what’s needed to remain competitive.”

I know there are other industries out there, like many of the paper mills in the province of Ontario, that are facing these challenges. The roughly 600 direct workers in the paper industry and the sawmilling industry in Sault Ste. Marie are doing their best to ensure they are competitive and they’re meeting those challenges.

We’ve heard much talk about some of those factors that are coming together to play havoc in our forestry sector: the high dollar, the energy costs, foreign competition, efficiency issues and the delivering of wood supply costs. I think it’s very apparent that electricity prices are only one factor that is impressing on the forestry sector this difficulty. It’s evident from the fact that mills have closed in Quebec and British Columbia, where electricity costs are among the lowest in North America. It’s one piece of the puzzle.

To the representatives here in the gallery, many of whom have come a great distance to be here to listen to this debate today, our government is doing as much as possible at this particular time to meet with you to discuss these issues and to offer a package to put money toward these initiatives.

The member from the third party says that money is not an issue, but we know it is. We know that providing the resources to pay for and support cogeneration, to upload the costs of building roads into the wood basket area where you get your fibre supply—those costs, as we know, were downloaded by the NDP in 1991 at an additional cost to the industry of about \$32 million. Those were paid for prior to 1991 and they were downloaded to the industry. That’s something that, in our forestry incentive package, we’re uploading, because we understand that we have to make things easier for you and we want to ensure that we help protect those particular jobs.

Even the member from Timmins–James Bay was making some of his remarks on electricity prices and said, “Yes, there are other issues out there. I’m not going to stand here today and say it’s only electricity, because we know it’s partly the American dollar being low; it’s partly regulation,” and other factors. It’s in the Hansard of March 3, 2005.

The member from the third party who talks about energy rates, Mr. Hampton, said, “Industry energy price subsidization can be an attractive theory, but tricky in practice. I think it far better to work with the industry to

lower its energy costs through greater efficiency, not through a scheme of subsidized rates.” That’s Mr. Hampton, a member of the third party, in his book on public power.

The past several governments here in Ontario really abdicated their responsibilities when it came to providing adequate energy supply in the province of Ontario. The NDP raised hydro rates by 40% when they were in government, while they built no new supply in the province of Ontario. They paid \$150 million to cancel a lifeline from Manitoba and cancelled Ontario Hydro conservation initiatives that would have added up to 5,200 megawatts by 2000. It’s very clear that this is a long history of ignoring the challenges the forestry sector faces.

1700

We’re not simply going to ignore the issue. We’re not going to run from the challenge in the forestry sector in northern Ontario. We’re not going to buy a rainforest in another country or cancel hydro deals. We’re bringing back into Ontario new hydro supply. We are taking those steps because we know it’s the right thing to do and we know the needs of the forestry industry here in the province of Ontario.

I also want to just go over some of those initiatives because they’re very important, this \$330 million in new initiatives over the next five years. We’re going to set up a forest prosperity fund of \$150 million over three years, invest \$28 million to maintain primary forest access roads to help reduce costs to the forestry sector, upload the cost of the forestry inventory studies which had previously been downloaded by the past government at an estimated cost of about \$10 million a year and establish an additional \$1 million per year with the Ontario wood promotion program to ensure that there’s proper marketing and that we’re promoting our Ontario products here in the province. That’s the feedback that I’m getting from local forestry representatives in Sault Ste. Marie: from Boniferro Mill Works, St. Marys Paper and Flakeboard Ltd., another company that has had tremendous success in our community.

I certainly have to give credit to Minister Ramsay for working very hard with the Premier on behalf of the people of Ontario and on behalf of the forestry sector to ensure that the forestry incentive package was delivered for northern Ontario industries. I also want to give credit to Minister Bartolucci, who has spent a great deal of time advocating for northern Ontario industry through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the NOHFC program: \$15 million toward geoscience mapping to unlock the potential of the far north; \$13 million in a new program called grow bonds that will invest in businesses and the human resources of northern Ontario; \$5 million for the GO North investment program, which is also bringing results to northern Ontario; and the creation of northern development councils so that northerners can once again have a greater say in this Legislature.

I can tell you the experiences in Sault Ste. Marie. The Flakeboard plant expanded in Sault Ste. Marie and, with \$1.5 million through the northern Ontario heritage fund,

built a 45,000-square-foot building, adding another 30 jobs, with an additional expansion through the NOHFC of \$575,000, adding another 15 jobs to this particular business. Unlike the NDP, we are putting the money into the northern Ontario heritage fund. When they were in government, they took \$60 million out of the northern Ontario heritage fund program and put it into general revenues. This is a program that is so vitally important to the economic prosperity and well-being of northerners, and our government understands its value and its validity to northerners and we're going to continue to ensure that the program is there and that it provides the leverage necessary to make businesses in northern Ontario very successful.

I know there are a number of other members who have spoken on behalf of our northern caucus and our northern contingent here at Queen's Park. I understand Mr. Gravelle, the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, has a number of comments to make and that he has been working very hard with his forestry groups in northwestern Ontario. So with that, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Oshawa.

Interjections.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'll leave that to the member. That's OK.

