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Thursday 23 February 2006

Jeudi 23 février 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 23 February 2006

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 23 février 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

NOWRUZ DAY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE JOUR NOWRUZ

Mr. Racco moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day / Projet de loi 63, Loi proclamant le Jour Nowruz.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Racco, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to speak about Bill 63, which is my private member's bill, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day.

Before getting into the bill I would like to bring your attention to the members' gallery and welcome some special guests of mine, members of the Persian community. It's still early, so only a few of them are present, but there are more coming. Mrs. Mahnaz Shahbazi and Miss Samin Isaveghlou, welcome.

March 31 marks the first day of spring for Persians all over the world. It marks the first day of the new year, or Nowruz, meaning "new day." Nowruz is celebrated with family and friends and symbolizes hope of new beginnings.

Statistics Canada suggests that nearly 100,000 Persians live in Ontario; however, this may be a modest estimate. With so many Persians choosing to live in Ontario, it is only right that we honour their presence and contribution to the cultural mosaic of our province by proclaiming March 21 each year as Nowruz Day.

I would like to share with you a bit of history about the Persian community in our country and in our province of Ontario. Compared to other immigrant groups, Persians are relative newcomers to Canada. As late as the end of World War II, it is believed there were only about a dozen Persians living in Canada. The large influx of immigrants into Canada after World War II did not include any significant number of Persians. Many Persians came to Canada as part of a massive flow of students to North American universities that began after 1965. That was in the United States. Many would remain in Canada

after completing their studies and having obtained immigrant status. Following the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the overthrow of the monarchy, and throughout the Iran-Iraq war, the rate of immigration accelerated rapidly.

There are many reasons why people came to Canada: political, economic, educational, professional and religious reasons. New Canadians enjoy Canada's democratic and stable society, free of oppression and violence. Many Persians settled in the GTA, with a significant percentage of them settling in North York in the 1980s and 1990s. It is now believed that 56% of Persian Canadians reside in Toronto, mostly in the Willowdale riding of my colleague MPP Zimmer. Unlike other immigrant groups coming to Canada, there was no established Persian community to help the new immigrants settle into the new culture. These new Canadians quickly joined the professional ranks as medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, nurses and dentists. Many of them had to upgrade their qualifications to meet Canadian standards because they got their education back home. Those who came later chose entrepreneurship, focusing on the creation of construction companies—we have the largest high-density builders from that community—restaurants, bakeries, dry-cleaning shops, grocery stores, repair shops and computer stores.

The Persian business community has generously supported Persian identity in Canada through financial means and promotional Persian-language journals, magazines, radio and television programs. Advertising revenue bolsters the production and free distribution of many group publications and programs. The Persian community is extremely active in promoting their culture and Canadian culture. There is a great deal of community support available for new immigrants from Persia as well. They host many events and there are many organization websites, publications and community groups available to the Persian community.

According to the 1996 census, there were approximately 64,000 Persians living in Canada, or a 21% increase from 1991. The Persian community is a young one, both in terms of the length of time it has been established in Canada and the age of the members of this community. Only 7% of Persian Canadians are over the age of 60. The largest age group is between 25 and 39. What that means is that there is significant growth within that community today. The 2001 census estimates that 89,000 Persians live in Canada. Now it is estimated that nearly 100,000 Persians are living just in Ontario. The numbers seem not to balance, but that is because there are more members of the community than the statistics

seem to indicate. The exact number is difficult to determine, as data collected is determined by country of birth or language spoken. Therefore, the data do not reflect all members of the Persian Canadian community. Over the last decade, Persians have made up between 11% to 20% of the permanent residents from the Middle Eastern region. Ontario has the largest percentage of Persians, which is estimated to be 58%.

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Within the community, Persians are making significant contributions in the area of academia and science worlds. There is a significant number of Persian professors at most, if not all, of the Ivy League schools in North America. There is also a significant presence of scholars, professors, masters and Ph.D.s at York University, the University of Toronto and Ryerson. In fact, I am told that at Ryerson there are 26 Persian professors teaching. That's a huge number.

Probably one of Ontario's most well known members of the Persian community is Mr. Karim Hakim of Hakim Optical. In June 2005, Mr. Hakim was inducted as a Knight of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, right here at Queen's Park. Sir Karim Hakimi, as he is now known, was bestowed the honour of knighthood for his generosity and humanitarian efforts. His contribution includes donating hundreds of thousands of pairs of eyeglasses to people in need all over the world. He also has participated in the Ride for Sight for the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Sir Hakimi led Canada's largest motorcycle charity parade, in which more than 1,000 motorcyclists across the GTA raised money for vision research. The motorcycle parade is one aspect of Ride for Sight, which has collected more than \$12 million in donations for the Foundation Fighting Blindness, FFB, the only private organization dedicated to finding causes, treatments and cures for blindness. The director of the Foundation Fighting Blindness has said that Ride for Sight has raised more money than any other motorcycle charity ride in Canada.

I thank you for the time. I look forward to the support of all honourable members on Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. Just before I conclude, let me say that we in this province, in Canada in fact, tend to recognize community members because we feel that Ontario and Canada are a country and a province made from many other nations from so many other parts of the world. I'm one good example. I was born and raised and educated in Italy, but I came here, and today I am in this honourable House. Like me, many other Ontarians and Canadians have had the good fortune of finding this province, this country, as welcoming as it is. We in public office should never forget how important it is to make all of us feel very comfortable where we are, because when we are happy, when we are comfortable, we can do even more than what we are doing.

I have a significant percentage of the Persian community in the riding of Thornhill, and as I said earlier, my friend MPP Zimmer also has quite a sizable percentage. The Persian community is all over the ridings, but those

two ridings have the highest number. This community has done so much, not only for themselves but for us, for Ontario, for Canada. By passing Bill 63, we are sending a strong message saying, "We are so pleased that you're part of Ontario, of Canada, and we want to celebrate your heritage, your first day," a celebration that they were born celebrating. Their parents, the people before them, celebrated for so many generations, and we in Ontario should, and I trust all of us will, support this bill, because it means saying thank you to them for choosing Ontario, for choosing Canada as a place to live, to grow, to work, to pay taxes and to be good citizens, because they are. They pay good taxes because they make good money. We should be happy for them that they do well, because when they do well, so do we.

Also, I can assure you that it is a community which respects and loves the laws of this province and this country. I can think of a number of occasions when I saw members of the community participating at functions, participating in the Chief LaBarge events, and in the community at large.

I say to them, thank you for choosing Ontario, thank you for choosing Canada, and I thank this honourable House for supporting the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm pleased to support the bill introduced by the member from Thornhill. I want to say that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Beaches-East York, who will probably make more anthropological remarks than I will, except to say that this holiday is the most revered celebration in the greater Persian world, and we understand it has been celebrated for 3,000 years. So strong is the support for this celebration that when the theocratic government of Iran came to power in 1979, Nowruz was banned because the government wanted to recognize only Islamic holidays and considered Nowruz a pagan celebration. But we know that the people wouldn't have any of it. It's the most popular holiday in Iran, and most people continued to celebrate it anyway; thus, finally, the government of the day had to lift the ban. We know that this celebration is strongly rooted in their traditions and strongly revered, so we acknowledge and celebrate with them today this most revered holiday.

I also want to extend my acknowledgement to a friend of mine whose name is Mehdi Kouhestani, who is the national representative of the international department of the Canadian Labour Congress and also is the former Ontario CUPE council president. We have known each other for quite some time, and I wanted to, by way of friendship, extend my good thoughts on their celebrations of this holiday.

I want to add that, as much as the member from Thornhill would like to celebrate this tradition in a very cheerful, happy way, I know that many of the guests who are here today watching this announcement would like me to talk about something else, and that is the issue of access to trades and professions. We know that many of the people from Iran and the greater Persian world come

to this country well prepared academically, that they are very well educated, and when they come here, many of them are not able to get the kinds of jobs they are looking for. I know that Mr. Racco, as he is speaking to some of our guests, is probably telling them how hard he is working to make sure they are able to get the jobs they so desperately want to get. I'm sure that's the kind of communication that's going on while he is there saying hello.

The point is that we on this side of the House, including my colleague Tony Ruprecht, who is very big on this issue—I am sure that daily in the Liberal caucus, if not weekly at the caucus meetings, he is speaking—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Hourly.

Mr. Marchese: I'm not sure about hourly—is speaking to the obstacles that many people who come from the greater Persian world are looking at in the way of getting the jobs that they deserve. And Tony Ruprecht from Davenport is constantly fighting to remove the barriers faced by engineers, nurses, teachers, doctors—constantly. That is why he is going to stand up here today to celebrate the Liberal accomplishments in this field, with the help of New Democrats, of course, to push him along the way.

We know that we have the most educated taxi drivers in the world, who would love to be able to get jobs as engineers, doctors, nurses and teachers but are not able to. I am sure they want us to talk about that today. It isn't just a matter of celebrating their arrival to the country and that they should be working and paying taxes; it's a matter of making sure, when they come to this country with the greatest of hopes and expectations to be able to land a job, that they ought to get it. The member from Davenport knows full well that many of these people who come to this country are not getting it, because for years he has been fighting on their behalf, and he's going to speak to us about the successes he is having in this caucus to get rid of those barriers.

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While it is true that many who are doctors are getting a little more access to being able to practise—and dare I say that the reason they are getting some of those doctors' jobs is because the country and the province need them? If it didn't need them, the good regulatory body, which I've criticized from time to time and don't praise enough, would not have broken down some of those barriers to enable them to practise. We need them, therefore the regulatory body says, "Okay, we'll open the door a little bit."

But do you think the regulatory boards of engineering have done the same? Tony Ruprecht knows they haven't, and he is lobbying day in and day out to make sure it happens while he's in government. The Liberal government, my God, is so great and so good that the barriers are just coming down day in and day out. We have the most educated taxi drivers, from the Persian world, waiting for the Liberal government to pry those doors open, waiting and waiting as Tony Ruprecht and others in that caucus, Mario Racco included, are just fighting it

out in caucus every week, saying, "We've got to do more."

It's about celebrating Nowruz today, yes, but it's about breaking down barriers; it's about making sure that these communities make a little more money so they can pay a little more tax to the Ontario and Canadian governments. Mario Racco is speaking to this. He's going to have two or four minutes at the end of the day to talk about what the Liberal government is doing to make sure that these guests who are here today have better wages and better opportunities at jobs, so they can be better taxpayers here in Canada and Ontario. He'll speak to that in the next little while, I'm sure.

But my friend Mehdi Kouhestani, from the Canadian Labour Congress, released a study that reported that Canadian-born visible minorities faced the highest barriers to steady, well-paying jobs of any group in the country. This barrier is expected to worsen, not get better. Canadian-born Arabs, Persians and west Asians experience a 14% unemployment rate. Canadian-born South Asians experience a 9.6% unemployment rate.

So what do I say to Mario Racco, the member from Thornhill, and others who might be speaking to this? We celebrate Nowruz today, but we would celebrate it more and with greater satisfaction if we knew that we were getting rid of the barriers to their employment and if we knew that they were getting well-paying jobs so they could be happy Canadians.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It is indeed a pleasure for me to stand today in support of Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. I certainly commend the member from Thornhill for bringing this forward. I trust that some people would come to the conclusion that, being a member from eastern Ontario, what am I up on my feet for? I have had a long association with history and heritage in my riding—I'm still associated with three historical societies—and with that and my work in education, I have always been very happy and excited about promoting not only the old heritages that we had in eastern Ontario but the new heritages that we celebrate in our community.

Eastern Ontario has had a long history of immigration, back to the Scottish, Irish, German, the Loyalist history, joining with the Mohawks who had settlements on the St. Lawrence River in my area and the Mohawk community of Akwesasne, where we still have great celebrations. This summer, I'm going to be attending their powwow. These are the things that we celebrate in eastern Ontario.

But as our province has evolved over the past couple of hundred years, we have in recent years welcomed many new and very diverse populations to our community, people of Chinese, Irish, Polish and Pakistani descent.

It was just last Saturday that my wife and I were in the community celebrating with the Italian Canadian sports club, a great celebration where they had a dinner and dance. It was just another opportunity to celebrate with those who, from around the globe, come to our community and bring their cultures. They bring unique

traditions with them, they enhance our cultural fibre and they have made our province what it is.

In my area too, the Cornwall and District Immigrant Services Agency has worked very hard to welcome our new Canadians; even those of Persian descent we welcome. In my community too, I look at the Quilt of Belonging. The Persian culture and history was recognized on the Quilt of Belonging, a brainchild of Esther Bryan. That quilt is touring in northern Canada; it is now at Rankin Inlet. I'm happy to say that three constituents from my riding, John and Susan Towndrow and their son Lee, are touring with that quilt and bringing many, many cultures to citizens across this country.

The member from Thornhill's bill will have the same effect that we have with that quilt, with the heritage I celebrate in eastern Ontario, because it will recognize the distinct contribution of Persian Canadians to our province. They have a great culture and they wish to respect and celebrate their traditions here in our province. I laud that. I lauded that for 32 and a half years in my classroom with the students I taught, and I continue to do that as I work for my constituents back home, bringing these celebrations into the community.

Nowruz, the Persian new year, is a festival that traces its origin back over 3,000 years to one of the world's oldest religions, Zoroastrianism. We have a community wanting to celebrate that new year because it really is a time when they celebrate cleansing. It is a time where they celebrate with the spring cleaning of home and person, with fire and with family. This celebration will give thanks to the prosperity of this province, for the work they do in this province, and it will be that new beginning. It certainly is a time of celebration. They have had a new beginning in our province, where they've come into our community and have been excited about celebrating.

I certainly laud and thank the member from Thornhill for having the initiative to bring this forward and to celebrate with those of Persian descent.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm very happy to speak in favour of this. Nowruz means "new day." It's a celebration that I understand has been going on for many thousands of years in Persia. It's always celebrated on the first day of spring. That is significant, because spring, as you know, celebrates renewal. We've come through the winter successfully, people have survived winter, and the first day of spring is the renewal, moving into a new era.

In many ways, Nowruz, celebrating renewal, also speaks to the Iranian experience here in Canada. Let me give you some facts about the Iranian experience here in Canada, because it very much is a renewal for Iranians and very much a renewal for Canada; for Ontario and for Toronto. Ninety-six per cent of all Canadian Iranians are first-generation Iranians here in Canada. 58% of those Canadian Iranians are resident here in Ontario, and of that 58%, 44% of Canadian Iranians live in the city of Toronto or the GTA. I'm very happy to say that in my own riding of Willowdale, in the north part of the city, there is an enormous Iranian community. In Willowdale,

as in Toronto, as in the GTA, as in the province and as in the country, the Iranian community has made a huge contribution.

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The vast majority of the Iranians here in Canada are in their prime and productive years, along with their young families coming up behind them. That's very, very significant, because the Iranian community is highly educated—highly, highly educated. In my experience with the Iranian community that I deal with, there are engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, technologists, business persons, medical personnel. Combined with that skill set and their high level of very sophisticated education and training, they are truly leading this city and province and country in a renewal of our society, a renewal of our economy. That's why Nowruz is such an important festival, celebrating renewal of the year.

I want to just refer to this House and get on the record a research article entitled *Iranians in Canada: A Statistical Analysis*—some 26 pages. It's prepared by the department of systems and computer engineering, Carleton University, by Professor Garousi. This is worth reading for all of us. It's a very detailed analysis of the Iranian community in Canada, in Ontario and in the GTA. It sets out the facts. We have a lot of conversations and a general anecdotal awareness of the contribution that the Iranian community makes, but this document—I urge all of you to read it—sets out the facts of the Iranian contribution.

There are, however, some difficulties that the Iranian community is dealing with, as are other new immigrant communities. It would be remiss of me if I didn't get those on the record. At page 24, the document highlights the two most significant problems that Iranians face here in Canada. Not surprisingly, they are underemployment—not unemployment, because everybody works—and underutilization of their professional skills. The document then goes on to analyze the cause of those problems and points out that the cause is largely a lack of recognition of non-Canadian credentials and, again, underutilization of Iranian professionals. I think that's something that needs redressing as we approach Nowruz, which is the renewal of the Iranian contribution to Canada.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I want, of course, at the outset, to pledge my support for this legislation. It is appropriate that we recognize not only the meaning of this important event as it has been over the last 3,000 years—the principles remain the same—but in so doing, I believe what this Legislature is doing, more than recognizing an event on a calendar, is recognizing the important contribution of a people who throughout the ages have made such a significant contribution to civilization, to who we are as humanity.

As well, as a provincial Legislature, we have the responsibility to recognize the foundations of our communities and the building of this great province and the building, indeed, of our country.

I look across the floor often in this place and continue to marvel at the wonderful opportunities that this province and this country afford us, because many of us are not born Canadians. Many of us cannot point to generations here, either in the province of Ontario or even this country. Personally, I came to this country at the age of five with my parents, who made a decision, very unselfishly so, to immigrate to this country. My father often said to me when I asked him the question, “Whatever prompted you to make the decision to come to this country?” to leave many of the very stable environments that he had and the family had, it was simply this: “I did it because I wanted more opportunity for you and your sisters.” It was a very selfless act on behalf of my parents to make that very difficult step. There will never, ever be any greater sense of appreciation in my heart towards my parents than for that very act that they took to choose to make this province and this country their home.

Many here who now have the privilege of representing our constituencies as members of provincial Parliament are immigrants. I’m sure that in the minds of our parents, when they made the decision to come here, they never dreamed that their sons or their daughters or their grandchildren would ever be in a position of elected office in this province, but here we are and we’re grateful, and so we have a responsibility.

I say to the member who brought this forward, congratulations to him for having the initiative and recognizing and honouring the Iranian community through this initiative. Much can be said about the economic initiative of the Iranian community. They are a true entrepreneurial spirit and they are people who know what it’s like to work hard. They are people who know what it’s like to expect nothing if you don’t put something in. You work; you are responsible for your family, for your own self-sufficiency. They are not a people who come forward with their hand out; rather, they are known for people who give a hand up. That is the generosity of the individuals whom I have come to admire and appreciate, both within the community in the broader sense as well as personal friends.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize an individual who has come to mean a great deal to me and who is an example in terms of both business proficiency and success, but someone who has never, ever stopped to consume those successes on himself or his family, but has taken the next step and has shared that success with the rest of the community. I refer to Mr. Farsad Kiani, who has businesses around the world. In fact, I tried to get in touch with him this morning. He’s in London, England, today—as he is, I think, almost on a regular basis, four or five times a month. He travels to the US because in his conglomerate of businesses he has facilities internationally. This is an individual, when you meet him, about whom you don’t get a sense of a magnate. Rather, you get a sense of someone who is first of all very human, is someone who cares deeply about the individual he is interacting with, and who also seeks no accolade for the things that he does or his family does within the community.

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I had the great honour a few months ago of being asked on behalf of Mr. Kiani to present awards at York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill, where Mr. Farsad Kiani and Mrs. Joan Bush Kiani have provided an endowment that recognizes and rewards York Central Hospital staff and physicians who regularly demonstrate outstanding examples of great customer service and compassionate care. I had the privilege of presenting the awards on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Kiani to volunteers within the hospital, to staff members and, I will never forget, especially to one lady. This is someone who worked in the support services of the hospital, and when I presented the award, the lady broke out in tears. It was the first time she had ever been recognized in such a gracious way for the work she has been doing in that hospital. But, you see, it took somebody who understands the importance of contribution to a community to have the sense to actually come forward and institutionalize an award that recognizes that kind of effort.

So I say to the Iranian community, thank you, not only for Mr. Farsad Kiani and Mrs. Kiani, but for the many individuals within the Iranian community who are made of the same humanity and who have the same giving heart and the same compassion that you have brought and instilled into the fabric of our province and our country. We are richer and stronger because of your contribution.

In that same sense, I want to pay tribute to someone who has made a significant contribution as well to our province. This is someone whom I met within the context of serving as a member of provincial Parliament, and that is Mr. Jamal Gharavi. He came to this country as a pediatrician and, sadly, was not able and is not able to practise as a pediatrician.

If there’s anything as a Legislature that we should do, collectively, in a non-partisan way—put everything else aside, folks; put away whatever label we may have as a political party, whether we be government or opposition, and let’s do one thing and get it right, and that’s the issue of foreign-trained professionals: giving them the respect to practise here in this province and in this country. There has been so much discussion and platitude given to this—and there isn’t anyone in this House who doesn’t see the injustice of someone having been trained, someone having practised in the medical profession, having operated and performed surgeries for years in their country of origin, and we give them points in our immigration system—here is the travesty—for being professionals. When they make application for immigration, they are told at the point of immigration, “Yes, we’re going to move you to the top of the list because you are a professional. You’re a doctor. You’re an engineer. You’re an accountant.” What does that message give them? That means, of course, that, “If I get high marks when I come to the country, I’ll be welcomed and I’ll have an opportunity to be the professional for which you gave me all of these points.” Not true. These people leave where they are, they come here and they find out that they may as well tear up their professional designation, because we say it’s worthless here.

I've said this often tongue-in-cheek, but there's a terrible truth to it: In the greater Toronto area, the quickest way to get a doctor is to call 967-1111. For those who don't know that number, that's the Pizza Pizza number. And it is sad because it's true. We have professionals who are delivering pizzas or driving cabs or working in other occupations when we should be honouring them for the professional contribution they can make. There is no shortage of doctors in Ontario—none. We have 3,000 doctors in Ontario who are not being allowed to practise, and shame on this Legislature for not taking the initiative and fixing that problem.

Interjections.

Mr. Klees: There are members of the government who are groaning. Now, hold it.

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: No. Don't talk about Mr. Harris. I am not justifying anything that any previous government has done. If we can help—I'm simply saying that every government has failed on this issue; every government. I take that responsibility, and I'm saying, let's move on. Rather than having this political DNA that seems to be imprinted into every one of our hearts, let's move forward and do something about it. That's what I'm saying. Forget the partisan deliberations about this. But I digress.

Mr. Marchese: Stay focused.

Mr. Klees: I want to stay focused on paying tribute to Mr. Jamal Gharavi, who, as I say, came to practise as a pediatrician but, because he was unable to, he has now focused on a very worthwhile community project. He is now working for Catholic Community Services of York Region and he has developed a program referred to as Focus on Fathers. It's a parenting program that helps fathers become better fathers. What a wonderful calling. If there's any way that we can strengthen our communities, it's to help to strengthen the family.

Again, isn't that so indicative of the Iranian community? If there is an example that we can take as Canadians from not just the Iranian community—I refer to it because that's the nature of the debate today—it is the respect for family, it is the respect for parents, young people, our pages. If there's anything at all that we should be learning from this debate, it's the fact that strong families strengthen our communities, and it starts with respect—respect for mothers and fathers and grandparents and respect for each other. That's an example that we have in this wonderful community.

So once again, I commend the member, my colleague from York region, for bringing forward this important bill. You have my support, and you will rightly deserve the honour of the community on whose behalf you have brought this forward.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I hope that I can do proud my friend from Trinity–Spadina in my anthropological talk here. I told him a little bit of what I wanted to say.

This is an ancient tradition. This is a tradition that not only comes from Persia, not only comes from Iran, but it is a tradition that literally transcends all of the cultures

and all of the religions of the world. You see, many religions celebrate this day—many, many religions—even unto this time. This is the spring Ohigon and the Kwan Yin day of Buddhism. It is the Shunkei Sorei-Sai day of Shinto—March 21. It is the Ostara day of Wicca and it is, of course, the Nowruz day for those who come originally from or whose ancestors can be traced through Iran.

Under the Muslim calendar, this is the year 1375, and we will be celebrating that this year. In the old Fasli calendar, it is the year 3744. Just so people know what that is, that is the renewal of the world. That is the day on which Zarathustra received his revelation. It is the day that is held sacred for the creation of fire. It is, of course, a very Iranian holiday; a very Iranian thought.

1050

It was in ancient times, the first Nowruz, when the whole cycle of life began. The sun, in those days, did not change; it was transfixed in the sky. There was no day and night. There was no male and female. There were no seasons. Everything was transfixed. It was on that first day, that first Nowruz, that, through the sacrifice of plants and animals, all of these things changed. Everything changed: There were days and nights, there were seasons, and the sun did move across the sky every day. It is that which is celebrated.

That ancient religion that came out of what is modern-day Iran has literally influenced every single religious thought in at least the western world and probably the entire world.

When we look at what happened and how the celebrations take place even unto this day, there is much in common with the religions that many of us profess in Ontario. It has much in common with Christian Easter. If you look what happens, it is a spring and a rebirth. It is something which we can easily understand, even in a Christian society.

I look back with sadness. I think what a different kind of world this may have been had this wonderful holiday and the people who first thought of it survived. One of the saddest days—except, I guess, if you were a real hero-worshipper of Alexander the Great—was 334 BC, in which the magnificent kingdom and Persepolis were destroyed. It was there that the faith that brought the first Nowruz was destroyed. There's not much left of that today. You can go and see the archaeological remains, but there's not much left of it.

That was a sad day. But do you know something? The celebration of this faith, the celebration of Nowruz, continued beyond the destruction of Persepolis. It persisted up until the time of the Sassanids, it persisted in those who migrated from Iran to India—and there's a very large Farsi community there today—and it persists here in Canada, as people have come to this great land.

It is, and continues to be in modern times, a 13-day celebration. Can you imagine? Thirteen days. We have the 12 days of Christmas; they have the 13 days of Nowruz. It is a wonderful time when all kinds of celebrations take place. What I think it is most akin to

and what we can best understand in terms of our own Christmas celebrations is that this is a time of shopping. It is a time of gifts; it is a time of feasting; it is a time of family and get-togethers. It's a time when money is exchanged: new bills and shiny coins. It is also very much like Easter. It is a time when all of the children get new clothes and wear them. It is a celebration, immensely, of life.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Like your tie.

Mr. Prue: And my tie. My ties are legendary. Hope you like it.

This is a religion, this is a thought that has literally lasted millennia. It is said that it probably started with the Sumerians, and the Sumerians transferred it to the Babylonians, to the Achaemenians, to the Elamites, to the Akkadians and to the Sassanids. It has survived Islam. It is part of the tradition, even in Christian and Farsi households. It is part of the tradition for those who still follow the Zoroastrian faith. It is part of the tradition even in Islamic cultures. Even in times when Islam was trying to do away with this great celebration, it has survived.

I commend the people who are here today and I commend the member who brought this forward, because this is a celebration of life. It is a celebration that is truly and uniquely part of the Persian community, but it is a celebration that all of us as Canadians can interpret, understand and appreciate and all of us should celebrate with every single passion that we can because it is a celebration that life will continue. Even though all of these ancient histories and all of these ancient cultures and religions have come and gone, what has been transfixed, what has remained is this belief in the rebirth, in the renewal, in family, in getting together and in celebrating life. That is what the Persian community has brought to us. I commend you for coming to Canada. I commend you for having the faith to come here and to bring this tradition with you.

As other speakers have said, we need to do more to help new immigrants. We need to recognize the rich history they bring and the culture they bring, and we also need to recognize the talents they have brought. If this bill in any way will do that, then we all must support the bill and we must support the member who brought it. More so, we must support the community that is now an integral part of all things we call Canadian. Happy Nowruz.

Mr. Ruprecht: Congratulations to Mr. Racco, the member from Thornhill, who introduced Bill 63, an Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. Today in the gallery helping us to celebrate this very special event and the passage, I hope, of this bill are Ali Samiian, Mahnaz Shahbazi, Samin Isaveghlou, Simin Isabiglu, Nader Naderi, David Farmani, Alidad Mafinezam, Merdad Hariri, Lily Pourzand, Maryam Aghvami, Behnam Esfahanizadeh, Masoud Mansourzadeh and Mohamed Tajdolati. Thank you for being here today to help us celebrate this special event.

This day is obviously very symbolic of a community which has requested this day for many years, and we are here today to say thank you to them for their contribution and also thank you to Mr. Racco. We know that finally, after these many years, this bill has come forward, and we wish to congratulate them.

This is a rich community. In 1946, after the war, the first students began to arrive, and then from 1963 to 1966 we had students come from Iran to join us here in Canada as immigrants. But the main wave came from 1976 to 1985, and consequently the richness of their culture is reflected today in Ontario.

I have, of course, as most members know, written a book called Toronto's Many Faces, and in the book is a very important and very special chapter on the Persian community. I want to very briefly just tell you how rich they really are. Not many of us know the media in this community: Images of Iran is a CityTV channel; the Iranian is the monthly newspaper; there is an Iranian program on Rogers Cable; the Iran Star, a weekly newspaper; Iranian Women; Rasa magazine; Zabran weekly newspaper; and on and on it goes. It's amazing that a community of less than 100,000 would have this kind of media representation. Organizations: the Iranian Community Association of Ontario; the Iranian Women's Organization; the Iran Ethnic Foundation; the Persian Traditional Art and Culture Foundation; and on and on it goes.

But much more important, look at the section of prominent Torontonians. Here is a people, whom those of you who spoke earlier have mentioned, with tremendous contributions. Here they are, less than 100,000 strong, and making a tremendous contribution throughout all the professions.

Yes, there is more to be done, and we made a promise which we are going to keep. But let's look at the prominent Torontonians: Nasser Akmal, owner of Persian Rugs; Shane Bagi, developer; Esanau Isragi, another developer; Sheena Garandazi, composer; Mr. Hakim, who was mentioned earlier; Idi Ghospanian, conductor; Niyam Kazemi, graphic designer; Fred Kazravi, entrepreneur; Dr. Lafti Monsouri, former director general of the Canadian Opera Company; Dr. Asalam Mohajer, recipient of the Roy Thomson Award; Kaza Mohadevi, owner of Iran International Carpet and Rugs; Dr. Fazemi Mortazavi, member of the Immigration and Refugee Board, community leader and philanthropist; Riza Navami, artist and architect; Dr. Seeva Taha, lawyer; and on and on it goes.

They have come here and they have selected this great country. Why? Because the preamble to the Constitution says that this country has the right—we are fiercely Canadian, but also we have the right, because of this Constitutional preamble, to be proud of our background and proud of our heritage. This is the genius of Canada and this is why so many Iranians and those of Persian background have come to this country. Equality before the law: Wow! That's an experiment that we, you and I and this generation of Canadians, are participating in:

equality before the law. The school system: equal treatment of everyone not only before the law but in the schools, with the opportunities they have.

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When we think of what this country has done, when we think of the contribution of Iranian Canadians to Canada, when we think that we are a multicultural country that has an experiment the whole world is watching, then we know Iranian Canadians and the rest of us have developed a great country that we can all be proud of, that all ethnic Canadians and all people from all over the world can come to this country and say, "We have a great country, we have a great culture, and more power today." Congratulations to the Iranian Canadian community.

I want to say thank you for coming today.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Racco, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Racco: Let me thank all the members in this honourable House who spoke. Because all of you spoke in favour of Bill 63, I trust that we might be able to deal with it quickly, so that this March we will be able to celebrate doubly such an important occasion.

It certainly has been a pleasure for me to work with the community. I want to tell the House that my party, the Premier, the honourable Sorbara, the Honourable Smitherman, MPP Zimmer and myself have been in touch with the community quite regularly to make sure that their wishes are reflected in the decision we make in this honourable House.

This community, as has been said, is certainly providing many professionals who are running our hospitals, who are building this city, this region and this province with the best quality residential housing that we can expect. Of course, they are active in almost any industry and profession in our province.

This is a community that has done so much for the province, but also for themselves. I want to say to them, thank you for what you have done, but most importantly, thank you for what you're going to do, not only for you and your families but for the province of Ontario and for Canada. You have provided additional honour to this province. You have been the best that you can be for yourself and for our province, and you deserve all our respect. I believe Bill 63 will go to some little degree to do that, so that together we can celebrate not only your heritage but Ontario heritage, because your community, like my community and our community, is Ontario, is Canada.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue and expand its initiatives and investment in public transit, especially in assisting the fast-growth municipalities in the "905 belt" around the city of Toronto to link with one another through new or better-organized public transit links between these municipi-

palities to ease gridlock, enhance opportunities for employment, and reduce carbon emissions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Delaney: This morning, I've got a resolution for the movers and shakers in Ontario. One of the drawbacks of being a mover and shaker in Ontario in the 21st century is that before you can do your shaking, you have to move from where you have your breakfast to where you do the shaking part of your livelihood.

Therein lies the challenge. You can stew in the crawling gridlock on the 401, the QEW or the DVP in TO, you can edge your way along the Queensway in Ottawa, and wherever people come to live, to work or to be entertained, they've got to figure out how to navigate through the traffic, then park the car, and only then focus on what they've actually come to do.

The peak period of commuter traffic may be rush hour in Ottawa, it may be rush minute in some of our smaller cities, or it may be our infamous all-day gridlock here in the GTA. Over and above the cost in time, parking and frazzled nerves, gridlock costs us in pollution, land use, and just plain visual blight.

Civilized cities enable you to get around in them without having to bring two tonnes or more of steel with you. Hong Kong, for example, packs about the same population as the two dozen municipalities that make up the GTA into an area less than the size of my riding of Mississauga West. You couldn't even begin to imagine trying to make a world-class city like Hong Kong, Paris, London, New York, San Francisco or Vienna function if everyone needed a car to move around, so why should Ontario's world-class centres of activity be any different?

This issue is one of the things that brought me to this Ontario Legislature. It's one of the reasons that I got into politics. In Mississauga West, one of the difficulties we had is that our people have to commute to commute. In the area that I live in, in northwestern Mississauga, our flow of traffic in the morning consists of people getting into their cars and sitting in gridlock to get to parking lots to park their cars to get on GO trains to take the GO train to downtown to get on the subway to go to work. Now, part of this is the normal course in the 21st century of people moving farther and farther away in order to be able to find a place that they can afford to buy to live in comfort. But part of it is also, as a society, our reluctance to organize ourselves to help people get from where they are to where they need to be.

One of the things that I campaigned on in 2003 to help ease some of the gridlock—it's not a long-term solution in and of itself, but it's part of the solution—is to get a new GO train station built at Lisgar in northwest Mississauga. On the day on which the Minister of Transportation announced the station, I got a call from one of the reporters on the Toronto Star, who said, "Are you aware that your station at Lisgar is the first time in 25 years that there's been a new station built on the Milton GO line?" I said that no, I wasn't. He said, "It's also the first time in 25 years that there's been a new station built in Missis-

sauga.” That shows you, as a society, just how reluctant we’ve been to come to grips with the fact that people have got to be able to get from where they are to where they need to be without, as I said earlier, having to take two tonnes of steel with them to do it.

This morning, for me, was a perfect example. I left my home at about quarter to 9 and had, I thought, lots of time to get down here. But I ran into frustrating gridlock that really shouldn’t have been there on the QEW, and although I’ve gotten pretty good at finding a few little shortcuts when the major routes are clogged up, I would have loved to be able to leave home after the last GO train scheduled had left and been able to take public transit conveniently to get here to downtown Toronto. But I couldn’t. Part of that reason lies in the reluctance of governments of all stripes over the last two generations to make decisions that needed to be made in order to help people, especially here in the GTA, move from where they are to where they need to be.

For example, again using my riding of Mississauga West, from west of Milton, where the GO train line ends, to east of the Humber River, where the track bed opens up a little bit, we have two tracks that take us into downtown Toronto. Forty years ago, that line had two tracks. CP Rail, which owns the track bed, uses it at pretty near full capacity all day long. For GO Transit and for all of the commuters who depend on it, we have a narrow corridor in time, as well as in land, in which we can move from where we live, which is northwest Mississauga, to where most of us want to work, which is downtown Toronto. That time begins at 6:30 in the morning and ends at 8:10 going out of Meadowvale; add five minutes to the other stations of Streetsville, Erindale, Cooksville, Dixie and Kipling.

This GO train station that we’ve just got at Lisgar will help by taking some of that east-west flow of traffic and allowing a little bit of it to move north in the morning and south at night in an area where we don’t have roads that are simply clogged with traffic. That, in and of itself, will help. Another thing that will help has been the agreement by our Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to help fund a third track on that Milton GO line. That third track will allow the pie to be made a little bit larger and will allow commuter traffic to run both ways all day long. We used to have that. Fifteen years ago, we could get from northwest Mississauga to downtown, and we could get, most importantly, from downtown back to northwest Mississauga during the day. Today we can’t. We need to more than ever, because most of the growth in the high-growth areas of the GTA, and especially in the my city of Mississauga, has taken place in the area where I live—in the northwest corner. It was a pledge that I made to the people who sent me here to do something about that problem, and we’ve started on that.

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I’m hoping that in the next five to seven years, we can get the federal government to match some of Ontario’s infrastructure funding and get CP Rail, which also needs the capacity that that third track would offer, and get

everybody to the table and get construction started on that. This isn’t just a minor project. That third track on the Milton line, in and of itself, was estimated at approximately \$300 million. Having sat there on the GO train in the morning and watched, I can count about six or eight bridges, including the big span over the Humber River, that need to be upgraded in order to make that happen.

The government of which I’m privileged to be a part has worked hard on public transit issues and made some progress. Although there’s a lot of work still to be done, we can point to some of the progress that we have made. Let me quote here from a news release from the city of Mississauga:

“Through the province’s gas tax funding, we have been able to improve service frequency along our major routes”—this is referring to busing—“ease overcrowding and expand service into new neighbourhoods,” said Mayor McCallion. ‘We have acquired 72 new accessible buses and we are now using smart buses to provide better service times along our busiest corridor—Hurontario Street. We have expanded the city centre transit terminal to provide better service between GO Transit and Mississauga Transit and to act as a future link for a bus rapid transit (BRT) network. Now we need the federal and provincial governments to fund construction of GO Transit’s BRT network, which will be a critical inter-regional transit corridor along the GTA.’”

Mayor McCallion points out a very important thing: If what I wanted to do is, say, get from downtown Mississauga or downtown Oakville and get to my colleague Mr. Racco’s hometown of Markham, if I wanted to get to downtown Markham, I’d have to go through Metro Toronto to do it or I’d have to take the car. What we need are transit corridors to link the 905 belt together in much the same way as we have a hub-and-spokes transit system right now that takes people from the 905 belt into the centre of the city and in the evening takes them home again but doesn’t allow those thriving municipalities along the 905 belt to link with one another.

Why is this important? Because 15 years ago, Metro Toronto outpopulated those municipalities, which were then mostly suburbs in the 905 belt, approximately two to one. Today it’s approximately one to one. Within about a generation, it will be two to one the other way. Our 905 belt will have twice the population of Metro Toronto, and we’ve got a band of about five to seven years to make some critical decisions, while we still can, in order to help the municipalities—and there are about a dozen and a half of them in the 905 belt—link to one another.

I thank you very much for the time to bring this resolution to this House, and I look forward to hearing discussion on it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It gives me pleasure to be able to put a few words on the record to the resolution from the member from Mississauga West. First of all, I’ll begin by saying that I support the resolution, and I think everyone in the House will support the resolution.