I know the minister stated that things are changing within the ministry. Once upon a time, if you worked in northern Ontario, it didn't matter if you were in a school or a hospital, if somebody asked you where you were working and you said, "The ministry," they knew you were working at MNR because MNR is probably the greatest ministry in government; right, Minister?

I've got a little bit of experience in this in a number of ways. I ran a cutter-skidder operation for a while, so I've got some hands-on experience with this, along with a number of other aspects as well, which may come out later on.

I want to give a bit of background, because I'm sure the people watching the debate may not fully understand all the complexities, as the minister and others have stated, of what's going on here. First of all, the industry has changed significantly over time. Many people don't realize, for example, that in Hearst over 200 million—that's 200 million—trees have been replanted there. Most people don't even know that the first 15 years of a tree's life are the most carbon-converting years because they're growing like kids, they're growing like weeds; they're competing with each other and they're fighting for carbon and converting that into oxygen for us, which is what people don't realize. It's sometimes good to get those understandings.

Clear-cutting: Some companies—for example, there is an operator currently operating just outside of Chapleau right now who will go in and clear-cut an area. He'll be able to go in and cut every 60-year-old poplar out of that forest, and then a year from now you would never know a cut had taken place. With the new technologies, they can go in, as wide as these two desks, pick a specific tree,

put a clamp on that tree and tell you exactly how many board feet are in that tree just by clamping around it. That's the computer technology that's going on. Those are things that people in most parts of southern Ontario don't really understand.

There are a lot of other things taking place. As a matter of fact, during the past week I happened to tour a cut area in the north. It was a hardwood cut, but I was quite surprised that they planted Jack pine in the area, and there was some white spruce and black spruce in there as well. It kind of surprised me, why they'd do that.

In Ontario, for moose management—in Alberta, for example, they've changed their policy and gone for caribou management. What that means is that you'll cut in pockets to promote short-term growth, quick growth, that will allow for moose development. Whereas in Alberta, they'll do large cuts, as the gentlemen here will know, and they don't touch that area again for 60 years because caribou need that long lifespan to allow the mosses and lichens that they feed on to grow in that area.

Some of the things taking place in this whole industry are very significant, and people need to realize that. From a southern Ontario perspective, it's difficult to explain, but when you're in, say, Chapleau, or a small community like that, or as the gentlemen here are predominantly from Kenora—300 jobs in my community, in Oshawa, and what did they do? They opened a new strip mall. But no, it's a significant component of the employment factor in the north. The forest industry and the mining industry are the lifeblood of the north, and we need to focus on that to keep those things going.

I know there are some problems with skilled trades, which all governments tried to work on, to make sure these people had the opportunity. What's taking place, though—I'll start off with a quote: "So long as the forest has value, it will continue to be a forest." What that means, for example, is that if Chapleau, Foleyet, Dubreuilville or any of the other small communities shut down their mills, guess what? The council isn't looking to the forest industry for support. They're going to look at other aspects of utilization of that product. Maybe it's the farming industry. Maybe they want to do cattle grazing in those areas. "So long as the forest has value, it will continue to be a forest." We need to make sure that forests grow in the province of Ontario so Ontario can prosper and the north can prosper, and everybody else can gain from that benefit. Whether it's because of hurricanes and other disasters taking place, we can all certainly help out throughout North America and benefit from the forest industry.

But one of the things taking place is that now, all of a sudden, the community in Chapleau or Foleyet, for example, will be saying, "We don't have anybody who works in the forest industry. Why would we support the forest industry?" And as those supermills are created in places like Timmins and Sault Ste. Marie, or whether it's Kenora, Dryden or Thunder Bay, those will be the key areas where those will be focused on and everybody else will be posturing to use that forest land for other reasons.

The forest will no longer have value to them and they will find other reasons for that. That's going to have a significant impact on all the communities around.

Some of the other things: There was one forester, and he was a good provider. I don't know if you gentlemen know that there was one forest mill sawing white pine—it was a slicer mill—and he had housing to house his people. He used to hire the husband and the wife, and it was a great community. For 50 years his business ran, but because of the current labour policy changes by the government, as well as the environmental changes that have taken place, guess what? He said, "It's not worth my while to do it any more." So he shut down and he's going to buy it from somewhere else. There were essentially 46 jobs at one point in Chapleau that are gone because of policy changes that are coming forward.

These are the sorts of things that people in southern Ontario need to realize significantly impact the north. That many jobs have a huge impact in a community the size of Chapleau, let alone all the other spinoff jobs. It's not just the mill. It's the ones who drive to the mill, it's the cutters in the bush, it's the suppliers that supply all these goods. It's a huge impact on a northern community, and people don't realize that.

1710

Some of the other things that are taking place: We focused on energy pricing. I was in one mill where they were doing a \$50-million upgrade in their plant. You know something? When the spot market hit, they had to have a two-hour notice to get on to sell in the spot market; they were gauging and trying to get changes in because they made more money selling energy in the spot market to New York state than they made producing paper. They were deciding, "Are we in the paper business or are we in the energy-producing business?" because there was more money on one side. The impact there is not only on the people working in the mills, like I said, it's the drivers and the cutters in the bush being impacted by things like that. Those are the things that need to be addressed.

There are a lot of other things that take place. I'm not sure if there are any cutters here who use, for example, the Martin guidelines. The Martin guidelines are interpreted by each separate district office in a different way. I know for a fact that the previous minister established a forestry committee that didn't include the government. They only had one seat on it, and all the rest was up to the industry to make sure there was consistency in the guideline interpretations so that all the cuts could be the same by the same company across the province. That way, the Martin interpretation or stick nest interpretations—and for those who are watching, stick nest is basically where, if you see an osprey nest, you report it to the ministry, they identify the species, and then they have a 10-acre parameter around it to protect that nest, which is great. But with the new technologies, I've seen where they took a photo, did a satellite send-off right into Chapleau, got it identified and were cutting that same morning in that same area with no problems in the stick

nest. That's an indication of the industry's ability to change, to go in and identify specific fibre out there, as well as the amount of board feet, clear-cut that area, and then next year you don't even know it's done, as well as taking care of nature. Some of the things the ministry could be doing would have a big impact.

On to some of the very specific things that have arisen today. I know for a fact, because I know the previous minister heard it from the senior bureaucracy, that—guess what?—there are too many players out there, and if we had 50% fewer forest mills out there, we'd have 50% fewer problems. Here is the perfect example. I'm going to read to you a comment from the Sault Star on February 16. It specifically says, "Bill Thornton"—I would hope Bill Thornton is a name that the government members would recognize, because I think he's acting director in charge of forestry right now. "Bill Thornton, director of corporate relations with the Ministry of Natural Resources, had an equally blunt assessment.

"It has been a long time since the sector has experienced changes as profound as what will take place this year," he said. "This is the starting point of industry restructuring." Remember what I said about the senior bureaucracy stating that if there were 50% fewer players, we'd have 50% fewer problems? "There will be fewer, but greater capacity mills, with fewer employees to operate them. There's a tough road ahead but it cannot be ignored."

Part of the problem was that they had to get out and, unfortunately, some of the geo-mapping stuff, as mentioned before by I think the member from Sault Ste. Marie, along with a number of others, as well as the minister—what they used to do was cruise forests. You look at that map and tell me—and I'll defy anybody in here on the floor, or maybe over there it would be different, to look and see if it's a birch or that strain of poplar that's all white and looks like a birch when you drive by. You can't tell what that fibre is by looking at a map from an aerial survey. You need people on the ground in the bush to tell what that fibre is. Quite frankly, there are a lot of mills that can operate up to about 15% birch fibre and the remaining content of poplar. But guess what? When you look at it there, it's all birch, but when you get there, it's all poplar. That's because there are problems within the ministry that they're trying to work out. The details aren't there, and it's going to have a significant impact.

There are other impacts within this industry that need to be addressed as well. Of course, there's the value of the dollar. When the dollar is high, fibre isn't as attractive to sell to the American states, so the demand drops as well. Not only that, there's the gas price. The previous minister had the opportunity to sit down with all the ministers from across Canada, and the federal government came out with a great plan. They were going to put farmland—and if you look at Logging and Sawmilling Journal, I think it's Alberta. What the feds have done now is that they've come in and they're planting vacant farmland to grow trees. I asked, and I know the previous

minister asked, very specifically of the federal government, "Isn't that an advantage to a company that's located close to those farms?" They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "The cost to ship them is so close that it's not competitively advantaged," and they never even considered the fact they were going to give certain companies advantages because of the shipping costs to take that fibre to the local mill when they plant right beside it on crown land and public lands. They were going to subsidize them, and if you read that, you'll see.

What's taking place in Alberta now is that there are going to be significant players who are going to get a benefit, because the growth of that fibre, when it comes time to harvest, is closer to the mills, and other mills will not receive the same benefit. They didn't work that out, and I'm not sure what's taking place in Ontario, but I certainly hope to hear from some of the government members on that.

Also, we talked about gas prices. We talked about some of the other costs, the value of the dollar and electricity. Electricity is one of the key problems with that whole sector, obviously, and we need to find a way to make sure that the individuals who are working in that industry are working in the best interests of the province and, more importantly, of northern Ontario, because, like I said before, the forest industry and the mining industry are the lifeblood of the north, and they continue to need to do so.

I know we have two other members who wish to speak, so I'll give up my time now.

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): I'm very glad to join this debate as well. As I think all members have recognized, this is a very important debate. It's about an issue that has a huge impact on thousands upon thousands of people in northern Ontario and many thousands as well in southern Ontario.

I don't have a lot of time left, and I have a lot of things I'd like to talk about. What I might want to begin with is how startled I was by the approach taken by the leader of the third party. Certainly, I know the member well. He's obviously a member from northern Ontario as well and I'm sure he cares about his riding, hopefully as much as I do and many other northern members do—I'm sure he does. But the approach he took bothered me from the point of view that he essentially spoke on the basis that these operations are all closing down. In fact, he even made reference to an operation that has not yet closed down, and spoke in those terms, which bothered me. What's very clear is that our approach should be one of, "How do we deal with this crisis?" It's recognized by all of us that indeed we have a crisis. We've had a tremendous amount of pressure put on our government, as well we should, and I like to believe they've responded in a very good fashion. But I've got to tell you, it bothered me very much.