Listening to the presentation, he started off by suggesting a new definition of the movers and shakers in our

society, and I just wanted to say that I felt good about that, because I am one of those movers and shakers. I come in from my great riding of Oxford every morning, and it takes me between two and two and a half hours to arrive here from Oxford county, recognizing that at least two thirds, if not three quarters, of the way takes less than a quarter to a third of the time. The rest of the time we get caught in the traffic and the gridlock that exists in and around Toronto. I can recognize the detriment that it has on the time that people spend, the detriment it has on our society and our environment. I think it's very important to suggest that we all should support this resolution to make sure more gets done.

I would just suggest to the member that maybe a more appropriate way—or maybe he has already done that—is to speak to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Finance and realize that more needs to be done for our transportation infrastructure in this province. That's why I was a little surprised. I was very appreciative of this resolution coming before us, but I was surprised that it was coming from a member of the government, particularly a member of the government living right in that gridlock area, who would have seen what was needed to get it done. I'll have to assume that he has done that and the government has said, "No, we have other priorities," and so the member is now seeing that this is the way to bring not only before the Legislature but before the people of Ontario that he agrees that the government is not funding the infrastructure enough and that more should be done.

Having said that, I just wanted to speak quickly about the one initiative that the government has done after many requests from the municipal government. The government finally came through with giving a little bit more funding, which they said was part of the gas tax. But if it was part of the gas tax—and I disagree with it. In fact, the gas tax all goes into the general revenues, and then the government decides where they send the general revenues. If it's a gas tax, it would have to somehow be associated with where the gas tax was generated to send it back to where it was generated. There's obviously nothing in the legislation or in the process that the government presently uses that does that.

The big problem we have is that the decision was made by the government that all the gas tax collected in the province—I shouldn't say all the gas tax, but the gas tax that they're allocating, which is the two cents per litre that is collected throughout the province, is then sent back to the municipalities that have transit. In my riding, two of the municipalities got some funding. The city of Woodstock got \$289,000 and the town of Ingersoll got \$46,000. Tillsonburg, of course, is about a third as big as Ingersoll; they have nothing, because it's dedicated only to transit.

Of course, we must remember that in rural Ontario, the only means of transportation is the roads and the bridges and the infrastructure needed for us to get from place to place. Not only do we have farther to go, but we have fewer people in the area to pay for those services, so it becomes very important.

Just for the member's benefit, I would say that my colleague John Yakabuski, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, introduced Bill 3, the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act (Assistance to Municipalities), and I think in this debate it's very important to again put on the record what my colleague said:

"The reason I introduced this bill is because when the present government brought in a gas tax rebate program, they extended it only to the 105 municipalities, out of some 445, that have a public or rapid transit system operating in their municipality. We feel this is a fundamental issue of fairness with respect to the way rural Ontario is treated. One of the great problems in rural Ontario today is the ability to keep in good condition the infrastructure they're responsible for, such as the county roads, the municipal roads, and the bridges, which in my county is one of the biggest challenges we have. Warden Sweet"—the warden of Renfrew county—"could certainly let you know that we have over 250 bridges in Renfrew county alone."

Again, I think it's so important, if we look at the gas tax and the issue of the gas tax—I know that is not directly related to the motion, Mr. Speaker, but you will have been listening to the member and he brought it up in his debate to the motion—and the distribution, if we go back in time and the way it has been ever since the gas tax, it was implemented and it was called a road tax on gasoline. That was supposed to be a tax that the government collected to help build roads.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): And the Tories fixed that.

Mr. Hardeman: I can tell you that shortly after it I was done, I don't think anyone spent all the money they were collecting on roads.

Mr. Marchese: Why not?

Mr. Hardeman: I think it was during the New Democratic years when they reduced the spending on roads because they had other priorities, but that's not the point.

The point is that the principal use of the gas tax was to be for the roads that gas vehicles were going to use, and that, in fairness, is not happening. We have a problem with the fact that money that is supposed to be going to roads is going to transit. That's not to say that that much should not go to transit. We now have a motion here that says even more is needed for transit. So the challenge is not where that money is going; I think we have to start realizing that the gas tax that municipalities are getting is in fact a portion from general revenue funds, and the portion both for mass transit and for roads is not sufficient to meet the demands of our infrastructure in roads.

As I said, I will be supporting this resolution because I think it's headed in the right direction. We've got to convince the members of the government, including the member putting forward this resolution, to put more money in our infrastructure and do something with this gridlock. I don't think there is anything that bothers the average person who is traveling back and forth every day

and spending all that time on our highways and byways more than sitting there, waiting. As he said, if you're not moving, you're not shaking, and it's true. If you're not moving, nothing is happening except that you're polluting our air and wasting our energy.

I support the resolution, but I would also ask that he ask his government to be fairer with the distribution and make sure all of Ontario benefits from the program the government puts in place. As I said, we will be voting for the resolution.

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Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I looked at this resolution, and at first blush anyone can say it is a good resolution, but in order for me to be persuaded, and I can be persuaded, I need to see some government action. We need to see where the money is. We need to see where the actions are. We need to see where the commitment is.

As a Legislature, why do we even have to ask the government and the executive council to do what is self-evident to all of us? We all know that much of southern Ontario is in gridlock. We all know about the carbon emissions. We all know about the amount of money that is being lost to the economy while people in trucks and transportation are gridlocked. We know the tremendous cost. We know about the downloading to the municipalities, which cannot keep up their end of road maintenance and transit and transportation systems. What we need to know is not whether we are committed to this, because of course it is self-evident that we should all be committed; what we need to know is, what are the plans? Where is the money? The budget is only about a month or two months away. Where is the money going to be contained in this budget? Certainly there was not adequate monies put aside in the last budget, and I doubt very much, in spite of this resolution and the good words contained in it, that there will be sufficient monies put aside in the next budget either.

The Liberals have a lot to say about this much-vaunted gas tax, of which we approve. We had the same thing in our platform. I'm not going to say that the two cents isn't a good idea, but it has taken forever for the two cents to work its way in, and in fact won't work its way in to be fully functional until October of this year. Is it enough? I don't think so. It is not enough because the gas tax is not providing even the same resources to places like the city of Toronto that they got pre-gas tax. Even with the gas tax at its full capacity of two cents this year, less money will be going to transit under that gas tax than the Conservatives gave to Toronto for transit. Can you believe that? I find that hard to believe. The reality is that the money going to transit in Toronto this year will be \$180 million less than they got in 1995. You can talk about the much-vaunted gas tax but there needs to be something else. There needs to be a commitment from the province of Ontario that it is committed to the building of subways, to putting transportation and buses on the roads, and to the upkeep of the roads and bridges in this province on which public transit will run.

There was much talk in the last election about the two cents for gas tax, but there was nothing in the Liberal platform, and there is no plan even till this day, for intermodal transportation between cities. This is the really big failure. We believe there should be at least one cent for intermodal transportation. If there is two cents for transit, there should be at least one cent for intermodal transportation. That means buses and trains that go between municipalities. It would be possible for someone living in Mississauga to work in Durham without taking a car if it was possible for intermodal transit to connect those communities either directly, through Union Station, or around Toronto. This is what needs to be done: We need to have intermodal transit and transportation, and it simply is not on the drawing board.

I look at other jurisdictions, at countries like Japan, at countries throughout Europe or the British Isles. You can see the genius of their transportation systems. If you hop on a train, you can literally go almost anywhere at any time. They run all day; they run into the evening hours. I know that even in the city of Toronto, in which I have lived almost my entire life with the exception of one year in Ottawa, where I live close to the Woodbine subway station, at 9 o'clock at night, if I'm still here in the Legislature, if we sit till 9:30, I cannot get the last bus home to my house, and I live just off the Woodbine subway station. If I can't catch that last bus, it's either a cab fare, which is about \$7, or it's a four-and-a-half-kilometre walk.

That's the problem, because the transit is so—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: The walk may be better for me, but transit is so starved of funds that even for a downtown community on the Woodbine subway station—I only live four and a half kilometres from that subway station—there is no bus to get home. This is what needs to be done: The transit has to not only expand in terms of the routes it has, but those routes that are in existence have to be able to run later in the evening and earlier in the morning for people to take advantage of them. This is what happens in other great jurisdictions. This happens in Japan and Great Britain. I look at the experiment in London. They have really pushed to clean up the downtown core of traffic. They charge people to go in now. Are we looking at that experiment? We're not looking at that experiment. I'm not sure I advocate it, but we're not even looking at it to see whether that will keep the cars out of downtown Toronto or downtown Ottawa; we are not looking at it at all. We are not putting any disincentives for people to come downtown with their cars. All we have here is silence.

I looked at this resolution and I thought, where is the money for the transit systems? I heard what my colleague from the Conservative Party had to say about the smaller towns not getting any money from the gas tax—and with good reason. That's because they're not running any transit systems. We have to be committed to transit: 85% of all the transit vehicles and 85% of all the people who use transit in the GTA use it in Toronto. In fact, there are

more yellow TTC vehicles—or at least there were. I'm not sure that's still the case, but there were more yellow vehicles when I was a member of Toronto city council. Those are the ones that grind the streetcar tracks and take the TTC employees around; they're not for the general public. There were more yellow vehicles in the TTC arsenal and in their warehouse than there were transit vehicles in the rest of the GTA. I know there have been some changes since then, but the reality is that most of it is downtown and most of it is woefully underfunded. The TTC is starving for operating funds and this year is again going to have to increase the cost of Metropasses and the cost of fares.

They're not alone. I opened the paper today. Here we are debating this, and members from Mississauga, what do I read in the paper today? Here it is from the Toronto Star: "Transit Fares Rise in Mississauga: Mississauga Transit users will have to come up with an extra 25 cents starting Monday as fares increase to \$2.50 a ride." That is a 10% increase. We're talking about getting better transit. What is this except dissuading people to use that transit?

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I look as well at what's happening with the TTC and Howard Moscoe's latest idea of giving free TTC passes. There's a lot that can be done and a lot that should be done, but we need to start with being true partners with the municipalities. The poor municipalities—Toronto's running a \$212-million deficit, Mississauga is having to raise their taxes by 5.9%, and here we have a resolution asking us for better transit. When the municipalities are treated better, when there is a true commitment to them and to the transit authorities they run, then and only then will I give credence to a resolution like this, and then and only then will I believe the executive council will come forward with the necessary funds to do what this very laudable and very courageous, I might say, resolution attempts to do. I just don't believe in my heart of hearts that it's going to make it from this member of the Liberal Party to that front bench in the Liberal Party and make any difference at all.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of the resolution from my good friend Bob Delaney. I'm going to express my support in two ways. One is with respect to the current government's program, which is helping my community of Niagara Falls, and then to explain how this resolution can benefit the residents of the Niagara Peninsula as a whole in terms of a Niagara regional inter-municipal transportation system easing gridlock, enhancing opportunities for employment and, finally, reducing carbon emissions.

First, let me tell this House that I'm pleased to indicate that the McGuinty government's gas tax refund fuelled an amazing 700% increase in weekend ridership in the city of Niagara Falls. From March 6 to June 5, Niagara Transit offered extended weekend service and special weekend fares of 25 cents. The 25 cents resulted in a ridership increase of 700%. It was such an excellent program that the transit commission decided to give the

citizens of Niagara Falls an additional break for the entire summer when Niagara Transit offered loonie weekends. Passengers paid \$1 rather than the normal adult fare of \$2.25, or \$2 for seniors.

More important, according to Niagara Transit's general manager, Terry Librock, was the fact that Niagara Transit's regular overall ridership increased by up to 13% for the entire year. Terry attributes 12% of the 13% to the 124 hours of extra weekend service to the community that the gas tax program funded. Terry also believes, as do I, that the government's program is a great investment by the province for municipal transit. The gas tax is paying off for our city because it provides long-term, stable funding, allowing the Niagara Transit Commission to plan significant transit improvements at the local level.

This year's provincial gas tax funding for Niagara Transit will increase by 50% to over \$820,000. With this money, Niagara Transit will use the funds to buy new buses and improve and create better services but, unfortunately, they will be doing this alone and not in an integrated fashion as my friend and colleague's motion speaks to. All of this is great news for transit, but the member from Mississauga has it right when he says there's a need to expand on these excellent initiatives and investments in public transit. We need to link our transit systems together for maximum benefit through new or better-organized public transit links; for example, a GO train from Niagara Falls. For me to come from Queen's Park in Toronto to Niagara Falls, I have to take the TTC. It's \$2.50 to Union Station. I have to take one of two trains; that's \$34.50. When I get back, I have to pay \$2.25 for Niagara Transit, and then I may have to use the People Mover System in Niagara Falls to eventually get home. That's a cost of about \$90 return.

So there's certainly an opportunity for us to work together to create a much more integrated system, and that's the reason I want to support this resolution.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm happy to support this resolution. The member opposite has hit on something. We need seamless transit in the GTA area, and we need that transit because the GTA area has a special responsibility to this province and to this country. We often hear that the GTA, southern Ontario, the area around Toronto, is the engine of economic growth for this province and indeed for this country. We've also heard that over the next 10, 15 or 20 years, competition in world economies is going to be fierce. We have to put forward and rely on every advantage we can possibly muster here in Ontario to be a strong economic competitor.

In the next 10, 15 or 20 years, it's expected that there will be an additional five million new Canadians, new population, in and around the GTA area. To build our economy so that Ontario and the GTA continue as the economic engine of this country, we need several things. We need an effective health care system so that workers and people are attracted to this province. We need an effective education system so that people are attracted to this province and to this area and that we provide the

necessary training and skills. We also need an effective transit system, not just to move the member opposite from Brampton into this Legislature, so that my legislative assistant, Shawn Knights, who lives in Brampton, can get in here, and so that my residents in Willowdale can get downtown and uptown, but we also need to concentrate on, in addition to moving people, moving commercial transit. That's roads and highways by which the trucks, tractor trailers and vehicles—transit—haul the economic goods that this province produces. They can move it around the GTA area, quickly move it out of the province down to the border, and move goods and raw products from northern Ontario down here. We're talking about a seamless transit here: moving people, moving goods and services.

In this Legislature, my count is that about a third of the members are from the GTA area. That's from all parties. Surely, on a non-partisan basis, the third of this Legislature that's from the GTA that sits in this body can get our heads together and work to develop a seamless transit system to move people and to move goods and services.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution. While we're here talking about how to improve transit links between municipalities to "enhance opportunities for employment" in the 905 belt, I assume some rural municipalities would be wondering when this government will be doing something further to enhance their opportunities. I support better organized transit links. In fact, I think it's a great idea, especially if they would go a step further and continue to link with many of our rural areas.

My feeling is there is a lack of understanding, certainly a lack of public transportation in my riding. In my view, this government has missed the bus as far as rural Ontario goes. Certainly in Norfolk county and Haldimand county in my riding, there is no bus. We did have a bus for a number of years that traveled along provincial Highway 3 coming out of Tillsonburg across to Simcoe and down to Port Dover. It caught up with provincial Highway 6, up through Jarvis, Hagersville, Caledonia and into Hamilton. That last remaining bus service hasn't existed for a number of years now.

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We were discussing the much-heralded gas tax that, obviously, our rural Ontarians pay with every fill-up. That, as we know, helps fund the public transit dreams of our urban neighbours. I will point out that in rural Ontario, certainly in my part of rural Ontario, public transit is a memory; it's not a dream. Little goes, obviously, to funding public transportation in rural municipalities. As we all know, OC Transpo out of Ottawa doesn't go as far as Winchester; the TTC does not go as far as Wingham. Of the three counties of my riding—Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk—Norfolk received nothing, Haldimand county received nothing. The only gas tax money to come our way was \$40,000 for Brant county. I suppose with \$40,000 you might be able to buy a used van, maybe

you could pay someone minimum wage to drive the van, and you could fill up the gas tank a bit. That would pretty well use up \$40,000.

My concern is that when this government was elected, they made a promise: They promised to tap into the potential of rural Ontario. I'm suggesting that tap is pretty well running dry, if you start looking at the kind of dollar figures or government support for rural Ontario with respect to this particular issue, the issue of public transit. I say this advisedly, but this bill does reflect a bit of an urban-centric agenda. It does focus on the 905 area. My concern is that there is an additional potential to ignore some of the unique issues in rural Ontario, transportation being one of them.

I think of this government's cavalier attitude, the proposal to take away the drivers' licences of young people with recent legislation introduced by the Minister of Education, to penalize young people for poor attendance in school. Again, in rural Ontario, Norfolk county, Haldimand county specifically, there is no other option. There is no bus; there is no TTC. If you take away a young person's licence, you have pretty well totally removed their transit options, other than calling a taxi, which can be very expensive, to have a taxi run out to a farm, for example, from town. You've removed that option in a business operation, a shop in the country or a farm where somebody has to drive that pickup truck into town to pick up parts or supplies. Especially during the upcoming planting season, a very intensive time where all hands have to be on deck, you do have to have someone with a driver's licence to go into town, especially when emergency repairs are called for.

You don't see this government removing these kinds of options for urban young people in that legislation, as I understand it. I'm sure that, for example, in our major cities, young people on occasion do have problems with attendance at school. I don't see a call to take away their TTC pass, for example, but the legislation seems more than willing to take away a young person's driver's licence. I'm suggesting there's a modicum of unfairness there.

With respect to this legislation, looking at the bigger picture, those of us who live in farm Ontario, rural Ontario, northern Ontario, essentially want to be back on the transit map where that is feasible. We are concerned that legislation like this can go the wrong way and continue to contribute to some of the damage that we have seen in the past two and a half years. Whether everyone has a driver's licence or not, we're seeing rural families, northern Ontario families, that are paying more than \$2,000 a year more, thanks in part to the McGuinty health tax, thanks in part to the ever-increasing cost of gasoline, of diesel, obviously of natural gas—of energy costs in general—and more specifically, as a result of the uncertainty of the policy from this government, of electricity.

Mr. Marchese: I'm going to read the resolution again, because I think it's particularly important. Mr. Delaney's resolution says, "That, in the opinion of this House, the

government of Ontario should continue and expand its initiatives and investment in public transit, especially in assisting the fast-growth municipalities in the '905 belt' around the city of Toronto to link with one another through new or better-organized public transit links between these municipalities to ease gridlock, enhance opportunities for employment, and reduce carbon emissions."

I'm going way out on a limb here, and I wouldn't want anybody to take any bets because this place is very volatile, but I wager to say there is not one member of this place who is opposed to it. Is that a fair assessment, do you think? With all due respect to the member, this is a very harmless little resolution here and I'm not quite sure why we're debating it. What I'd rather do is debate the following, and this is the Liberal promise:

"We will bring a region-wide approach to identifying and meeting GTA transit needs by creating the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority...."

"The new GTTA will be given the clout and resources to tackle gridlock and ensure free movement of people and goods in a rapidly growing region."

That, monsieur Delaney, mon ami, is the Liberal promise that was made. Why didn't he introduce that promise as a resolution to be debated here today rather than the resolution he brings forward that says the government should do more on this and that? Do you understand what I'm saying, Mr. Delaney? You probably appreciate why people like me get irritated by stuff like this.

You see, when you make a promise such as the one I read, we should be debating where you are at with that promise. I remind you that you've got about a year and a half left. You ain't got much time. As my friend from Beaches-East York said, your budget is coming down in a month or a month and a half or so. He does not and I do not anticipate you're going to deal with that problemo. So I'm saying to you that you've got about a year and a half left to deal with your promise to create the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, and you refuse to speak to the promise by introducing a useless, weak resolution that says nothing.