I represent Thunder Bay–Superior North. Most people know that. That means I represent the people of Red Rock, where there's obviously a situation at Norampac. I also happen to know what they're trying to do at

Norampac, which is to find a way to keep the operation going. I've spoken to the senior management there and we're working very closely with them to try and keep the operation going. When they made the decision to curtail their operation, to lose those jobs, which was devastating on its own, they made it clear all by themselves that they wanted to keep the rest of the operation going. They were looking for help from our government, and we hope to provide that. That's why I don't think an attitude of "This is the end of the day and it's going to go down" is one they want to hear.

I can say the same thing about Cascades. I've spoken to senior management at Cascades and they are not planning to close down. Listen, we all understand that there are some real challenges—and that's the polite word—to face. Many of us in the House have used the term "perfect storm" more than once, and it's quite true. There's no doubt that the price of electricity is one of those challenges, but we also know there are many others as well. Certainly, when they made the announcement of the decision at Cascades, they were very clear about energy costs being a factor, and the fact that the dollar had gone up to above 85 cents and what a huge difference that made.

The fact is, you're absolutely right to expect the government of the day to respond. We do have a number of government members from northern Ontario and we've all been working extremely hard to make sure that we get a package out there.

I won't stand here and tell you that I think it's actually enough. I would like to see more, and I'm going to continue to lobby. My colleague the minister would expect me to continue to lobby. I want to see help on the energy prices as well. But I can tell you that I know how hard he has worked. I certainly know how hard I and my colleagues have worked to make sure that we come out there with a package that's going to have some value. I can tell you—and I think you know this too. I guess the odd thing about what I'm saying is, to some degree I'm irritated because I'm hearing what the opposition is saying. I did spend years in opposition, as you know, and I understand how it's done. But the fact is, I still think the obligation that we all have is to try to find a way to work together to make sure we find solutions to a real problem; not determine that it's over, not determine that this is the end of the day, as I think was the approach the leader of the third party was taking. That's what I heard him say, and it bothered me.

The fact is, we have to continue to work as hard as we can to come up with—but you know, talking about finessing the issue bothered me as well. Regardless of whether or not you like the package that's out there, it's a \$680-million package: \$350 million in loan guarantees and \$330 million in some very important incentives to the industry. I know for sure it's going to make a difference. I've already spoken to enough industry leaders to know it will make a difference.

1720

I am certainly looking forward and waiting for the federal government to respond. My colleague the federal member for Thunder Bay–Superior North agreed that should be the case. I think it's very important we have a federal response. The federal government, I believe, put together a package recently with the province of Quebec, and we need that to happen. The fact is that we need the help of everyone, which includes members of the opposition in the House, to recognize that indeed it's not a simple solution. There are incredible changes going on in the industry, and we need to be sure that we all work together on this.

That's the part that bothered me the most when I heard the member for Kenora–Rainy River speaking at the beginning of this debate. It's not over, folks. We've got a lot of work to do, there are some real challenges ahead, and we're going to keep working to make that happen.

It somewhat sticks in my craw too that the fact is that you did download responsibility for forest road maintenance.

Interjection.

Mr. Gravelle: Yes, you did download it. The minister read the letter from Bud Wildman. There was some assistance from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. It just bothers me when I hear that. You did decide not to go ahead with the Conawapa falls project in the 1990s, which has had a huge impact on the future of energy generation. There's no question about it. Perhaps it is simple, and I appreciate the fact that we have to have, and must have, this kind of debate.

One of the best things about it from the perspective of the northern members is—I've been speaking about this issue in caucus on a continual basis, as have all my northern colleagues, and I'm very grateful, may I say, to the Premier for his direct involvement in this issue. Absolutely, I think it's important. He's very concerned about this. As to those who so blithely say we don't care about the north or the northwest, it really bothers me because I know how hard I have worked on it, how hard my colleague Bill Mauro has worked on it, how hard the ministers have, their northern colleagues and the Premier. The fact is, sure, there's more to come and I want there to be more, but I think part of that has got to come from the federal government.

I will continue to do my part to battle on behalf of my constituents. I represent people in Marathon. I know how people in Marathon are feeling right now. They're worried; they're nervous. I know what's going on in Terrace Bay and Schreiber. I understand the challenges. But it's an interesting thing even with the situation at Neenah Paper. Energy is actually 8% of their costs, as you would probably know.

Before I lose my time, even specifically responding to the resolution, the member for Timmins–James Bay himself said, when he was asked about giving energy rates for the northern industry, "I don't know how that'll ever fly." I saw you on TV talking about how you couldn't see how that would ever work because the rest of industry

would want it. That's what you said on TV, and I thought that was an interesting thing to hear you say.

The fact is that we've all got to keep working on this together, keep challenging our colleagues. I'm going to keep doing that. That's my job. I'm grateful for all the support I'm receiving on this side of the House, and I'd sure like to see that kind of support from that side of the House as well.

Ms. Scott: It's a pleasure today to rise to speak on the motion brought forward by the member from Kenora–Rainy River "that in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must recognize that during the first two years of its mandate, thousands of jobs have been lost in the forest industries of northern Ontario; and

"Recognize that communities are being devastated by the loss of jobs and the disintegration of local and regional economies...."