Mr. Delaney: Rosie, you've got to be nice.

Mr. Marchese: I did say, "With all due respect."

Rather than dealing with the downloading of transportation to the cities, which is literally desiccating most of the cities around Ontario—you understand "desiccating"; they're dry, really dry—rather than dealing with the downloading the Tories left us with, which you promised to deal with, rather than introducing that motion to be debated, you're here with something that gives us no satisfaction or pleasure by way of debate. You should be taking up the uploading of transportation so that municipalities could finally deal with their problems, or at least making sure that we get back to the old formula we had as New Democrats, and that former mayors here would probably know. The formula was 75% province, 25% cities, and 50% on capital.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): No, it was 50-50 on operations.

Mr. Marchese: Fifty per cent on operations—it's what New Democrats had when we were in power. The Tories eliminated that. You should deal with that because that's what cities need by way of provincial support, not a resolution that gives us absolutely no hope that we're ever going to deal with this, that gives the city of Toronto no hope that it can ever deal with its transportation woes, when my friend Michael Prue speaks about being behind by \$180 million less today than they were getting in 1994-95. That's what we've got to deal with.

So you can hide behind your 2% tax that is yet to come due, that is yet to be fulfilled, that has yet to come, and when it does come it will be by October. You can hide behind it, but cities are starving, Monsieur Delaney, for funds. They're waiting for the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. They're waiting for that. It's your promise. Debate that in the next couple of minutes you've got. But please, don't bring me here for an hour to talk about something that says, "Yes, the province should do more," that should do this, should do that. They're not doing anything.

I hope that Monsieur Delaney in his two-minute response will speak to the Liberal promise that clearly we do not have before us, that clearly they're about to abandon and that clearly is not helping our cities.

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Mr. Arthurs: I appreciate the opportunity to spend a couple of minutes on this resolution. I'm pleased to stand in support of it.

I want to reflect, though, a little but on what we have been doing. I would suggest that we have a four-year mandate and that the GTTA is on track, that it's coming. It takes some time to work with the stakeholders.

Let me reminisce for a second. Back in the early 1990s, when there was an NDP government, I remember there was a steering committee—I can't remember what we called it. GO, the TTC and the abutting municipalities were all invited to the table. Lou Parsons actually chaired that. One of the things we put on the table was two cents for gas tax, but the government of the day said, "We can consider that but we'd have to raise the taxes on gas to do it," and that wasn't acceptable. So that initiative really didn't go anywhere because the government of the day wasn't prepared to address it on a go-forward basis and sharing to enhance the system.

Then the Tory government came into play and they created the Greater Toronto Services Board, the GTSB, and gave it primary responsibility for transportation and transit in the greater Toronto area, but they gave it no teeth, they gave it no capacity, they gave it no financial ability to do anything. What did they do at the end of the day? They gave up on it and pulled it back because they fumbled the ball so badly.

Our government in the interim has been working very hard over the past two years, making sure that all the stakeholders come to the table, making sure that when the minister comes forward with his proposal on the GTTA—whenever that is; it'll be in the mandate; it's one of our commitments—he will come to the table with

everyone on side, working together, paddling in the same direction as opposed to everyone paddling in different directions. I'm rather looking forward to the success our government is going to have on that initiative, as compared to what I've experienced with former governments over the past dozen or so years.

I'm also going to look forward to the balance of the two cents on gas tax that our government committed to and implemented almost immediately. It was October of 2003 or 2004—I can't remember when we back-dated it to, but we put that first cent in place and municipalities knew we were serious. We committed to staging it over the two-year time frame to allow it to ramp up. This October they'll get the final instalment, up to two cents a litre on gas—not a new tax but in the existing structure—to support public transit in the greater Toronto area and across the province where there is transit.

I'm very pleased with the resolution. I think it's a good resolution. I think it speaks to what the need is. The 905 regions around Toronto represent about 15% or 20% of the population of the province. We should be paying attention to that. We should be paying attention to its economic viability, to the capacity of people to move within that system, as well as to move in and out of the city of Toronto. There's a lot of work that still needs to be done, and at times we have to get the 905 regions on Hansard, because Lord only knows, we get enough of Toronto on Hansard from all members. So this is an opportunity for us to ensure that the vital needs of two-and-a-half million people get addressed as well.

I'm certainly looking forward to the minister and his timing, when he's ready and feels it's appropriate, in bringing forward the GTTA initiative within the context of what we promised in our campaign platform, and I'm certainly looking forward to the balance of the two cents a litre coming forward to assist and encourage municipalities.

In my own jurisdiction, my own home town in essence, most recently the region of Durham has got the message. They needed to work together to enhance transit within that jurisdiction, and took the disparate transit systems and created the Durham Region Transit system, to begin working more closely so they could work with their neighbours in York and Peel and Halton, as well as their neighbours in Toronto.

I'm very pleased to stand today in support of the resolution that the member from Mississauga West has brought forward and look forward to voting on it shortly.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): First of all, congratulations to Mr. Delaney for introducing ballot item number 20, to assist “the fast-growth municipalities in the ‘905 belt’ around the city of Toronto to link with one another through new or better-organized public transit links between these municipalities to ease gridlock.”

It's obvious that what we need here and what Mr. Delaney is asking for is a real paradigm shift, a shift to new priorities.

The NDP members today, as much as I normally like what they have to say, and I'm listening very carefully,

are simply too negative. You will remember the history of public transit. Remember what happened in 1996-97? Capital funding for transit was slashed from 75% to numero zero. Now, in 2005, Ottawa is getting \$200 million for public transit from the Liberal government; Toronto, the GTA, \$600 million. This is the Canada-Ontario, Ottawa infrastructure agreement.

What about the gas tax? The gas tax for Toronto, between 2005 and 2006, right now, is \$120 million. In short, since October 2003, Toronto received \$447 million for public transit. Now, you have to admit, that is certainly better than zero. That's the history we've come from.

It is obvious: Transportation, especially for the public—it is important that we realize this is not simply moving people around. If anyone has seen what takes place in some of these Asian cities like Bangkok—I know you've been there—or Manila—I know you've been there—it takes about two hours to travel half a kilometre on public highways. That's gridlock. We are doing better, but we certainly have to do much better than that.

As I said earlier, and Mr. Delaney's motion is speaking directly to it, we have to have a shift in priorities. We are counting on the NDP members who are here today to support this bill and to stop being Mr. Negative. We have shifted our budget from zero to all these millions of dollars and we are counting on your support. Support this bill. Don't sit here and just be negative and sit on your hands and say, “Oh, this is useless because we can't get this bill from the backbenches to the front benches of the Liberal Party.” This, as you know, is not correct. You know better than that. We are counting on you. We're counting on your support. Stand up and be counted, be positive and help Mr. Delaney. Get up every day in the Legislature and help so that the Minister of Transportation can make his case.

Mr. Marchese: Shameless, shameless.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ruprecht: And especially you, Mr. Rosario Marchese. You have a special responsibility on your shoulder, because your riding is in the middle of Toronto, and consequently we are counting on you to support this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: Yes, that's true. The whole point is simply this: From 75% to zero does not speak well of a seamless public transportation system.

Mr. Marchese: What does it speak to?

Mr. Ruprecht: This is what Mr. Delaney's bill speaks of directly: a seamless transportation system that will stop the gridlock in Ontario.

In addition to that, it's not only the gridlock in Ontario; it will produce employment opportunities and reduce carbon emissions, which you said earlier you agree with. Stand up and be counted.

Mr. Marchese: Shameless, shameless.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina will come to order.

Mr. Ruprecht: We support you; you support us in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: I really shouldn't have to ask members like the member for Trinity–Spadina to come to order as often as I do. This is private members' business. We're here to listen to what each other has to say. It becomes more difficult when there is that much commotion in the House.

Mr. Delaney, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. It will take almost the whole—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Trinity–Spadina, I have asked you to come to order, please. Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Delaney: I'd like to thank the eight members who spoke knowledgeably and certainly passionately about this resolution: the members for Oxford, Beaches–East York, Niagara Falls, Willowdale, Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Trinity–Spadina, Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge and Davenport. I note that the member for Oxford recognized his two- to two-and-a-half-hour commute to get to Queen's Park; and his seatmate, my good friend the member for Durham—who, I might add, is an excellent hockey player—suggested raising taxes, and gosh, this is just not a tax-cut-and-borrow government.

Some \$10 million of the 2005 gas tax went to rural municipalities, and some \$12 million in 2005-06 of the gas tax went to rural municipalities, just to put that into some perspective.

The member for Beaches–East York says, essentially, "Show me the money." Beginning last year, Ontario has invested \$1.4 billion in gas tax funding to benefit 83 transit systems serving 110 municipalities. This year's amount is \$232 million, up from \$156 million last year and up from a total of zero when the former government cut support for transit systems in 1996-97.

Thank you very much for the time to discuss this resolution this morning.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: There must have been something in the Wheaties this morning, I think.

The time provided for private members' business has expired.

NOWRUZ DAY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE JOUR NOWRUZ

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will first deal with ballot item number 19.

Mr. Racco has moved second reading of Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. 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 ayes have it. Carried.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to send Bill 63 to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Racco has asked that the bill be sent to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 20, that being private members' notice of motion number 8, standing in the name of Mr. Delaney. 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 ayes have it. It is carried.

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

The House recessed from 1203 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): A few weeks ago, Lieutenant Governor and fellow Muskokan James K. Bartleman recognized the contributions of Orvil K. Hammond of Bracebridge. Orvil Hammond has funded breakfast programs at two local schools as well as contributing to the installation of an elevator at the Bracebridge Memorial Community Centre, enabling wheelchair accessibility at the centre.

Mr. Hammond was among 38 Ontarians who received the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship in a ceremony held here at Queen's Park, which recognizes good citizenship and outstanding public contributions through exceptional long-term efforts. In a career spanning over 60 years, Orvil Hammond has progressed from humble beginnings to being a very successful businessman. Over that time, he has always helped our community and his employees in many thoughtful ways. Congratulations, Orv.

I'm also very happy to recognize the efforts of more than 80 Harvest Share volunteers from the Parry Sound area. This program is dedicated to improving accessibility to good quality, affordable and nutritious food. Harvest Share also promotes recycling in all of its programs. I would like to recognize Tim Vankoughnett, who has contributed 208 volunteer hours and counting, and Roswitha Promberger, who has been with the organization from the beginning. Other volunteers include: Steven Burnside, who has given 1,053 hours; Joan Burnside, giving 932 hours; and Karen Allen, with 739 hours. Their hours of effort and those of fellow volunteers is remarkable and deserving of recognition. On behalf of the many people in Parry Sound–Muskoka who benefit from their efforts, I extend my heartfelt thanks and congratulations.

CANADIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate three

women hockey heroes who struck gold this week at the winter Olympics in Torino. Kudos to Gillian Apps of Unionville, Cherie Piper of Markham and Gillian Ferrari of Thornhill, members of the Canadian women's hockey team that defeated Sweden 4-1 in the final. Your gold medal win is a shining example that through skill, determination, teamwork and a true Canadian attitude dreams really do come true.

I'm particularly proud of these young women because they serve as a role model for youth, particularly girls, to engage in physical activity and sports. The McGuinty government is helping Ontario youth lead stronger and healthier lives through a vehicle called the Active 2010 communities in action fund, or CIAF. Recently, the Markham Skating Club received a one-year grant worth over \$8,000 from CIAF. These funds will support an outreach and membership development project to engage new residents of Markham in recreational skating.

Living in one of Canada's most culturally diverse communities, many new residents of Markham may have had little experience participating in skating as a form of physical activity and recreation. Through this project, the Markham Skating Club will engage and encourage 400 new children and youth residents to skate. As our Minister of Health Promotion has said, organizations like these play a critical role in this government's strategy to help Ontarians develop healthier and more active lifestyles.

Please join me in congratulating Gillian Apps, Cherie Piper and Gillian Ferrari on their tremendous win.

OMERS PENSION PLAN

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Our leader, John Tory, has been urging both Premier McGuinty and CUPE's Sid Ryan to let cooler heads prevail and return to the negotiating table. Before I go further, I want to thank the Premier for taking the advice of the leader of the official opposition at the 11th hour and averting a strike that would have crippled this province.

Premier, I still don't understand why the government is ignoring AMO's request to see the province's estimates on the total cost of the OMERS reform. AMO has every reason to be concerned with changes you are making to this multi-billion dollar pension plan. I would expect that, on a matter of this importance, you would want to share your numbers with AMO or, as scary as it may be, Premier, is it that you really don't know what the financial impact is going to be to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario?

I'm very concerned with Bill 206—a bill that was amended over 100 times, a bill that is not at all the same as it was the day it was first introduced. The amendments that were made to this bill do nothing to address the concerns brought forward by the many presenters during the committee hearings. In fact, some went so far as to say that if the government was going to put forward what is believed to be a flawed governance model, then, frankly, it would be better that the government leave things the way they were.

The province is rushing to reform one of Canada's most important pension funds, without a reasonable understanding of the potential repercussions and without sufficient regard to the best interests of employees, retirees, employers and, most importantly, taxpayers, because that's where all of this OMERS money comes from.

Once again, I ask the Premier to recognize that the taxpayers of Ontario should not bear the undue financial burdens this bill could impose upon them.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let me tell you what hard-working folks in the whole area of health care delivery have to say about the government's misguided, ill-conceived and downright boneheaded LHINs proposal.

Liz LeMesurier, from Deere Street in Welland, and Gerry Fortier write to me:

"Dear Mr. Kormos

"As a health care worker and a voter I am concerned that the Ontario government is radically restructuring our health care system without any consultation with the public and health care workers.

"Bill 36 will create 14 local health integration networks that will decide the health care Ontarians will get.

"LHINs will have the power to shut down local health services or transfer them to other locations.

"Our communities will lose health services. Health care workers will lose jobs.

"LHINs will have the power to transfer public health services to for-profit companies through a competitive bidding process.

"LHINs are not local and undemocratic.

"All this has caused me"—the authors of this letter—"deep concern. These changes will negatively impact patient care, our communities and hospital workers' jobs."

These health workers, along with millions of Ontarians, know that this government, hell-bent on the privatization of health care with Bill 36, its LHINs policy, is dooming the future of health care in the province of Ontario. I join with them in telling this government to stop and terminate Bill 36.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS CONFERENCE

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I'm delighted to share my enjoyment in attending the opening ceremonies for the Young Entrepreneurs conference held yesterday at Mohawk College. The conference is designed to provide a forum for young people to understand the impact of entrepreneurship on the economy. A teacher asked, "Who has cut grass or babysat for money?" and then made the connection between these activities as defining the start of entrepreneurship. The majority of companies are started by one person—one person with an idea and a dream.

Entrepreneurs are the backbone of business. My thanks go to all the teachers who are encouraging young people to explore these options. Thank you to Reid McWilliams from Mohawk College, who, along with Kristin Huigenbos, coordinator of the Small Business Enterprise Centre of the city of Hamilton, organized this very successful conference.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has two wonderful programs for students, Summer Company and Youth Partnerships, which offer great opportunities for students to test their interest in small business by giving them mentoring and hands-on business experience.

Entrepreneurs are a hard-working, dedicated group of citizens who combine energy, tenaciousness and creativity to build successful businesses, develop job opportunities and support communities.

Congratulations to the Small Business Enterprise Centre for their initiative in offering this conference at Mohawk College, and to all the young people who brought their enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and attended and celebrated and cheered.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I want to address a very serious problem threatening both the commercial and sports fisheries in the St. Lawrence and Thousand Islands region that the Minister of Natural Resources to date is ignoring.

The double-crested cormorant moved into the region a number of years ago in the wake of another invasive species, the zebra mussel. Cormorants are clear-water fishers, and the presence of zebra mussels has dramatically reduced turbidity and made the river an attractive hunting zone for this invasive species.

New York state's Department of Environmental Conservation along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service have made efforts to control the cormorant population on the US side of the river, but their efforts are not achieving the desired goal, because Ontario officials continue to sit on their hands.

New York State Senator Jim Wright, along with Tom Nichols, chair of the St. Lawrence County Legislature, have called on the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, to work co-operatively with US agencies to address this growing problem before irreversible losses occur.

I urge the Minister of Natural Resources to get engaged and stop taking a pass on efforts to address this dramatic situation. Significant damage to fish populations is occurring and the time to act is long overdue.

1340

SPEED SKATING OVAL

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak about the Ontario Speed Skating Oval. Earlier this month, I had the honour of

announcing an investment of more than \$800,000 by this government toward the construction of an innovative facility in the town of Lakefield just outside of Peterborough.

The speed skating oval in Lakefield will be Ontario's only temperature-controlled, outdoor 400-metre speed skating oval, complete with an adjoining multipurpose building. A key element of this project is the geothermal heat pump system. This means that excess heat will be captured for use as a heat source for the oval buildings, two local high schools and a subdivision in the area.

This announcement is about community partnership, about partners working together to provide the best solutions to build a stronger, healthier Lakefield.

I wish to recognize the efforts of those committed partners who were instrumental in bringing this project forward: Mr. Graham Wilkins, Mr. Norm Kyle, Mr. Rick Morrison, Mr. Mark Graham, Mr. Bob Helsing and Mr. Allan Heritage. And a special thanks to Catriona Le May Doan, who has graciously agreed to be the honorary spokesperson for this project.

The McGuinty government is delivering results in Lakefield and communities across Ontario through the rural economic development program. It is expected that the Ontario Speed Skating Oval facilities in Lakefield will be used by more than 80,000 people annually. This project will provide more than 180 new jobs in the community and has the potential to generate more than \$6 million in new tourism for Ontario. Congratulations to everyone involved.

DON VALLEY WEST CONSERVATION FAIR

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm happy to report today on the Don Valley West Conservation Fair that I hosted at Don Mills Plaza this past Saturday. I'm proud to report that over 200 residents came to take a look and learn from the displays set up by 17 exhibitors on a range of conservation issues.

We had small business people, not-for-profit citizens' organizations and school-based programs all demonstrating their leadership and sincere interest in making a smaller ecological footprint in our society.

I want to thank Citizens' Environment Watch, Earth Rangers Centre, Enbridge, GreenSaver, Next Energy, Nulight Ltd., Toronto Hydro, the Don Valley West One-Tonne Challenge, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, Evergreen, EnerWorks, North Toronto Green Community, FIRSTeam, EcoSchools, New Currents and Recycling Streams.

While residents learned how they could draft-proof their homes, switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs and teach their children to reduce, reuse and recycle, they also learned of the additional benefit resulting in reducing their energy costs. As I spoke with many of the people in the mall, I appreciated just how much they

were interested in this issue, are already aware about energy issues and want to do more.

This event is just one example of how we can foster a culture of conservation. I'm pleased to say that the residents of Don Valley West care deeply about how conservation plays a significant role in environmental responsibility.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Rather than dwell on the myths that have been circulating about local health integration networks, I'd like to clarify the purpose of Bill 36: to deliver a more transparent, regionally accountable, truly integrated health care system for the people of Ontario.

Let's pause for a moment to consider the state of that system. What we inherited were the remnants of a system neglected to the point of implosion. The Tories closed hospitals, fired thousands of nurses and ran up a massive deficit in the process. We had a choice: to accept the consequences of the Tories' slash-and-burn health care policy or to roll up our sleeves and deliver a reformed health care system that is more accountable and responsive to the needs of patients. Needless to say, we chose the latter.

Today we are delivering on that promise. LHINs represent a fundamental shift in Ontario health care. We are taking a loose cluster of services and turning them into a truly integrated system, a system that will be responsive to specific local health care needs.

I do worry about the dangerous games some groups are playing with our health care system. Those who would spread misinformation and seek to derail our reforms are taking grave risks with the health of Ontarians. I would call on all stakeholders and members of the House to join us in focusing Ontario's health care system where it properly belongs: on patients.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation de téléphones et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): The intention of this bill, of course, is to change drivers' behaviour, to address the issue of driver distraction, to improve the statistics with respect to the relationship between technology and potential accidents and to require drivers to cease using phones in certain situations. But the key thing to this piece of legislation is quite practical: It's to do the right thing. If it saves one life, it does the right thing.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Dunlop and Mr. O'Toole exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Dunlop assumes ballot item 40 and Mr. O'Toole assumes ballot item 22; Mr. Hardeman and Mr. Klees exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item 47 and Mr. Klees assumes ballot item 23.

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

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES EMPLOYÉS MUNICIPAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act / Projet de loi 206, Loi révisant la Loi sur le régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Racco, Mario G.
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Hampton, Howard	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS**LOCAL HEALTH
INTEGRATION NETWORKS**

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I wonder if the Premier could explain to the House why his government has found it necessary to provide the Minister of Health with more power than any Minister of Health in recent memory. I am referring specifically to the power that is given in the LHIN bill to allow the minister to ride roughshod over the LHIN accountability agreements whenever he chooses to do so. I wonder if the Premier could explain why that power is necessary if your priority is on giving the power to make these decisions to the local level?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to take the question. In any discussion about LHINs, I would ask the leader of the official opposition, as I would Ontarians, to consider our track record to date with respect to health care generally and medicare specifically, and the tremendous commitment we have demonstrated in that regard. We are the first province to put in place a specific piece of legislation, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare

Act, which effectively enshrines national legislation at the provincial level.

The LHIN undertaking, which we are putting forward on behalf of the people of Ontario, is all about ensuring that Ontarians have more say in their community when it comes to the delivery of good-quality health care. What it does, in a real sense, is give more control, more determination to people at the community level, and we think that's healthy and appropriate.

Mr. Tory: Let's talk about that, because, as with so many things, it's a matter of whether it's real or a mirage. In fact, you used different language the other day. You said that you had every confidence in the people to assist when it comes to making important decisions.

What you've done is put a section in this bill that, without a hearing, without cabinet oversight or approval, without having to meet any definition at all of what is in the public interest, the minister can override the accountability agreement between the LHINs and himself at the end of a negotiating process that hasn't succeeded, effectively rendering them—his hand-picked appointees, by the way—powerless to be involved in the decision.

1400

Worse than that, this overriding that he can do, totally trampling on any involvement by the local people, will take place in secret, in darkness. That means the public will never know that the minister overrode what the local people wanted to do.

So I ask you, Premier: If this is really about local input, local decision-making, local involvement, why are you allowing your minister to become some sort of a politburo where he gets to make the decisions himself in secret? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again the leader of the official opposition is sorely mistaken in this regard. Our made-in-Ontario model will empower local communities to make decisions about local health care. We just don't believe—and I'm surprised to hear the leader of the official opposition assert something to the contrary—that you can micromanage the entire health care system from an office tower within the precinct of Queen's Park.

Right now, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada with no local say over health care needs. On behalf of all those people who have signed on to serve on LHIN boards, I resent that somehow these people have been chosen for reasons other than their ability and their goodwill and their determination to improve the quality of care at the local level.

Mr. Tory: Premier, of course, you have basically substituted those hand-picked appointees of yours for good people who signed up before to serve on local hospital boards, where they will have no role to play anymore. But even the hand-picked people you put in place are going to be overridden by the minister. If you've read the bill, check out subsection 18(3), which says that the minister can override any of these decisions that your hand-picked people will make in any event.

We moved an amendment that would have strengthened your argument about local representation and

power. We said that there should be a dispute resolution mechanism set up so that if the minister and the LHIN can't agree, he doesn't just get the power to go to a secret room and decide by himself; somebody else gets to take a look at it. You voted that down.

If you're serious about what you said and making sure local people have a say in local health care matters, why won't you reconsider that? Why did you vote that down? Why are you centralizing all the micromanagement precisely with your Minister of Health? Because that's what you're doing.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the official opposition may be suffering from the perspective that comes from not being here when his party formed the government. He probably does not remember, and perhaps he would not like to recall, the Savings and Restructuring Act of 1995, which paved the way for closing 28 Ontario hospitals. There was no local input at that time. That was the approach brought by that government at that time.

On the contrary, over here we have put in place long-term funding for all Ontario hospitals. We have also said that we have faith in local communities. That is the foundation on which we will build this new LHIN concept. It's about ensuring that the people of Ontario have greater access, greater say in their communities over the quality of health care that's going to be delivered in their communities. It's based on our belief that you can trust the people in Ontario communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My question is to the Premier. I'm not sure whether he said you can or can't trust the people, because, with all this power being given to the minister, there's no way you trust the local people. You're giving all the power to him to open and close and amalgamate and cut off services—unprecedented powers.

Let's go to section 30 of the bill. We talked about this the other day. Your minister can, by ministerial order—no court hearing, no oversight by cabinet, no nothing—transfer a charitable donation, given by a citizen in good faith to a hospital, somewhere completely different. So if he uses his power in the act, section 28, to close a hospital arbitrarily, which he can do, he can then take a charitable gift and simply transfer that to some other community.

If you really believe in local power for these things, if you really believe in encouraging people to give to the hospitals, why would you create a power in the minister to transfer a charitable donation anywhere he wants—no cabinet oversight, no court approval? Why would you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know that the Tories tried to manufacture an issue with this particular section of the bill. They asked the OHA about this section in the standing committee, and the OHA replied that they didn't share the Tories' concern. Just so we're clear.

Apparently they're not going to allow the facts to get in the way of the adventure which they are pursuing. We

have written sensible legislation. Only property that is directly tied to the integration can be directed to move. Charitable property can only be moved to another charity, just so we're clear in that regard. And if someone has made a charitable gift for a specific purpose, the property, if moved, must be used for the very same purpose.

Mr. Tory: Let's talk about that, because it also applies to the closure of a hospital, and in the event, under an integration order—

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: Yes, it does. In the event your minister decides to close a hospital in a community—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Minister of Community and Social Services, Minister of Finance, I'm having difficulty hearing the Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: In the event that you didn't intend to give the minister power to close hospitals under the integration order section, then you wouldn't have given it to him, and it's right there. If he chose to close the sole hospital in a town, then yes, I agree, the property does have to be transferred to another charitable foundation. It could be transferred to a foundation 500 miles away.

This process is presently governed by the courts. Presently, you have to go to court to make an application to transfer it. Why would you give the minister unprecedented, unfettered, unqualified power to transfer things right out of a community if he closed a hospital, no say from anybody else, no consultation with the donor? Why would you do that? You talked a lot the other day about amendments that you listened to that are reasonable. Why would you bull ahead with this if you never intended to use the power and transfer people's gifts from one community to another regardless of what they wanted?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think it's really important to understand the foundation on which the leader of the official opposition is launching this attack. He is the representative of a government that closed 28 hospitals, the representative of a government that spent \$400 million to fire thousands of nurses and compared them to hula hoop workers. He is the representative of a party which now is saying that, given the opportunity, the first thing they would do for Ontario health care is to reach in and remove \$2.4 billion.

I would again ask Ontarians to compare and contrast. We've increased funding for Ontario health care by 19%. We are the first government in the history of this province to have put in place three-year funding so hospitals can plan long into the future. And we are the first government in Ontario that said we have faith in Ontario communities to better manage their own affairs when it comes to the delivery of quality health care.

Mr. Tory: Of course, all of that has nothing to do with the question at hand, the transfer of charitable property, absolutely nothing.

I would ask you this simple—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. We need to be quiet so that I can hear the Leader of the Opposition ask his question. It's not helpful when we decide to assist him early on.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Or later on, Mr. Speaker, if I might add, but never mind.

Premier, if you really mean all of what you have just said about local control, if you really mean that you don't intend to do the things that you are implying you are not going to do, why is it necessary in this bill to give the minister unfettered power to close hospitals, to withdraw services from hospitals, to move charitable property? If you weren't intending to use these powers, why would you create them to begin with, or why wouldn't you have some check and balance on them, whether it's cabinet oversight or court oversight or something like that? Why do you need these powers in this bill—unprecedented recent powers—if you're not going to use them? Why are they there?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: You would think, if there were any merit whatsoever to the argument being made by the leader of the official opposition, that the Ontario Hospital Association would want to register their concerns with us. But they do not share the concerns put forward by the leader of the official opposition. Those are the people who are on the front lines, those are the people who assume the very important and special responsibility to deliver good-quality care inside our Ontario hospitals, and they have said that they are not concerned by this provision. So I will leave it to the people of Ontario to make their decision as to whom they are going to attach credibility to when it comes to this issue: the leader of the official opposition, who is doing so on a partisan basis, or those people who run our hospitals and who have told us they're not concerned about those provisions.

1410

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier and it's about local democracy. Premier, you say that your local health integration network, or LHIN boards, and the bill will mean local control of our health care system. That should mean that local communities will have some say over who sits on the LHIN board. Can you tell the people of Ontario how many LHIN board members will be elected by local communities? Will they all be elected by local communities? Will a majority be elected by local communities? How many LHIN board members will be elected by local communities under the McGuinty government scheme?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP is very much opposed to reform of any kind when it comes to improving the quality of health care we deliver in the province of Ontario. He is adamantly opposed to the very concept of giving more control to our communities when it comes to the delivery of health care therein.

Understand what we've inherited here: 154 hospitals, 581 long-term-care homes, 42 community care access

centres, 37 public health units, 55 community health centres, 16 district health councils, seven ministry regional offices, 350 mental health programs, five academic health sciences centres, all with different geographies, different funding flows and overlapping accountability. We think that we can do better. The answer for us is to put in place our local health integration networks, which ensure that communities can bring all those services together.

Mr. Hampton: What a surprise, the Premier wouldn't answer the question. The answer is, under the McGuinty government, zero members of the LHINs boards will be elected by the people. All of the LHINs board members will be hand-picked and politically appointed by the McGuinty government. You know, it's very strange—100% of MPs are elected by the people, 100% of MPPs are elected by the people, 100% of municipal councillors and school board trustees are elected by the people. The McGuinty government calls this local health care control, but none of the board members are elected by the people; they're all politically hand-picked and appointed by you.

Premier, how can you have the gall to call this local control over health care when none of the board members will be locally elected; they'll all be political appointments by you?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP likes to play fast and loose with the reputations of those people in Ontario who have stepped up to the plate and decided that they would put their shoulder behind the wheel of an important aspect of health care reform in our province. The leader of the NDP may not have confidence in those people who have decided they're going to help in this particular undertaking, but we are very pleased that people have taken on this responsibility on behalf of their community, and we have every confidence that they will do the work that is necessary to ensure that we better integrate services at the community level with the net result being better-quality services for people in Ontario communities.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I just think you should be honest with people. Don't call this local control over health care when none of the board members are going to be elected locally. All of them are going to be appointed politically by you. Don't call that local control.

Now, you may think it's a good idea to have hand-picked McGuinty government appointments in charge of a \$21-billion health care budget, but New Democrats believe we should listen to some of the front-line health care experts like the Ontario Nurses' Association, who said, "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the LHINs are simply an additional layer of bureaucracy under the substantive control of the health ministry."

I ask you again, Premier: How can you call this local control, when none of the LHINs board members will be elected by local communities? They'll all be centrally appointed, politically hand-picked and appointed by Dalton McGuinty.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again I part company with the leader of the NDP when he, in a broad-brush fashion,

disparages all those Ontarians who have agreed to participate in this very important reform. Fundamentally, it's about better integrating services that are already there in the community, bringing them together in a way that makes it more patient-friendly. That's what this is all about. It's about improving the quality of health care for Ontarians. So it may be that the leader of the NDP is not supportive of the individuals who have come forward and decided to act on behalf of their community, in the best interests of their community, but obviously I cannot agree with him in that regard.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: Despite all the Premier's words, he must admit it's very strange that none of these board members is going to be elected by local people.

I want to raise why it's so important to have local control. Yesterday I raised with you the LHINs bill's privatization clause, section 33, which gives the health minister the unprecedented draconian power to order the privatization of key health services like food delivery and cleaning services. It's a plan that the registered nurses call "disastrous for patients." Premier, how can you justify giving all control to Queen's Park-appointed LHINs board members, bureaucratic shields for your decisions, instead of giving control to working families in local communities who should be making the decisions about local health care?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The fiction that is being put forward on a regular basis now by the leader of the NDP is that LHINs are somehow a plot to introduce more private health care in the province of Ontario, and this, of course, from a member of a former NDP government that brought private ancillary services to the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital in 1993, to the Trillium Health Centre in 1994, to the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in 1991, and to the Halton health care centre in 1992, just so we're clear.

On the other hand, we were very proud, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to put into place the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which effectively enshrines national legislation at the provincial level. Therein lies the contrast.

Mr. Hampton: This is about why local control is important. You're going to give your Minister of Health the capacity to privatize all kinds of hospital services. I think local people ought to have a say in that before he orders that from his office in downtown Toronto.

Here's another reason why local communities deserve a real say: You, Premier, are giving LHINs the power to merge, to transfer, to amalgamate and to wind up health services in a local community. In my part of the province, the LHIN is the size of Spain. If the LHIN in my part of the province amalgamates services, people who are ill may have to travel great distances just to access services that used to be available in the local community. I think before the Minister of Health does that from his office in downtown Toronto, local people deserve to have a say in that. What do you think, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's wrong to frighten your constituents in that way. I would ask all Ontarians to take a look at the record we've amassed so far. We've raised spending in health care by 19%. We will build a new medical school. We're expanding medical school spaces. We're funding more than 3,000 new positions for nurses. We're putting into place family health teams. And yes, we are moving ahead with LHINs. That is part and parcel of our unwavering commitment to both medicare and to improving the quality of care we're delivering to the people of Ontario. So the leader of the NDP can say whatever he wants, but I would ask Ontarians to keep in mind our track record and our devotion to their cause, and in particular, to their right to better quality health care.

1420

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you seem to have real difficulty answering the questions today. Here's one more reason why local control is important: The LHINs will be able to use cutthroat bidding to pick who delivers health services, just like we now have in home care. It becomes not a question of who can deliver better care but who will deliver it for a rock-bottom price. We think that local communities deserve a say in these matters. They deserve a say in the quality of health care that happens in their community.

In committee we put forward an amendment to make sure that LHIN board members are elected by local communities, not appointed by the McGuinty government at Queen's Park. Today I'm asking you this question: Are you opposed to that amendment?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP sees any aspect of this legislation with which he disagrees as being part of a plot to introduce privatization. I think it's important for the leader of the NDP and for Ontarians to understand the nature of the bill itself, and in particular I want to quote from the preamble. The very first provision in the bill itself reads as follows: "The people of Ontario and their government ... confirm their enduring commitment to the principles of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, accessibility and accountability as provided in the Canada Health Act ... and the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004." It goes on to say: "The people of Ontario and their government ... are committed to the promotion of the delivery of public health services by not-for-profit organizations."

These are the very first provisions in the bill. They speak volumes about the spirit that informs this bill and our commitment to better-quality health care for Ontarians under the auspices of the Medicare Act.

The Speaker: New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My question is to the Premier, carrying on with the LHINs. It also talks in there a lot about local decision-making. My question is very simple. Paragraph 28(1)1 says that after receiving advice from the LHINs, the minister can issue an order to cause a hospital "to cease operating, to dissolve or to wind up its operations."

That power does not exist in the law today. If you don't intend to use it, why are you putting in the bill an express power, just with the advice of your hand-picked appointees—because they are that—why are you putting in the bill the power of the minister to issue an order causing a hospital to cease operating, dissolve or wind up its operations? Why do you need the power if you're not going to use it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: If the leader of the official opposition maintains that the power is not there at present, then how did they close 28 hospitals in Ontario? Again, they closed hospitals.

We are strengthening Ontario hospitals. We're increasing their funding levels right across the board. We've increased funding levels generally for health care by 19%. We have given hospitals something they've been looking for for a long time now, which is a three-year funding commitment so they know exactly where they stand in that regard, to better manage their accounts and the care they deliver.

Again, I would ask the leader of the official opposition to cut us just a little bit of slack in this regard, and I'd ask Ontarians to carefully consider our approach to their hospitals and their health care and contrast that with the leader of the official opposition's party when they were in government.

Mr. Tory: There is not, in the law today—check it out—in the Public Hospitals Act, any power to order a hospital closed. There is not that power. There isn't the power, as well, to order charitable property given by citizens of Ontario to their hospital to be transferred somewhere else.

I'll repeat my question on both. If you don't intend to use the power to close a hospital down, if you don't intend to take someone's gift to a hospital and transfer it somewhere else, then why are you now creating these powers for yourself when they didn't exist before? Why are you doing it if you're not going to use the powers?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition is now arguing that the power, in fact, does not exist. Yet they closed 28 hospitals, which begs the question: Did they close those illegally? I think that's the question it raises.

If there is any group of people in this province who are concerned about a potential hospital closure, they are found within the Ontario Hospital Association. They have told us they do not have concerns in this regard. We will work with the Ontario Hospital Association, but more importantly, we will work with Ontarians to ensure that this LHINs bill and ultimately the legislation, should it be passed by this House, in fact improve the quality of health care that we deliver inside Ontario communities.

Mr. Tory: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'll be filing the appropriate papers to indicate my dissatisfaction—

The Speaker: Thank you. It's not necessary—*Interjections.*

The Speaker: Order. New question.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. Municipalities across the province are being forced to hike property taxes because your government will not upload the download and you will, therefore, not pay your bills. St. Catharines is facing an 11% increase, Peterborough is looking at 12%, Hamilton is looking at nearly 8%, and Toronto has said that unless you come across with money, they're looking at 6% or more. Why are cash-strapped municipalities being forced to pay the bills that you have admitted are the province's responsibility?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I appreciate the question that has been asked. Let me say very quickly that this government has done an awful lot in the last two years to try to deal with the disastrous effects that the previous government dealt with with municipalities. When you look at the area of affordable housing, for example, we have committed over \$300 million of provincial taxpayers' dollars, together with the federal taxpayers, to come up with an affordable housing program across this province that will deliver 15,000 new affordable housing units, plus another 5,000 units of affordable housing that will actually be built and occupied by low-income individuals. We've helped with the gas tax. Just about right now, 1.5 cents of every dollar of gas that is being sold goes to municipalities. If memory serves me correctly, the number is well over \$300 million that municipalities are getting. We're working with municipalities—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. There may be a supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): You should try uploading the question.

Mr. Prue: Yes, I should try uploading and perhaps you should too because my question is not about how much money you're spending on housing, which is a provincial responsibility, it's how much you are giving to the cash-strapped municipalities.

You continue to require them across the province to fund provincially mandated programs off their limited budget base, something you vehemently opposed when you sat on this side of the House. With property taxes soaring across the province, municipalities can't afford any longer to shoulder your broken promises. When are you going to pay your own bills? When are you going to stop forcing them to pay them for you?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Perhaps it's unfortunate that this member did not have the opportunity, or maybe he was at the ROMA conference earlier this week, where the ROMA delegates applauded the fact that we are working with municipalities to deal with the land ambulance situation. The Premier, as a matter of fact, made a commitment that within two years there will be true 50-50 funding. They also applauded the fact that this year,

under the Ontario municipal partnership fund, an additional \$51 million is being given to municipalities across this province, making a grand total of \$707 million to make sure no municipality will receive fewer dollars than they received last year. We are working with our municipalities. There is a lot of work to be done, but an awful lot of work has already been done. We want to make sure that each and every municipality in this province is viable and vibrant, because a good municipal world makes for a good Ontario.