From the United Steelworkers, many of whom are in the gallery today watching this, the Kenora mill closure is set for October 23, wiping out this community. The government has got to listen.

Timmins city council had a special meeting and passed a resolution acknowledging the devastating impact this is having in their community.

The forestry sector "generates \$19 billion in annual sales, employs ... 275,000 people, pays direct salaries of \$4.8 billion...." They're responding to what the government announced. It's "'a baby step in the right direction,' said Councillor Gary Scripnick. 'The \$28 million for primary road maintenance (announced by the province) does not even cover the recent escalation of fuel cost, and the biggest issue that the forest industry wanted tackled is a supply of affordable electricity. That wasn't even addressed.'"

In my own community, Haliburton county—a beautiful spot of the world, if you haven't been there—tourism and forestry are neck and neck as the number one economic industry in Haliburton county. I've had several industries go under there. I've had some survive. It's tough. We have a large employer, Hunter sawmills in Gooderham, which employs about 60 people, but I've had Ontario Hardwood Veneers go under.

We have planing mills, wood components—loggers are having a tough time just with the price of fuel and insurance, but the eastern part of Haliburton county alone needs this industry. It's essential. We're all under attack here, rural and northern Ontario.

The member from Thunder Bay–Superior North mentioned that the federal government has to participate. We notice that the feds gave \$50 million to the Quebec forestry industry and we're hoping that they do the same for Ontario.

Tembec has sent out a press release that says, "Assistance to industry should come in the form of loan guarantees from the EDC (Export Development Canada). They will recognize our duty deposits as accounts receivable and provide loan guarantees to companies that wish to use them. Since we will eventually get these deposits back, the government has virtually no risk."

James Wallace has written in to the Peterborough Examiner. "Northern mayors, councillors, forest industry managers, union officials and, in a report that has now been collecting dust since May ... the Minister's Council on Forest Sector Competitiveness are saying the same thing."

Warnings of the possibility "of the 2,200 direct jobs ... 8,900 indirect jobs.... The federal government would lose \$160 million in tax revenue, Ontario \$100 million and local municipalities \$22 million....

"After the auto sector, forestry is the single largest contributor to the provincial balance of trade."

It's devastating. The government has to do something soon. They asked for the Minister's Council on Forest Sector Competitiveness since May—and I repeat, since May. It should be noted that it's in the last two years, similar to the time period since this present Liberal government has been elected, that the industry profits have languished. Just since December 2004, there have been mill closures announced at two pulp and paper mills, one veneer mill, one particle board mill, four sawmills in Ontario, and one company has stated its intent to sell a paper mill.

In the report, the delivered wood costs: to bring delivered wood costs in Ontario into line with the global average; roads and hauling costs; regulatory issues related to harvesting, transportation and efficient distribution of wood and wood products. In the past several years, the forestry industry has been bearing the full costs of building and maintaining access roads and bridges on Ontario crown lands, but many of these roads are public access roads used by tourists, campers, hunters, and other industries like hydro, mining and other issues.

The recommendation: that the provincial government assume its proportional share of the costs of building and maintaining the public access roads network on provincial crown forests and that "proportional" be defined as 100% of primary road costs and 50% of secondary road costs.

I know I need to share my time, Mr. Speaker.

The date on this is February 23, 2005. "The Ontario government announced its intention to appoint a facilitator to work with industrial companies to explore cogeneration opportunities in the province." I don't know if I've missed it or not, but I don't think that has ever happened: Has there been a commissioner appointed for cogeneration? Are we not talking about the costs of energy, the survivability of northern Ontario? They said in February of this year that they would appoint a cogeneration commissioner and it has not been done. The member said he wants all parties to work together and the government to do something for northern Ontario. There's one thing they said they would do in February and it hasn't been done.

I want to end with a quote from Jamie Lim, the president of the Ontario Forest Industry Association: "With more mills and more jobs on the very cusp of being lost, we cannot urge our government strongly enough to act decisively." Here's your chance. Act decisively.

Mr. Chudleigh: I just want to remind the House that today is October 20. On October 20, the Minister of Natural Resources stood in his place today and said he's willing to turn the lights off on Ontario's infrastructure. I don't think I've ever remembered a day when a minister stood in this House and said that infrastructure in Ontario was disposable. I'm particularly disappointed that this minister would say that, because this minister got into politics because he was developing infrastructure in the New Liskeard area of the clay belt. He full well knows how important infrastructure is to small towns, to large cities, to Ontario's economy in general, and yet today we are talking that there is some infrastructure, there are some pulp and paper mills in Ontario, which is not going to survive. Minister, that's really not good enough.

We've got to find a way to make every one of those mills survive, to make Ontario the place where pulp and paper comes from, to make Ontario the competitive jurisdiction that we were at one time and should be again. It's going to take a lot of work, but even one of those mills is too many to let go. Because you know, more than most people over there, that infrastructure is extremely difficult to get back once it's gone. To stand in your place and say, "Infrastructure, pulp and paper mills: We may not have as many in Ontario tomorrow as we have today," is really unacceptable. I think that everyone in this House has expressed today, through this motion, that they would be willing to stand up and work as one unit to make sure to do whatever is necessary to save those mills and to make them competitive and to find the markets to sell that newsprint. We're living beside the largest consumer of newsprint in the world. Surely we can find a way to sell that newsprint to that newsprint-hungry nation south of us. To stand here and say that it is expendable is just not acceptable in the Ontario that I know. It took too long to build that infrastructure and we should not let it go. We should not let it go over an issue like this.