1430

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Premier. Last year, this government announced our Reaching Higher plan. As part of that plan, we spoke about investing in additional training in our colleges and universities to improve the quality and accessibility of our schools. Two weeks ago, I was privileged to be at Nipissing University in North Bay and Canadore College which, as you know when you visited, are co-located. I was there with President Dennis Mock of Nipissing University and President Barbara Taylor of Canadore College, and we announced an investment of \$2.3 million to those fine institutions to improve education there.

Premier, can you discuss with us today the impacts of these investments and others across the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I am pleased to receive the question from the member and to learn more about some of the good work that is being done in our post-secondary institutions and training centres by all those who are committed to improving the quality of skills and education of the people of Ontario. In that regard, I am very pleased to be co-hosting, together with Premier Charest, the first-ever national summit on post-secondary education and skills training this evening and all day tomorrow in Ottawa.

Ontario families know of our determination and commitment to improve education and training opportunities for them. Our \$6.2-billion investment is the largest in a generation. I am proud to say that a quarter of that, about \$1.5 billion, is devoted exclusively to improved student assistance. What we are going to do by way of this plan, which I am looking forward to sharing with my colleagues from across the country, is build a foundation here in Ontario which expands across the nation and invests in our human capital.

Ms. Smith: Premier, last week, I had the privilege of being at the Canadore Commerce Court site with president Barbara Taylor, where we announced \$1.1 million of investment through the small northern and rural colleges fund. Canadore, as you know, is at the forefront of training in apprenticeships and in skills, trades and development in the north, and we are very proud of the programs we have developed in partnership with our local school boards in a lot of our smaller communities.

At that time, Barbara Taylor told me that she will be participating tomorrow in the national post-secondary education and skills training forum. I understand that Ontario is taking a leadership role in this, and I would like you to please share with the House how we, as Ontarians, are taking a lead in improving training and post-secondary education across our country.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I thank the member for her question and for her commitment to improving training and educational opportunities for her constituents. Premier Charest and I are determined, by way of hosting this summit, to bring together stakeholders from right across the country—all the provinces and the territories. We're bringing people there who represent educational institutions, educators themselves, business, labour and, of course, student representatives. This is all about exploring the challenges we face across the country as a whole and then finding better ways to exploit the opportunities.

We in Ontario firmly believe that education does a number of absolutely marvellous things for us. It enriches the enjoyment of our life, which is something that we sometimes overlook, it strengthens our economy and it strengthens our democracy, because educated and skilled citizens have a better understanding of the issues that go before them. For all those reasons and many, many more, I am very much looking forward to co-hosting the summit in Ottawa—

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

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: Could the Premier inform the House why personal and business bankruptcies are on the rise in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Again, there's just so much negativity coming from the Conservative Party. We remain very optimistic about our economy. We take heart in the fact that hard-working Ontarians who go out there every day and borrow money and take risks have created some 215,000 net new jobs—we haven't created them, and I'm not going to take credit for that—since we first earned the job of governing. So it may be that the Conservative Party is down on the economy, which means, effectively, they are down on the ability of Ontarians to pull through any challenge that we have, but I disagree with that entirely. I have confidence in the economy because I have confidence in the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: It's disappointing that the Premier dismisses out of hand the fact that business and personal bankruptcies are on the rise in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. It's not just me; it's a CIBC World Markets report from this week. Let me give you the facts: in 2005, a 6.2% increase in business bankruptcies, the worst performance in the entire nation; in 2005, personal bank-

ruptcies in Ontario were not much better, the second-worst performance in Canada.

Clearly, your high taxes, high energy costs and runaway-spending fiscal policies are impacting on working families and businesses in the province of Ontario. Premier, I'll ask you one more time, why are personal and business bankruptcies on the rise in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and what are you going to do about it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I can't fathom the reason for the negativity when it comes to the Ontario economy, and I don't understand why the Conservative Party wants to talk down Ontario. They want to talk down the Ontario economy, which really means they want to talk down the ability of Ontarians to pull together and work together through any challenges that we might face.

Again, I say to the members opposite, but more importantly I say to the people of Ontario, that I have confidence in their abilities. I am pleased with the fact and proud of the fact that they on their own have generated some 215,800 new jobs since we first earned the privilege of serving them as the government. In January alone, the people of Ontario created 15,600 net new jobs. I do not share in the member opposite's pessimism. I'm optimistic, together with the people of Ontario, when it comes to their future and their economy.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Premier. Last night, over 200 concerned, determined and sometimes angry citizens met to discuss your plan to build a mega power plant on Toronto's waterfront. Let me tell you, it is absolutely clear from last night's meeting that the east end is overwhelmingly opposed to your plans. Why are you ignoring the community and simply making the wrong choice for the east end of Toronto and for the citizens of Ontario?

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

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I find it absolutely overwhelming that the person who is the third party's environmental critic would actually be asking us to waive an environmental assessment, because there is no environmental assessment on the proposed Hearn site. The other very interesting part is that that same party is now proposing that we transfer to a private company, Florida Power & Light, at no cost, an asset that belongs to the people of Ontario. So I'm quite taken aback and overwhelmed by these questions.

Mr. Prue: It's no wonder; almost everything overwhelms this minister. I think she is incapable of understanding that an environmental assessment needs to be done on your proposal, not the truncated little job that you did on it already.

Mr. Premier, there are a number of solutions that are both environmentally friendly and will ensure that the lights stay on in Toronto. I repeat, it's not too late for you to tell your minister that she is dead wrong and will do

something that nobody in our community wants. That's why 200 people showed up last night, and that's why the community as a whole has voiced their concern about your inappropriate actions.

Why are you ignoring our community? Why are you ignoring the positive alternatives? Why are you ignoring the city of Toronto? Why are you ignoring Toronto Hydro? Why are you ignoring everybody who's trying to develop the waterfront? That's what we want to know. Why are you building something we don't want?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'm very pleased to respond. We are building because we are going to keep the lights on in Toronto. The Independent Electricity System Operator has indicated that by the year 2008, there will be rolling blackouts in downtown Toronto—hospitals, universities, businesses, schools—the economic engine not only of this province but of Canada.

They are proposing that, instead, we put up part-time emergency generation. "Just spend \$120 million and we'll take it down in a few years. Who cares?" I use the money far more prudently on behalf of the people of Ontario. We will keep the lights on for the people of Ontario. We will make a difference because we know where we're going, not where we have been.

1440

CONSERVATION

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Energy. We've heard much about the government wanting to create a culture of conservation in the province. I know as well as you do that this can't happen overnight. To ensure that we can create that culture, we need to give Ontarians the necessary tools to do so. The most popular example, of course, is the blue box. Twenty years ago, few people outside Ontario recycled; now it's second nature for everyone.

My constituents, whom you had the pleasure of meeting last week at my energy forum, are keen on becoming a part of this culture. Conservation has an important role to play in shaping Ontario's energy future. A megawatt saved is a megawatt we don't have to produce. Minister, what steps has the government taken to ensure that a culture of conservation is being fostered and takes hold in Ontario?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I'd like to commend the member from Willowdale and the member from Don Valley West for involving themselves in an energy forum with their communities. I also have to say that a significant number of members from the official opposition have involved themselves in energy forums. But unfortunately, only one person—who is no longer here—from the third party thinks that energy forums and conservation are of any value.

What we have done is put a number of things into place. With Bill 100, for the first time we have a chief conservation energy officer in this province with responsibility to look at provincial programs. If and when passed, we will have Bill 21, which is the first conser-

vation bill in Canada, the second in North America, that would require municipalities, schools, colleges, universities and the broader public to engage in conservation initiatives. And that's just the beginning. We have done many things to put in place the beginning of creating that culture of conservation.

Mr. Zimmer: Minister, you mentioned that Bill 21 is a part of our plan to build a culture of conservation. You've shown that conservation is more than just shutting the light off when you leave the room or making sure the dishwasher is full before you run it. Conservation requires a multi-faceted approach. That means using energy wisely and ensuring that we have the regulations in place and have programs in place that engage communities.

What measures have been included in the bill to ensure that we can work on improving conservation using these tools?

Interjections.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I understand the members of the third party find this amusing. They have since the beginning. In fact, they were the party that collapsed all of the programs that might have made things a whole lot different.

Our bill, if and when it's passed, will require the MUSH sector—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—and the broader public sector agencies to actually put together conservation plans, publish them and be accountable to those plans, so we can create that culture of conservation for the people of Ontario.

There may be people here who do not care, but I can assure you there are people all through Ontario who know that conservation makes a difference in their lives. The footprint that they choose to leave behind will be a lot lighter than the footprint that was left behind by the third party.

LAYOFFS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I have a question for the Premier. As you know, the manufacturing sector finds itself in a major crisis under your watch. Plant closures and layoffs have devastated families and communities across Ontario. The leader of the official opposition, John Tory, has asked you time and again to meet with officials from communities affected by these layoffs, and mentioned some of them in the opposition day motion that you supported and that was passed unanimously in this House on December 8.

I understand that you have recently met with officials from Cornwall to discuss the employment crisis in their community. In the meeting, they presented you with a list 18 actions your government could take to alleviate some of the problems your policies have helped create. Can you inform the House which of these 18 items has seen action to date?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I had a very good meeting with representatives of the community of Cornwall and

we look forward to working with them on an ongoing basis. I can tell you that, more than just having meetings with communities that have been affected by job losses, we have put into place a job-loss protocol, where the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade as well as the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities lead a multi-ministry team that could also include the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The purpose of that team is to put into place an effective adjustment advisory program. I'll talk more about the details of that in the supplementary.

Mr. Chudleigh: Collingwood, for example, has seen the devastating impact of your policies. Terry Geddes, the mayor of Collingwood, and the honourable member for Simcoe—Grey have written to you requesting a meeting to discuss the problems they have been having in their community, and you have yet to respond to them. Premier, is one meeting with one community all Ontarians can expect from this Premier? Is your tour of duty over with respect to the communities in Ontario that have been hard hit by your energy and taxation policies?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We're very concerned when any community, but to bring it down to its most basic level any family, is affected by a job loss and the devastating impact it can have on that family. We are going to work as hard as we can to put in place the necessary supports to help industries and sectors that are particularly challenged in an era of globalization. Perhaps the member opposite can, but we on this side of the House cannot guarantee that there will be no job losses of any kind at any time. What we can do is work as hard as we can, by way of our auto sector strategy, our advanced manufacturing strategy, our forestry sector strategy and the supports we're putting in place for Ontario's farmers, to help industry turn around and get on a more sustainable footing. At the same time, we can also work with other sectors that are growing more rapidly so they can generate more jobs. At the end of the day, this economy has still generated 215,000 net new jobs. On the whole, there's good news out there.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Premier: Sir, why won't you protect French-language health services providers from the arbitrary power of the minister to force amalgamation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I really have no idea where the member is coming from on this, but I can say that I would ask the member to consider our record in this regard and our devotion to Ontario's francophone community. That has been expressed either through the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, with additional funding provided for francophone services, or the Ministry of Culture, and there are a variety of other min-

istries in this government. We look forward to continuing to work with the francophone community to ensure that they are well served.

Mr. Kormos: Premier, folks down in Welland know all about your record. Your closure of the only Bill 8 land registry office in Welland and its transfer to non-Bill 8 St. Catharines is part of that record. Foyer Richelieu is a long-term-care facility that has obtained great success in maintaining French-language traditions through language, customs and cuisine, among other things. They are fearful they could become victim of section 28 of your Bill 36 LHINs and forced into amalgamation with non-francophone providers. Will you stand and guarantee today that Foyer Richelieu in Welland and any other French-language, francophone, health service provider will not be forced into amalgamation with an anglophone health service provider?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What I will do is undertake to have the Minister of Health speak more directly to this, but what I can say is that we remain devoted to meeting and satisfying the legitimate, lawful needs of Franco-Ontarians.

Je suis fier de dire cela. En tant que fils d'une Franco-Ontarienne qui vient du nord de l'Ontario, en tant que père de quatre enfants qui ont tous fréquenté des écoles de langue française, alors, le sujet traité par M. Kormos n'est pas, pour moi, quelque chose d'abstrait. C'est quelque chose qui est très important et très personnel.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would just remind members: It's improper to refer to members by their proper names. Riding names are what is needed.

1450

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the minister responsible for children and youth services. Minister, guns and gangs have been on everybody's mind in the past while, and with good reason. Every corner of the city has, in one way or another, been touched by criminal gangs and the guns used by gangs. Community groups, church leaders, our police forces and youth organizations have risen and confronted the problem with a very unified voice. Curtailing the violence caused by guns and gangs is everybody's responsibility.

What have we done to increase the positive opportunities in our communities so that our youth can reach their full potential and grow up to be good citizens in our province of Ontario?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'd like to thank the member from York West for that very important question. I think I need to start by saying that there's no question in my mind that the overwhelming majority of our young people are law-abiding citizens.

We have not just recently been focusing on this, however. The Premier earlier today made reference to our investment in post-secondary education, which was announced last year. The Premier and our government

committed to ensuring that young people simply need to have the interest and the ability, and don't necessarily have to be wealthy, in order to pursue post-secondary education. Tuition grants that were introduced last year will allow children and young people from all communities to pursue college and university.

Very recently, we announced \$28.5 million over the next three years in a youth opportunities—

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

Mr. Sergio: I would like to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services for her response. I find it very excellent to hear about the allocation of millions of dollars for youth outreach programs that our government has indeed committed to our communities.

Now that I know what we are doing to be tough on the causes of crime, I would like to ask the minister: What are we doing to be tough on crime? Minister, what actions is the McGuinty government taking to reduce gun crimes, prosecute those responsible and stop the spread of illegal guns in our province?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'd like to refer that question to the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): There's no doubt that the member for York West is truly a champion of public safety for his community and for the people of this province.

Last month, the Premier announced the single greatest infusion of capacity into our criminal justice system with his announcement to establish a provincial operations centre, expand the guns and gangs task force, including prosecution and police of all jurisdictions working together for the first time ever, and state-of-the-art technology through our provincial operations centre, recommended by chiefs of police and the OPP commissioner. In addition to that, a major crimes court is to be established to ensure that these new and significant cases, with a significant number of defendants, will have an appropriate forum that protects victims; a special victims' unit that assists families and victims of gun crime who have particular trauma—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

FARM INCOME

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: In the last week and a half we've seen two very large cash-crop farm protests in both Guelph and Ottawa. Minister, my question is simple. It can be answered with a yes or a no. Will your government comply with the farmers' ultimatum, the March 9 deadline for a risk management program for our grain and oilseed farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm very happy to say that our Premier has made it very clear: We are prepared to deal with the farm income issue along with the federal government.

Mr. Barrett: I didn't hear a yes or no. You are prepared—you know, the deadline isn't really about you or the Premier; it's about planting season and the banks. Farmers have to buy seed, they have to buy fertilizer, they have to buy spray, they have to buy fuel—repairs for their machinery. This deadline is very real. I hope you would address it.

Today's local headlines: "Farming Crisis Destroys Families," "We're almost in a Death Spiral."

The federal Liberals announced \$755 million. The federal Conservatives announced an additional \$500 million. I wish to ask Minister Dombrowsky—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Come to order. Question?

Mr. Barrett: My question to Minister Dombrowsky: How much are you announcing?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: First of all, I'd like to inform the honourable member that he's a couple of weeks too late in terms of bringing this information to us. The Premier had the opportunity to meet with agriculture leaders after the Premier's agri-food summit. So the Premier heard directly from the industry some two weeks ago about all the issues you have raised today.

He has made very clear that he is aware of how urgent their issues are. He has told them that when he spoke with Prime Minister Harper, two issues were identified as priorities, and he urged the Prime Minister to act swiftly, because Ontario is there with the money, and we want the federal government there with us. It would appear that the federal government is not eager to move as swiftly as we are, but I have told the agriculture community, and I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to tell you today, that we are there with the money. We want the feds there—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): In the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I will direct my question to the Premier. Eleven individuals and organizations, including the city of Hamilton and Dr. David Pengelly, professor of medicine at both McMaster University and the University of Toronto, are asking you for a full environmental assessment of Liberty Energy's energy-from-waste incinerator. Dr. Pengelly has called the emission of nitrogen oxides an urgent matter of public health concern, especially given that Liberty's own consultants admit that Hamilton's airshed has shown signs of reaching its capacity. Given the seriousness of the health and environmental implications of Liberty's incinerator, will you immediately call for a bump-up to a full environmental assessment at this facility?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me just say that we are absolutely committed to giving local residents an opportunity to comment on this proposed undertaking. The environmental assessment required for electricity projects

is facilitating this opportunity. I understand that the proponent has followed this environmental assessment process to date, and attempted to address the concerns raised. I know that the Minister of the Environment's director is presently awaiting some additional information before the formal review process begins.

As a rule, our government is committed to ensuring that we do everything we reasonably can to improve the quality of air in the province of Ontario, and it's with that in mind that this project, like all the others, will be reviewed.

PETITIONS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I want to thank Mr. Bill Smith, of Angus, for circulating that petition.

1500

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that has to do with credit reporting agencies. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, and the Minister of Government Services specifically. It reads as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed unanimously on November 30, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

“(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as, SIN and loan account numbers.

“(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

“(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit-inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

“(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

Since I’m in total agreement with this petition, I’m certainly delighted to sign it.

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

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

“Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

“Whereas the alternative for many of these individual is a life of homelessness on the street; and

“Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would ‘significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care.”

As I am in agreement, I’ve affixed my signature and am pleased to be able to give this to Ian.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas during the 2003 election campaign Dalton McGuinty promised to establish a standing committee on education to ensure transparency in education funding; and

“Whereas such a committee has not been established; and

“Whereas Ontario’s education system is not properly funded and there is no transparency in funding;

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

“To immediately establish a standing committee on education to hold public hearings every year on the effectiveness of education funding.”

I support the petition.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition prepared by Sonny Sansone from my riding. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario farmers are facing difficulties in earning their living and supporting their families;

“Whereas urban residents, such as those in Toronto, count on a reliable food supply from Ontario farmers; and

“Whereas farming is an integral part of the Ontario economy;

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

“To ensure that Ontario farmers are supported so that all residents can count on a reliable, well-priced, safe food supply for all Ontario residents.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Ian today.

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

“Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

“Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would ‘significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care.”

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

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): “Whereas rebuilding our post-secondary education system is critical to the future of our communities and our province; and

“Whereas high tuition user fees are resulting in massive student debt; and

“Whereas Ontario ranks second-last among all provinces in terms of total PSE budget received from

government grants and has the highest percentage of total post-secondary education revenue from private sources; and

“Whereas working and learning conditions must be healthy and safe, because working conditions are learning conditions; and

“Whereas the deferred maintenance cost at Ontario university campuses is estimated to have already reached the \$2-billion mark;

“We, the undersigned, support the Canadian Union of Public Employees’ call on the provincial government to invest sufficient public funds that will:

“(1) Restore public money cut from operating funds since 1995 and bring Ontario up to the national average for funding post-secondary education;

“(2) Finance the \$1.98 billion needed for deferred maintenance; and

“(3) Provide the funding needed to continue the tuition freeze beyond 2006 and increase grants to working-class families.”