1730

Mr. Bisson: So little time and so much to say, so I'll try to do it as best I can in the 13 minutes I've got. I want members of this assembly, especially government members, to understand something and get this clear. This is not just a northern Ontario issue. This is not just northern Ontario that's going to suffer as a result of what's going on in the forestry industry as a result of government policy. It's going to affect not just the northern economy but the economy across this province. My colleague Andrea Horwath, the member from Hamilton East, who is our industry trade critic, pointed out correctly that if the industry goes down in northern Ontario, the industry in southern Ontario will go the same way because many mills are situated in southern Ontario as well. They're not just in the north, number one. Number two, most of the servicing as far as technical support, engineering support and manufacturing of equipment that allows these mills to operate, the chemicals they use, the glue they use, everything they use to operate this industry, is produced in southern Ontario.

People need to understand that if northern Ontario goes down as a result of what happens in the forest industry, southern Ontario is going to go with it. We're talking about 275,000 jobs in this province. It's real, serious stuff, and for the government to say, "This is cyclical; this is not the fault of a provincial government; this is what's happening in the United States and everywhere else," really misses the point. If you talk to industry, they're very clear. Industry is saying it's not cyclical. This issue is one that can be solved by the provincial government's moving on a number of fronts, and I'm going to talk about those later. I want to make it very, very clear on the front end of this debate that this is not just a northern Ontario issue. Yes, we're going to suffer the greatest, but southern Ontario is going to be right behind us. I say to this government, shame on you for not responding to what I think is a crisis in this province, not just in northern Ontario.

I also want to say that people need to understand, as we go into this debate, that this is the second-largest employer in Ontario, the second-largest industry. We collect almost \$1 billion of revenue in this province as a result of the activities in the forest industry by municipal governments and by the provincial and federal governments. The employment levels, as I said, were 275,000 overall when you look at the entire industry and the industry that supports it. I want to propose this: This is the second-largest employer in Ontario. Imagine, if you will, that if the auto plants along Highway 401 from Windsor out to Oshawa were to face a similar crisis, what this government and every government would do. It would wake up, it would hear the alarm bells and it would do something in order to avert the disaster that would ensue in the communities from Windsor to Oshawa and everybody in between. I ask myself as an Ontarian, "Why is our government not responding to what is a serious issue in the forest industry when it's so important to this province?" I say to you, if we're able to do it for the auto sector, we should be able to do it for the forestry sector as well.

This government's response has been, "We fixed the problem, don't worry. We've still got programs; there will be adjustments. But we've put forward this aid package in order to assist industry." Let me tell you this: Imagine, if you will, that you're in debt over your ears and your Visa card is out to the max. The banker says, "I'll fix your problem: I'll give you a MasterCard." How does that fix your problem? It's just going to throw you back in debt, and eventually you're going to go under.

The second issue is that whatever money the industry would get from the province may stave it off for six months, a year, two years, but the problem is the associated cost of running industry in Ontario as a result of forestry policy and energy policy. If you want, Minister, you can throw a billion dollars at industry. That's not what they want. The issue is, you have to go after the root, fundamental causes of the problem in industry, and the biggest part of that has to do with electricity, energy generally, and also forestry fibre costs.

I want to say to the government, the minister stood here and said, "We announced last year some \$300 million, \$350 million as an aid to the industry so that we can allow them to lever money to modernize themselves, and we've announced another \$50 million a year over the next three years"—\$150 million—"in order to assist industry."

First of all, they're matching funds. Industry has to go and get the capital themselves to match it. But here's the problem: The government says, "You're going to be able to do things like invest in new technology so that you can become more efficient and state-of-the-art." They are state-of-the-art. This industry is not the industry of 60 years ago; it's an industry that has invested in itself over and over again to make itself cutting edge. This is a cutting-edge industry. Walk into a paper mill in Kapuskasing, in Kenora, in Sault Ste. Marie. Walk into a sawmill. You'll be astounded at the technology you'll find in them. They're the best workforces in the world. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union that is here today, along with the Steelworkers—both of those unions represent the vast majority of the unionized workers—represent the most effective workforce in industry.

Let me give you an example: The overall cost of paper production is 15% labour. If the issue was "These guys are getting too much money," industry wouldn't—there's no argument. It's 15% of the overall cost. The big cost for industry is electricity energy prices and fibre costs.

I want to come back to the point I wanted to make about the package the government has put forward. Industry has told me, in talking to Jamie Lim at the OFIA and talking to people at Tembec, Domtar, Grant and others, "Listen: If the issue was as simple as us investing in ourselves and modernizing our technology, as the government says, we've done it. That's not an issue. If the simple solution is for us to invest in cogeneration plants, we would have done it." They didn't need the government to tell them they can invest in a cogeneration plant.