I agree with this petition, and I’m signing it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition from many of my constituents and also from constituents around the province. This petition has been read many times in the Legislature, but I’d like to read it again.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

TEACHER QUALIFICATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): “Whereas the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario will have met all the requirements of the individual faculties; and

“Whereas these same publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario have all met the stringent standards as outlined and controlled by the Ontario College of Teachers; and

“Whereas the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario will be placed at a severe disadvantage if they are given a provisional certificate of qualification by the Ontario College of Teachers;

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

“To make the changes necessary to the Education Act and/or its regulations in order to grant the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario a permanent certificate of qualification, or

“To deem that the bachelor of education degree granted to the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario deems them to have completed the equivalent of the Ontario teacher qualification test, thus allowing the Ontario College of Teachers to grant these same graduates a permanent certificate of qualification.”

I agree with these petitions, and I am signing them.

1510

CHILD CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario in regard to daycare support. It reads as follows:

“Whereas there is a well-documented need for daycare spaces in the province of Ontario;”

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Very good.

Mr. Ruprecht: Thank you.

“Whereas the former government of Canada and the” —

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: Thank you very much.

“Whereas the former government of Canada and the present government of Ontario recognize that need;

“Whereas the government of Canada committed \$1.87 billion over five years and the government of Ontario continues to commit \$700,000 a year for the purpose of expanding daycare spaces for Canadians.

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, call on the newly elected federal Canadian government to live up to the signed agreement between the government of Ontario and the government of Canada to provide thousands of daycare spaces for our children in the province of Ontario.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): These petitions have hundreds of signatures from tobacco men, orchard men, fruit and vegetable growers who depend on migrant labour. It’s titled “Bunkhouse Tax Assessment is Bunk!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas MPAC (the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation) is implementing residential assessment of farm bunkhouses that were previously assessed at the farm rate, resulting in assessment levels four times the previous rate; and

“Whereas usually farm bunkhouses are occupied a few months a year; and

“Whereas farmers are already reeling from the financial impacts of rising input costs, low commodity prices and government regulation;

“We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year’s levels until a fairer method of assessment is developed, or a reclassification of bunkhouse properties is made.”

I affix my signature to this.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I’m pleased to join with my colleague from Scarborough Southwest in this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario farmers are facing difficulties in earning their living and supporting their families;

“Whereas urban residents, such as those in Toronto, count on a reliable food supply from Ontario farmers; and

“Whereas farming is an integral part of the Ontario economy;

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

“To ensure that Ontario farmers are supported so that all residents can count on a reliable, well-priced, safe food supply for all Ontario residents.”

That’s an excellent petition. I’m pleased to affix my signature to it, and ask page William to carry it on my behalf.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with library services. It says:

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the \$700,000 cut in funding to the Ontario Library Service ... budget will have a significant impact on the delivery of public library service across the province in areas such as:

—reductions in the frequency of inter-library loan deliveries;

—reductions in the SOLS’ consultation services and the elimination of a number of staff positions;

—the elimination of province-wide research on library and socio-demographic trends that all libraries need for their own planning;

—the reduction of consortia/charitable purchasing, a service that provides economies-of-scale discounts to libraries on a variety of goods and services; and

—a reduction in the amount of material that is translated for OLS French-language clients;

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

“To restore funding to the Ontario Library Service ... in order to signal support for the Ontario public library system.”

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L’ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act / Projet de loi 21, Loi édictant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l’énergie et apportant des modifications à la Loi de 1998 sur l’électricité, à la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l’énergie de l’Ontario et à la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I believe the leader of the third party has the floor.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Allow me to refer to one of the submissions that was made to the standing committee. This is from John S. McGee, a professional electrical engineer. This is what he has to say in his submission:

“I submit that all aspects of the bill dealing with smart metering in schedules B and C should be entirely deleted. The main reason for this recommendation is that the very high capital and operating costs of the smart metering have not been subjected to a cost-benefit analysis. The smart metering initiative is unlikely to contribute in any material way to the government’s objective of making more efficient use of Ontario’s existing electricity supply system and reducing reliance on external sources. This objective can be met at far less cost and with more certainty by means that I will outline later.”

Then he goes into the implementation costs. He says:

“Their estimated total capital cost for smart meters was \$1.07 billion with annual operating costs of \$50 million....

“Depending on specifications written by the Ontario metering entity, all existing meters, including smart meters installed under pilot programs, could become obsolete and consigned to already loaded landfill sites.

“And of course, with mass introduction of new technology there will be unforeseen technical problems that will further add to costs.

“So it is reasonable to expect costs to balloon to the \$1.5-billion to \$2-billion range.”

This is interesting, what he says:

"It should be apparent that the 4.25 million residential and small general service customers have little ability to shift load to lower-cost off-peak periods. Even with a smart meter they won't know the hourly cost of electricity until the day after they used it. The idea of doing laundry, washing dishes or bathing in the wee hours of the morning is not going to fly. Small retail businesses must be open to respond to customer needs which are predominantly in the daytime peak hours. Time-of-use electricity billing has been available on an optional basis for decades for small consumers. The uptake has been virtually nil because of inability to shift load.

"Large industrial and commercial customers have been billed on a time-of-use basis for decades and it is unlikely they will shift any more load than they already have."

Then he makes an interesting point. He talks about cost allocation:

"The cost-allocation approach under consideration by the Ontario Energy Board is a dollar addition to the fixed monthly service charge. Since the residential customer count is 93% of the total, they"—the residential customers—"will bear 93% of the cost even though they use only about 28% of the electricity produced. Since the commodity component of the bill for small consumers is less than 50% of the total, the smallest consumers will see the highest percentage impact of smart meters, yet they have the least ability to avoid the increased cost by shifting load."

I think that's an important point. Under the scheme that the government is entertaining, people who have the least capacity to shift load, and, by the way, very likely people who have the lowest or the most modest incomes, will get hit the hardest by this government's approach.

I want to say something about apartments. What the government has done is, while they refer to this as smart metering, in fact, they're also trying to slide in the concept of sub-metering. What sub-metering means is this: Let's say you have an apartment building. In many apartment buildings, people do not pay for their electricity directly; it's part of their rent bill. The reason for that is in many cases the tenant doesn't have control over the major use of electricity in the building. In most apartment buildings, the tenant doesn't own the appliances; the appliances are put there by the landlord. In some cases, the appliances may be 10, 15, 20 years old and are not energy efficient. Charging the tenant for an appliance that he or she has very little control over would be irrational to most people. Similarly, many apartments don't have individual thermometers. In older apartments, quite often, that's the case. So if you have electric heat, the tenant has no control.

1520

One of the things the government is considering doing—in fact, I think they've already made the decision—is to slide in sub-metering. I again want to read from a submission that was made by a tenant who lives in Toronto. This is the point she makes to the committee:

"On the chance that sub-metering should be on the agenda as an amendment in Bill 21, I would like to make the following comments.

"I have lived for 30 years in this 37-year-old building and it has the original appliances. Although in good working order, they are definitely not energy efficient!

"I have a corner apartment with a walk-in closet that is so cold in winter [that] I use some of the space as a cold room to store bottled water, vegetables, etc.

"The outside walls of the apartment are extremely cold to the touch—almost as if there is no insulation or it is very thin.

"When I first moved into this apartment, it was supplied with thermostats to control the heat, but they were disconnected some years ago so that the landlord had control. A few years ago, we asked the landlord to reconnect them but were told, 'It is too expensive.' I can't believe he would now do it voluntarily! As a result, when the landlord got a little stingy with the heat many people used small, plug-in heaters. If sub-metering goes ahead, then these thermostats should be reconnected so that heat expense in the apartment is in the hands of the tenant, with a better chance of encouraging conservation.

"None of the above items are under a tenant's control, and if sub-meters are installed, it would be extremely unfair to the tenants in this building without first addressing the measures I have indicated."

There is a lot wrong with this bill. There's not much energy efficiency in it. That's why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have listened very carefully, in the two days, to the remarks of the member from Kenora—Rainy River and leader of the third party.

I'd just like to get on the record, if I could, that on December 17, 2005, the Toronto Star published an article that described a pilot conducted by Hydro One to provide real-time information to 500 homes through the use of in-home displays and smart meters. Ontario chief energy conservation officer, Peter Love, strongly supported the results of the pilot, indicating he was in favour of installing in-home displays. The project captured energy use in homes in Barrie, Brampton, Lincoln, Peterborough and Timmins. These devices recorded energy use between July 2004 and September 2005, with the results indicating that participants reduced their energy use between 7% and 10%.

That pilot certainly indicated that the use of smart meters and new technology does indeed allow individuals to reduce their energy consumption.

I want to reiterate that on the larger pilot of 1,000 homes in Chatham-Kent, which we had an opportunity to receive information about when we were visiting Chatham during committee deliberations, the all-in cost was \$1.29, because they retrofitted the meters already installed in homes. They found technology that would allow them to do so. That study certainly indicated substantial savings by those 1,000 single-family residences in Chatham.

I'd like to reiterate that those findings were verified by the accounting firm Deloitte, which looked at all the numbers that were provided by the Chatham-Kent pilot study to, in effect, show conclusively that savings can be achieved by the installation of smart meters. I think it's important that that information be put on the record.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To comment on what we just heard from the member from Kenora–Rainy River, I also have a submission on sub-metering in rental units. This comes from the Algoma Community Legal Clinic up in the Soo. They basically indicate, in contrast to what we just heard in the last two minutes, that smart meters are a flawed conservation strategy and will significantly decrease, rather than increase, any incentives to save energy in the multi-residential sector. They point out that allowing smart meters and sub-metering to be used in large multi-unit buildings—government as well—will increase the financial burden on low-income tenant households, thereby threatening their ability to keep the lights on, maintain their housing, and pay for food, medicine and other basic necessities. The key message from this submission is that by shifting the burden of electricity consumption from landlords to tenants, this Liberal government will reduce conservation incentives overall in the sector and will hurt low-income consumers. Clearly, I see this as a lose-lose situation.

There's another presentation. It's from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. It's titled Zapping Tenants, and it includes a critical analysis of sub-metering. Their main concern is that no comparative studies or analyses on either the costs or the benefits of sub-metering versus other conservation strategies have been done to justify the inclusion of a sub-metering, smart meter approach in these large rental buildings.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I want to congratulate the leader of the NDP, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, for his one-hour speech this week and another hour speech last November on this very bill, thanking him for his leadership on issues connected to energy and congratulating him on appropriately mocking the Liberal government and their delusional pretenses around energy conservation.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Harsh words.

Mr. Marchese: Harsh indeed. The act says “An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act,” and I will have an opportunity in an hour or so to elucidate and elongate my remarks around this particular issue.

When you read this, if any of you have an opportunity to read this bill, Bill 21, when you get to the part that talks about energy conservation leadership, what you will note—and that's why I say our leader has appropriately mocked this Liberal government—is it requires no one to do anything around energy conservation. There's no requirement for anyone to do anything. So for this section of the bill to be labelled “energy conservation leadership” is highly, highly inappropriate. They know this. They know there's nothing within this bill that speaks to that, but I will, and our leader has.

He also addresses the issue of smart meters. He has pointed out, in committee and in this House, that the government is going to be—actually, not the government. We're going to be spending approximately \$2 billion on capital alone on this, forgetting the cost for operational, and not one cost-benefit analysis has been done. How wrong can this government be on this issue? Very wrong. I'll speak to that.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): I'm pleased to participate in this debate on Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act.

First of all, I want to applaud and thank the minister for taking a leadership role in this bill. As outlined in this bill, there are four schedules. Schedule A deals with providing leadership. The McGuinty government is fully committed to providing that leadership for energy conservation by taking action as well as consulting the people of this province to help build a culture; that is, the culture of energy conservation.

I had the privilege of moving into a new house recently and I decided to put a smart meter in my new house. I am quite sure this smart meter is going to save some energy for me and it will save me some expenses. The leadership of energy conservation is one of the ways to help energy conservation culture, by the McGuinty government's commitment to deliver 800,000 smart meters by the year 2007, and across the province by about 2010. I think the minister needs support and I'm fully supportive of this bill.

1530

The Acting Speaker: It's time for response.

Mr. Hampton: I want to thank the other members for their comments and insights. I want to return to the letter I was reading from a Toronto tenant commenting on the potential of sub-metering in her apartment building:

“If sub-metering in high-rise buildings should become a fact, installation expense should be paid by the landlord as it is a basic change to the building. It should not even be considered for these older buildings!”

“Installing sub-meters without the tenants' consent is trampling on their rights. Our original leases in this building have utilities included.

“It would be a horrendous task to calculate a fair rent reduction for sub-meters for each individual apartment in each building, and I believe too easy to deceive the tenants on the accuracy of the calculations. One size does not fit all!

“If this goes ahead and the end result is higher costs to the tenants, it will result in even more vacancies and that will definitely conserve on the utilities.”

She makes the point that there should be conservation, but as she says, conservation and energy efficiency would involve replacing the windows, would involve putting in better insulation, would involve taking out an inefficient heating system and putting in a high-efficiency heating system, would involve retrofitting with

energy-efficient appliances. But if you put all of the bill on to the tenant, when all of these things are under the control of the landlord, the landlord no longer has any incentive to do any of these things because the tenant is paying the full load and the landlord gets a free ride. So I would urge the government to think about that before they go down the road of sub-metering.

Let me just say in conclusion that this bill continues a pattern under this government, a pattern where they hold photo-ops, where they make announcements, but when you look under the covers, there's no substance. There is very little substance to this bill, there's very little energy efficiency, very little energy conservation, and that's why it's a big problem.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): A generation ago, Ontario had an abundance of electrical generation capacity. We had—and I might add, continue to have—a technological advantage in the superior engineering used in our thermal generating plants. Then, inexplicably, we stopped building generating capacity, just as Ontario's population growth accelerated. Soon our surplus turned to balance, and then slipped into shortage on the watch of the two previous governments.

Ontario needs about 25,000 megawatts of generating capacity to meet its peak needs at the height of the summer heat. Beginning in the dying years of the last government, Ontario became a regular importer of out-of-province, expensive, peak power and Ontario paid premium prices for every kilowatt hour.

Let me use an analogy to describe the state of our electrical generating assets. Let's suppose you had bought a new car in the mid-1970s and in the years since you had used your car all day, every day, and even though you had done all the required maintenance and treated the car very well, the fact remains that you still drive a 30-year-old car with high mileage. No matter how well you've treated it, you have an old piece of machinery that will soon need replacement. What remains beyond dispute is that in the same way an individual needs to replace an old, high-mileage car, Ontario needs to upgrade or replace its electrical generating capacity.

While Bill 21 is not about the building of generating stations, it is about a practice that will help us make the best use of the generating capacity that we still have, and that's conservation. Conservation is a little like physical fitness. Everyone says they're all for it, but people practise it in different proportions. We've had awareness and education programs on conservation for decades. To a large extent, the message has been received. To a more limited extent, however, behaviour has changed.

The proposals in Bill 21 will bring the implications of energy conservation home to roost in Ontario's homes and businesses. That means if, in physical fitness terms, you're in favour of physical fitness and you also maintain an active and healthy lifestyle, you're acting in your best interests and those of your family, and you'll be rewarded. If, in energy conservation terms, you walk the walk and install a programmable thermostat, put timers

on the lights that you prefer to leave on, use the time delay on your electrical appliances and so on, then the provisions of Bill 21 will likely be a pleasant surprise. If you're doing your personal best to use electricity sensibly, even while you watch others in your area crank up their air conditioners high enough to see their breath in the house on the hottest days, you might wonder what it takes to get people to get the importance of conserving energy.

Let's look at just one such measure: the smart meter. What's a smart meter? It's a device that measures not just how much electricity you use, but at what time you use it. This concept isn't new to us as Ontarians. Our telephone and cellphone providers have used smart metering technology to bill us for the air time or the bandwidth that we consume for years. With that widely accepted concept already deployed, consider the century-old technology that's in use outside your home that records your use of electricity. All it does is record how many kilowatt hours of electricity you've consumed.

You'd scream long and loud if your cellphone minutes were being billed at prime rates and not at off-peak rates if that's when you used the service. That's all a smart meter does. If you're a smart user, a smart meter delivers you a smart discount. If you're a wasteful user, the smart meter not only charges you the premium price you've incurred, but the data it provides will show you very clearly what patterns you can change to cross the divide between being a wasteful user and being a smart user.

How do I know this? Enersource in Mississauga included me in their pilot project. They installed a smart meter in my Churchill Meadows home in western Mississauga. The information I have on my home's energy consumption shows me very clearly how much electricity we save by using compact fluorescent bulbs, by turning off electrical appliances when we're not using them and by upgrading our stove, our fridge, our washer, our dryer and our dishwasher. We've upgraded them to more energy-efficient models, and we can see the difference. As we see how much money we save just by shifting the use of our appliances to later hours, we can also see the difference in terms of our savings by simply pressing the time delay control.

Smart meters reward smart behaviour. Bill 21 is about rewarding people who do the right things at the right time for the right reasons. Thank you for the time today.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The member, of course, speaks eloquently on the government side to talk about all the attributes of smart metering. Unfortunately, there is the flip side to every positive that we hear about smart meters.

One of the things that concerns me the most about smart meters is its life-altering effect on the families of Ontario. Those people who perhaps are hardest hit by increased electricity costs and charges are the people with two parents working and perhaps two children to look after as well. Those families are going to find it very

difficult to change the time when they can turn on the dishwasher, change the time when they can bath the children, change the time when they can run the washer and the dryer. Running the washer and dryer at 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night may sound like a good idea to people who don't have too many children around the house, but if that old washing machine starts knocking and clanging and wakes up the baby, I think that maybe they're going to go back to their normal wash times of 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock in the evening. So the saving that smart meters could bring isn't going to be available to a lot of the families that could use this the most, because their lifestyles just don't allow them to take advantage, to have the flexibility to change the duties they have, the requirements they have in their lives, to change the order of those things to times when they could be more flexible and perhaps make those savings. It's going to be very difficult for many families in Ontario to take charge of their lives and make those savings.

1540

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I want to take a couple of minutes to comment on the bill and some of the comments made earlier.

The people of Ontario, in my view, are beginning to get it. I heard the comments from the member for Mississauga West. He talked about the ongoing programs around conservation, that people have heard them all and some would respond and some wouldn't, but we're now seeing that people are really beginning to get it.

I held my second annual conservation forum just two weekends ago. It was at a commercial site, so there was some traffic flow available. We literally had thousands of people coming through, stopping and taking the time to visit some 20 different organizations engaged in conservation, and energy and sustainable communities, as well, were part of it.

Among the groups there, I had a local firm, Intellimeter, that develops smart meters and sub-metering and actually does the installations. People were lining up all day long to talk to the owner and his staff about what smart meters can do, the go-forward kind of activity he's engaged in, what kind of technologies can be applied to it once it's there. In addition to the pure energy initiative, they're very interested in other capacities that smart meters will have. They talked to them about sub-metering and the implications for that.

I know the effect the installations in condo buildings and some rental buildings can have on overall energy consumption when people begin to take charge of their own usage. Certainly, there's a disincentive to waste energy in some cases, but a great incentive when they're also saving energy.

At the forum I held, the local LDC was still distributing compact fluorescents to interested parties. Most of us now have many of them in our homes. They took the time to fill out a form. They figured they were going to do maybe 500 or so. They actually went back for more. There were over 600 families that picked up com-

compact fluorescents on that Saturday, and that's 600 more families that are beginning to save energy—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Questions or comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough West.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it's Scarborough Southwest, but it's in the west part of Scarborough.