Here's the basic problem: If you take a look at your energy policy, if you went out and built a cogeneration plant, your base rate for electricity would be higher with a cogeneration plant than it is off the grid today. If you look at the cost of producing electricity from cogeneration, it's about 12 to 13, 14 cents per kilowatt hour. They pay less than that on the grid as it is now.

The basic issue is this—and I want to take exception to something that my good colleague, the former member for Renfrew, Mr. Conway, said on TVO. He said, "You've got to understand that Ontario is in a pool price of electricity." What hogwash. Here's how it works: If you can have 1,000 office buildings in downtown Toronto all turn on the lights and air-conditioners at the same time, they will pay the same price for electricity if they burn one kilowatt or if they burn 10,000 kilowatts. But where we are, because of the type of industry we're in, as the demand for electricity in Ontario goes up, what ends up happening is our industry has to pay what's called peak power prices in order to purchase electricity. So the

base price is about 8.5 cents per kilowatt hour, roughly. How much was it in Kapuskasing, Bob, just about two days ago—2,000 megawatts?

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: Two thousand bucks per megawatt is what we had to pay because the demand load for electricity within the province was so high that the price that Tembec had to pay in Kapuskasing to get that electricity was \$2,000 per megawatt hour. So there is no pool price. In northern Ontario, those industries that use electricity to the degree that the pulp and paper industry uses it, and I would argue mining as well, are burdened with costs because they have to pay peak power prices. Southern Ontario doesn't have to do that, by and large.

1740

I met with the auto sector here the other day when they had the reception. Electricity is just a mere mention in their balance sheet when it comes to costs. They don't have to deal with these issues; our industry does. This government needs to recognize that there is no pool price in this province. We need to take a look at how we're able to give northern industry an ability to reduce those electricity costs, because if we don't, at the end of the day, we're going to go under.

I want to say to the government, your electricity policy is the root cause of the problem. Go talk to Terry Skiffington in Kapuskasing; go talk to the mill manager at Abitibi in Iroquois Falls, whose name I forget offhand; go talk to Jamie Lim; go talk to any of them in industry. Don't listen to me as a New Democrat; don't listen to Cec Makowski; don't listen to Norm Rivard from CAW and CEP—whoa, CAW? I mean, CEP and the Steelworkers. God forbid. I didn't say that. Go and talk to industry; industry is going to tell you that the base cost of doing business in Ontario has gone through the roof and a big part of it is electricity costs.

I want to go to the fibre issue. I only have about four minutes left. I want to explain this to members. I want to put this in a very basic way. I was at a press conference this morning, along with my friends from Kenora and Kapuskasing who were here, both Steelworkers and CEP. Sean Mallen from Global asked a question. I think it was a very good question. He said, "Industry is saying that they want government to pay for the roads that we use to haul the trees from the forest into the mills. Why should we do that? It's a lot of money." Who the heck pays for the road for the auto plant in Windsor to ship its products to and fro on Highway 401? The entire auto sector is subsidized when it comes to transportation, along with every other industry in the province. When it comes to transportation, the province picks up the entire cost, because we pay the price of building the roads. Industry is saying that they need the government to re-upload to themselves the costs of roads.

The parliamentary assistant said, "That was you that did that." No, go look at the estimates binders: 1989 is when this started. We are the government that reinvested back into roads—maybe not to the degree that we had to, but the issues were different then. Electricity prices

weren't what we're paying today. What this government needs to recognize is that when industry says, "We need help," if you don't deal with those issues, they're not going to be standing two and three years down the road—and I would argue even before that.

I say to the government: You need to understand that the trees are farther into the forest. We are sustaining our forests in a very good way. We've cut the trees that are closer to the mills; those are being regenerated, but they're not ready to cut, they're not mature forests yet. So those mills across northern Ontario and other places are having to go farther and farther into the forest to haul the fibre back to the mill. The cost of transportation is killing them, both because of road construction costs and also fuel costs. The government needs to recognize that it has to take that responsibility. The government said, "We did that. We spent \$28 million as a program in order to re-upload the roads back to the province." Well, that's a drop in the bucket. The reality is that it's a larger cost than that. So when the government stands in this House and says to me as a New Democrat, as a northerner, as a steelworker, as a person who worked in the industry—listen, it is not cyclical; it's not a question of what's happening with the global economy; it's a question of what's happening here in Ontario.

The last point I have in the last couple of minutes, and I want to talk directly to industry and to the OFIA, is this: Don't be suckered by this government. This government is trying to say to industry, "Stick with us. We'll be fine. Wait until next spring's budget. You're going to see something good in next year's budget to help us." Listen, I've been around this place long enough to know what that song is all about. Industry has to decide if it wants to survive, because if industry does not, in my opinion, come together and put pressure on this government to take action now, first of all, by this spring there won't be very many of them left. We already know how many of them are going down just next weekend.

The issue is, what happens if government doesn't respond—and I don't believe they will—in the spring budget? You are then looking at another complete cycle of the budget where the government is basically going to say, "Don't worry. Vote for us in the next election, and we'll fix it next term." You can't get suckered by that.

At the end of the day, industry has to say, "Are we prepared to go the entire way? Are we prepared to basically put pressure on this government?" I'm not saying we have to be mean and nasty, but we have to put pressure on this government at the end of the day so that they move on the key issues, which are the cost issues of being able to do business in northern Ontario when it comes to forestry.

I also want to say this to the minister: You know that today we have the workers from the Kenora mill and the workers from the Tembec mill. They're here for a reason.

Applause.

Mr. Bisson: We should applaud them. We have with us Cec Makowski, who is a vice-president for the Ontario region of CEP; and we have Norm Rivard, who is a vice-

president of the Steelworkers wood council within the Steelworkers organization.

I want to say, these people have come from a long way for a reason. You don't see these guys down in Toronto every day; you see them every now and then. Quite frankly, the last time was probably in the early 1990s. They're here to bring you a message: This government has to take responsibility and has got to deal with the root costs of doing business in northern Ontario when it comes to this industry. You must deal with hydro-electricity prices, and you must deal with fibre prices. If you don't do those things, we're not going to be standing at the end, and then they'll be coming for you in the next election. That's the problem you're going to have.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1745 to 1755.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Hampton, Howard

Horwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Scott, Laurie
Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Craitor, Kim
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John

Gravelle, Michael
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David
Peters, Steve
Peterson, Tim
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.

Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 12; the nays are 39.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday afternoon next.

The House adjourned at 1758.

CONTENTS

Thursday 20 October 2005

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Foodland Ontario

Ms. Wynne.....	227, 234
Mr. Barrett	228
Mrs. Mitchell	230
Ms. Scott.....	230
Mr. Leal	231
Ms. Churley	231
Mr. Klees	233
Ms. Mossop	233
Mrs. Van Bommel	234
Agreed to	243

Crime prevention

Mr. Qaadri	235, 242
Mr. Dunlop	236
Mr. Duguid	238
Ms. Churley	239
Ms. Wynne.....	241
Mr. Wong.....	242
Agreed to	243

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Waste Reduction Week

Ms. Scott.....	243
----------------	-----

Support for South Asian community

Mr. Brownell	244
--------------------	-----

Long-term care

Mr. Runciman.....	244
-------------------	-----

Transportation

Mr. Zimmer	244
------------------	-----

Hospital funding

Mr. Wilson.....	245
-----------------	-----

Education

Ms. Smith.....	245
----------------	-----

Electricity supply

Mrs. Mitchell	245
---------------------	-----

Industrie forestière

M. Bisson.....	245
----------------	-----

Growth planning

Mr. Levac.....	246
----------------	-----

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Daylight saving time

Mr. Bryant	246
Mr. Runciman	248

School bus safety

Mr. Takhar	247
Mr. Bisson	249

Hydro rebates

Ms. Cansfield.....	248
Mr. Yakabuski	249
Mr. Hampton	249

ORAL QUESTIONS

Minister's expenses

Mr. Runciman	250
Mr. McGuinty	250, 251
Mr. Yakabuski.....	250

Infectious disease control

Mr. Hampton.....	251
Mr. Smitherman	251

Crime prevention

Mr. Dunlop.....	253
Mr. Bryant.....	253

Federal-provincial fiscal policies

Mr. Prue	254
Mr. McGuinty	254

Immigrants' skills

Mr. Ruprecht	254
Mr. Colle	255

Hospital funding

Mrs. Witmer	255
Mr. Smitherman	255

Forest industry

Mr. Hampton.....	256
Mr. Ramsay	256, 257
Mr. Miller.....	257

Contaminated property

Mr. Lalonde.....	256
Mr. Ramsay	257

Steel industry

Ms. Horwath.....	258
Mr. Cordiano.....	258

School bus safety

Mrs. Van Bommel	258
Mr. Takhar	259

Tourism

Mr. Arnott	259
Mr. Bradley	259

PETITIONS

Cancer treatment

Mr. Jackson	259
-------------------	-----

Driver penalties

Mr. Prue	260
----------------	-----

Health services

Mr. Berardinetti.....	260
-----------------------	-----

Adoption disclosure

Mr. Sterling	260
--------------------	-----

Disabled persons

parking permit program	
Mr. Prue	260

Gasoline prices

Mr. Ouellette	261
---------------------	-----

Municipal restructuring

Mr. Prue	261
Ms. Horwath.....	262

Long-term care

Mr. Ruprecht	261
--------------------	-----

Tuition

Mrs. Munro.....	261
-----------------	-----

Affordable housing

Mr. Berardinetti	262
------------------------	-----

Leslie M. Frost centre

Ms. Scott.....	262
----------------	-----

OPPOSITION DAY

Forest industry, opposition day

number 1, *Mr. Hampton*

Mr. Hampton	262
Mr. Ramsay	266
Mr. Miller	268
Ms. Smith.....	270
Mr. Yakabuski	271
Ms. Horwath	273
Mr. Oraziotti	274
Mr. Ouellette.....	276
Mr. Gravelle.....	278
Ms. Scott.....	279
Mr. Chudleigh.....	280
Mr. Bisson	280
Negated.....	283

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

The Speaker	246
Mr. Kormos	246
Mr. Dunlop	246
Mr. Wilson.....	246
Mr. Qaadri	246

Business of the House

Mr. Bradley.....	262
------------------	-----

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 20 octobre 2005

DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Industrie forestière

M. Bisson.....	245
----------------	-----