Interjection: It's in the south part too.

Mr. Berardinetti: The south part too, which is close to Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): And you have the bluffs.

Mr. Berardinetti: And we have the bluffs there as well, that's right, and there are a lot of opportunities there to generate energy, perhaps, through other sources such as windmills in the future. That's something to look at in the future.

What makes me happy and I like about the bill is the direction we're taking in terms of conserving and moving towards conserving energy. That is the key. What I want to say in these couple of minutes I have is that when it comes to areas like health and education and even energy, a lot of the focus, for example on health, is on prevention; it's to prevent something before you get a disease. When it comes to education, it's get in there early and don't let our schools get into a bad state so that people don't get an opportunity for a proper education at a young age at a well-established public institution.

So in the same sense, with this bill, we're saying let's conserve energy before we spend it. Let's put in smart meters and have a regulatory system to control the smart meter entities that are going to exist out there. I think in the years to come this will be more and more the direction we're going to move in. Years ago in the health field, people first started talking about prevention of certain types of illness by taking certain actions, like exercising more, having a certain type of diet. More and more, that has become the main way of thinking when it comes to the health area. In energy, too, before we can focus on going forward on an energy plan, we need to look at conservation. This bill does that.

Mr. Barrett: I attended one of the sessions on smart meters that was held in Simcoe, down our way, when the justice committee came down to visit. There were a number of letters and conversations that I had in our community. These people, for whatever reason, didn't testify before the committee. I was concerned; they were in the audience—Norfolk Power, for example—and much of their opposition to smart meters is couched in a communication I have received here from Brant county. They've made it very clear to myself and to the MPP for the Brant riding that the county of Brant is opposed to the proposed smart meter legislation; it removes meter ownership from them, the local electrical distribution company, the LDC. They feel that stripping the meter ownership from not only their own LDC but other LDCs across the province would negatively impact their revenue base and, subsequently, financial contributions to

the municipalities that own these local distribution companies. The province's memorandum of understanding that was signed in 2004 commits to prior consultation on matters that will have a significant financial impact on municipalities.

For whatever reason, they didn't attend the justice committee consultations that I was present at. Norfolk Power: I also received a very similar letter from them, and they don't see any positive outcomes for this initiative.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given to his question by the Premier concerning local health integration networks. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Time for reply. The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga West.

Mr. Delaney: I thank the members from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge and Scarborough Southwest for their comments.

One point brought out in the debate on this particular bill is the cost of deploying these smart meters. Let me draw on an analogy that we're probably all familiar with: Consider, when they were first introduced, the cost of such things as electronic calculators, computers, cell-phones, microwave ovens and digital watches. They originally came out as premium products, but within a very short time had gone down to the price of commodities. I think we can expect pretty much the same thing of smart meters. As soon as the provisions of Bill 21 allow the manufacturers to say, "Okay, a smart meter is something that will perform the following functions," and to formalize them into a request for proposal or an RFP, we can expect to see the engineering wizards at the companies that manufacture the meters compete on the basis of price, because the functionality will be pretty much established in the RFP. In the same way that we saw exponential declines in the price of common electronic components that we use every day, so, too, we can expect to see the cost of the manufacture and supply of the smart meters fall precipitously to pretty close to the cost of simply manufacturing the components in the few years after the implementation of the energy conservation measures in Bill 21.

That gives me a great deal of confidence, unlike the member for Kenora–Rainy River, who keeps insisting that this is going to be a cost that will spiral out and out of control. I know in my own case, when the time came to install the smart meter, Enersource showed up, we did the job, and it was over with in about 90 seconds.

Thank you for the chance to reply.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, 2006, which was introduced by the Minister of Energy and which has been capably responded to by our critic, John Yakabuski.

I'm pleased to join the debate today. I think this particular piece of legislation is another example of the fact that this government, despite having been in office for two and a half years, still has no comprehensive plan for energy conservation, or a plan in order to ensure that people and businesses in this province will have a stable, affordable supply of energy as they move into the future. In fact, we're seeing this concern for this supply and affordability reflected as some of the jobs are lost in our province. We've lost over 80,000 jobs. We also know that, despite the investment made this week into the forest industry, we still continue to hear from people in the north about their concern about rising energy costs and the lack of this government in the development of any plan that will respond to those concerns.

So we have another bill, a bill that, at the end of the day, contains little in the way of detail. It has not been terribly carefully considered. It doesn't speak to how this is going to be funded and certainly, for some people throughout the province of Ontario, these smart meters are going to cause some financial hardship. Also, for some people, particularly tenants, they're simply not going to have any control over their ability to conserve energy and control their own personal costs.

What is happening in this bill? Well, the government has said they're going to install somewhere in the neighbourhood of 800,000 smart meters by the end of 2007. They want to make sure that, by 2010, 4.3 million customers in this province would have these meters. We know that the cost of these first meters is going to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of at least \$400 million. We also know that this cost is ultimately going to climb to somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$2 billion. We also know that this huge capital cost, this huge investment, has never had the opportunity to benefit from any cost-benefit analysis. We've also just heard from one of the other members that this technology is probably going to be changing over time. We could have a lot of obsolete meters in this province in very short order, and they're going to contribute to a problem for our landfill sites.

When people get these new meters, we understand that they're probably going to be charged, monthly, \$1 to \$3 for their use. Tom Adams, the executive director of Energy Probe, says that consumers are going to end up paying more for the new technology but have little to show for it. He says that right now, most consumers pay about 50 cents a month for their meters, and he believes that, with these new devices, that cost is going to increase to \$8. That is a tremendous amount of money for individuals in this province who are on low incomes.

I want to address some of the concerns that we have been hearing about. I want, before I do that, to quote—this was a quote from the Record, the Kitchener–Waterloo newspaper, on November 4, 2005, when Dave Martin, energy coordinator for Greenpeace Canada, said: "Don't get me wrong; I think time-of-use ... rates is a ... good thing ... but smart meters are not a substitute for real conservation programs."

I guess that's something we need to point out again and again. Despite the title of this bill, there is not, and has not been in the past two and a half years, any effort on the part of this government to encourage people to conserve energy. There have been no incentives; in fact, incentives that were there in the way of energy-efficient appliances that we put in place have been removed.

The other concern I have, as far as this bill and smart meters are concerned, is that there's nothing said here as to how we're going to educate the population. I agree that most people want to do what they can to conserve energy, but you also have to educate the public. You need to carefully articulate the purpose, you need to inform the public as to what these meters can and cannot do, and you need to provide some resources in order that individuals will understand the role of these meters. Certainly this bill doesn't deal with any of that; in fact, the information contained in the bill is quite sparse.

Now, in my community I have heard concerns, in particular from tenants. I want to go to a presentation that was made here to the committee regarding smart meters and sub-metering in rental units. This is an oral presentation that was made to the standing committee on justice policy with regard to Bill 21, and it was made on behalf of RENT. Now, you might ask, who is RENT? They're a group of people in my community. It stands for Renters Educating and Networking Together. It is a volunteer, proactive non-partisan group of concerned citizens who seek to improve the state of tenants within the region of Waterloo through education, organization and general representation.

These people came forward and made a presentation to the committee. They expressed some concerns about the proposal that has been put on the table by the government, and they go on to say that in every rental situation, tenants have neither the means nor the authority to make truly meaningful conservation changes required in their units. For example, they talk about the fact that they're not in a position to upgrade insulation, to do any structural replacement or to repair any draughty windows and doors, to repair or upgrade the heating system, to install programmable thermostats or to replace old appliances with new energy-efficient models.

They go on to say that this proposal on the part of the government to shift these rapidly rising energy costs to tenants penalizes Ontario's lowest-income tenants.

They talk about the fact that the burden will be on the tenants, who basically have no control over the upgrading of the energy efficiency of the building. They go on to say that, yes, a tenant could turn off a few lights. They could do their laundry at night, but we also know that in some buildings the laundry services are not available at night, so that's really not an option. It's very difficult for tenants to have any real control over achieving maximum energy savings or conservation, and I want to get that on the record.

They, of course, express concern about the fact that some of the hydro costs as a result are going to be downloaded to them and are concerned that, again, they

can't do anything about this. For example, they mentioned that if they have energy-guzzling appliances, they can't do anything whatsoever about changing that.

1600

So they are certainly concerned about their ability, and they do ask a lot of questions. They did make a presentation to the committee on behalf of the many people in the region of Waterloo that they do represent. They ask questions about sub-metering: "If sub-metering is allowed, how much will the sub-metering company charge for its administrative fees? What controls are in place for sub-metering and future fee increases?"

They are also concerned about demographics of tenants. For example, what about tenants working outside the home daily or living in Florida for extended periods during the winter? Are the tenants retired people or parents at home with children who will require more hydro usage because they are home through the day? Should these people pay more?

So I think you can see that, certainly, this whole issue of sub-metering and tenants is going to leave us with some questions that obviously need to be answered in order that the tenants and landlords of this province are both treated fairly and equally.

The other presentation that was made to the committee was made on behalf of a group called the Waterloo Region Community Legal Services. The presentation was made by Ms. Gay Slinger. Again, they are a community legal clinic. They're funded through legal aid. I want to point that out because, obviously, the people they assist are people who meet the legal aid criteria, and many of them are living on social assistance benefits, disability pensions—the unemployed, people working for minimum wage and, of course, seniors.

These are the seniors who are living on fixed, limited incomes, and they also have certainly expressed their concerns about the rollout of the smart meters throughout the provinces to the buildings, the multi-residential buildings, and also the use of sub-metering, which is going to allow landlords to unilaterally, they say, impose individual electricity billings on tenants. Often, this is going to be through private sub-metering companies.

Again, they support, like everybody else in this province, the need to conserve energy and reduce the consumption of energy. They also appreciate and recognize, as we all know we must, that we have to develop a culture of conservation. However, this bill doesn't speak to that.

They go on, then, to talk about the fact that they're concerned because tenants cannot simply shift using energy off to peak periods. They talk about the fact that it's not within their control to do so in any meaningful way to save money. That's a concern that they talk about.

They go on to echo the concerns of RENT, where they say tenants are not in a position to retrofit the buildings in which they live in order to garner any major or significant savings with respect to true conservation. They know that that can't be made. They can't make those changes. So they do want the government to distinguish

between the private homeowner and the tenant because, of course, private homeowners do have some ability to deal with drafty windows, they say, making upgrades to the home, dealing with issues like insulation, and also installing high-efficiency furnaces. However, we do need to keep in mind that all of those are costly initiatives. At the end of the day, obviously, there are going to be some cost-benefits.

She goes on and makes an interesting comment: “When I walked into this room over the lunch break”—she’s now referring to the justice committee that was meeting—“it was empty at that time—it was stifling hot in here because you don’t have the control”—meaning control for the heat—“in this room. In order to control your own heat, you had to open a window. So there’s your heat going out the window.”

She used that point to illustrate the fact that tenants are living with the same lack of control in their units. That’s a good case, because today in this building many parts of this building are hot, and there is actually very little control that any of us has to make changes.

She goes on to say that tenants simply “do not have the ability to effect true savings,” and that’s all tenants, regardless of their economic class. You simply don’t have the ability to do so. Again, that is a concern. She goes on to say that if you’re going to speak to and deal with “meaningful conservation,” we need to take a look at the energy efficiency of the entire building as opposed to the energy efficiency of just one unit. You have to take a look at the whole infrastructure of the building and, of course, you have to take a look at the appliances in the building. Again, many of those appliances are owned by the owner of the building, and there is nothing the tenant can do if those appliances are not energy efficient.

She goes on to say, “Understand that even if you’ve got a gas-heated building but it’s not working properly—and that’s not within your control either—that’s when you start using your oven for heat and you start buying space heaters.” Of course, that sends the electric bill even higher.

She talks about clients who are disabled, elderly or single parents, who are home all day. She says they don’t have the same luxury as people who are going out to work, who can turn down their thermostat in the morning and come back from work and turn it up in the afternoon. They just are not in a position where they can sit in the dark all day, they can have the radio and TV off, they can turn down the thermostat if, in this instance, it is even individually controlled. Again, this bill does create some hardships for some of the people in the province who simply don’t have the opportunity to benefit.

I think we can see here that, despite what the government says about this legislation, at the end of the day the government has continued to demonstrate throughout the past two and a half years that they do not have a plan for energy. There is a growing concern in this province. I hear it particularly from people in the business sector, people who create the jobs in Ontario. They continue to tell me, “You know, Elizabeth, you read about the jobs

we’re losing in our community, the jobs that we’re losing in the province of Ontario”—that is now over 80,000 jobs since January 2005—“but we want you to know that our business, despite the fact that we are still operating, is also suffering and our bottom line, obviously, is not where we would like it to be because of the escalating energy costs and because of the lack of any stable supply.” As they’re looking forward and trying to predict, it’s difficult, because they have absolutely no idea what their costs are going to be one, two and three years out. So this becomes one of the factors that causes people who own businesses in this province to take a look at whether or not they can afford to stay here. It’s one of the factors they need to look at. So I would encourage this government and this Premier to develop an energy plan, as opposed to going out and speculating about rolling blackouts this summer, because the people in this province deserve it and need it.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I just want to say how much I appreciate the comments made by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, and not just her comments but so many other comments made by Conservative members in general. I’ve got to tell you that when they’re in opposition they really sound good. I think they need to stay in opposition a little longer because I think it’s really helpful to the democratic process for the Conservative Party—of course, I hope the Liberal Party doesn’t stay too long there. I suspect they’re going to have a problem holding on to a lot of seats in the next election; that’s another problem.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: That is another matter. I love the fact that some of the Liberal members feel so confident and arrogant, just like our government members did in 1995.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: No, but it can’t happen to you, so don’t you worry, not any of you. Don’t you worry about re-election. You just sit there comfortable and cozy in your seats. Make sure you’re occupying a permanent place in that seat because you’re going to be there for a long time. Don’t worry.

Anyway, my point was to my friend Mrs. Witmer from Kitchener–Waterloo. I appreciated most of her comments because they coincided with what we have to say, with what our leader has said, and I will agree, with much of what I will have to say when I make my remarks in the next five or seven minutes. She will notice that much of what I have to say is in agreement with what she’s saying. I’m telling you, opposition is good for you.

Mrs. Witmer: I just don’t want to stay here.

Mr. Marchese: I know you don’t want to stay there too long, but it does feel good on all sides to hear your approach to this issue, particularly as it relates to energy conservation, because there’s nothing there, and your comments around the smart meters, which we agree with.

Mr. Leal: As always, I have great respect for the comments of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. She has a long and very distinguished history in this House, and I have great respect when she speaks on issues. But—there is a “but” here, respectfully. We talked about our initiative to educate people to push forward the notion of a conservation culture. We are supporting a wide range of initiatives to provide information for Ontarians on energy conservation. These include printed conservation materials, our website and call centre, community information forums, workshops and symposiums. We have adopted the powerWISE conservation brand, a partnership with Ontario’s six largest electricity distributors, to help streamline delivery of conservation information to Ontario electricity consumers. We’ve also established Ontario Conserves, an on-line source of advice, tips and information to provide and encourage conservation for Ontarians.

We’ve also worked with the Green Communities initiatives throughout Ontario. They provide the EnerGuide program, where they will go around and do audits on residential homes to give the owner a perspective of where they can spend some dollars to make their home more energy efficient. I’d like to emphasize one of the largest pilot studies in Ontario: Chatham-Kent, 1,000 smart meters, all-in costs of \$1.29, verified by a third party. Deloitte looked at their costs, verified their costs and indicated that there’s a substantial savings by introducing smart meters in the province of Ontario. It’s an—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you.

Mr. Chudleigh: I notice the member for Peterborough didn’t mention what that substantial saving was. It might be interesting to know what that number is.

I must comment on the member for Trinity–Spadina as to his predictions for the next election. Something that I would point out to the members who are serving their first term: This man’s predictions have been extremely accurate over the time I have been sitting in this House. He seems to have a crystal ball that can actually see into the future, because it’s really, truly wondrous, the accuracy of these things he comes up with. I don’t know how you do it, Rosie, but I stand in awe.

Mr. Marchese: It’s divinity—or semi-divinity, if you will.

Mr. Chudleigh: That’s easy for you to say.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo pointed out very clearly that this government is struggling to find its path on this particular issue. It was interesting that—

Mr. Marchese: What path?

Mr. Chudleigh: “What path?” says the member for Trinity–Spadina, and that may very well be another prediction that is very accurate. When they were running in the election, of course, they said they were going to maintain the price cap. Well, it’s a good thing to maintain a price cap when you have to develop a plan that you can go forward with. That’s why you would freeze something, like they froze university tuitions. Then they had to develop this plan. Well, as soon as they got into govern-

ment, they didn’t have a plan, but they broke their promise on the price cap. Off came the price cap, and up went the cost of electricity. That’s going to happen again with this bill, as was pointed out. Most of the power that you’re going to be using in your homes is no longer going to be at 4.3 cents or 4.7 cents or 5.4 cents; it’s going to be at 9.3 cents. So the price you’re paying for power is going to effectively double. The people of Ontario will understand where that doubling came from; therefore, the prediction.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): In response to the comments from the minister—from the member—

Mr. Marchese: A former Minister of Health.

Mr. Patten: —former Minister of Health, probably the finest minister of the former government, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who, I must say, I really appreciate—and I think you epitomize the best of the role of opposition, and that is: pointing out what you feel are some possible problems with the legislation that people may be facing, and you back it up with anecdotal responses from your constituents, and that sort of thing. You don’t rave on, and yell and scream and condemn that the whole thing is rotten and there’s nothing good in the legislation. I want to acknowledge your quality of participation. I respect that.

I would say, though, that developing a culture cannot really be done simply through legislation, as I’m sure the member knows—and the member, by the way, from Trinity–Spadina, thank you for giving me this little bit of time; I appreciate that. The culture is not confined to this legislation. I had a conservation forum in my riding. I think the minister was encouraging any member who wanted to have one in their ridings, saying that there would be some resources and some help available. I’d be very happy to come to your riding and work with you to put on one of these forums, Ms. Witmer, and any other member as well. I would also say that the incentive, of course, for these smart meters is conserving money. The incentive is, if I can save on the costs of the utilities I have in my house, then this is going to go a long way toward paying for the unit itself, which has a nominal cost, and also cut down on the costs that I will be paying for electricity in my home.

The Acting Speaker: It’s time for a reply.

Mrs. Witmer: I want to thank the member from Peterborough—he always makes a very valuable contribution—and, of course, my good friend from Trinity–Spadina. I’ve spent many a time on committee with him, and sometimes we’ve agreed and sometimes we’ve disagreed, but we’ve always tried to hold the government accountable for their actions. I want to thank my colleague from Halton for his comments. He participates in many of the debates and makes, I think, a very excellent presentation each time he speaks; and of course, my friend from Ottawa Centre, for whom I have a tremendous amount of respect. Perhaps I’ll take you up and we could do an energy forum together in Kitchener–Waterloo.

Having said that, do you know what? I think what we're endeavouring to do, as we continue to discuss Bill 21, is obviously point out to the government some of the shortcomings of the legislation, to point out what comments we have heard from people in our riding, from people in the province of Ontario.

We all need to move forward with a desire to do what we can to create that culture of conservation in Ontario, but at the same time, I'll go back to what I said before. There is a desperate need for a plan for energy in the province. There is a lot of uncertainty, and certainly some instability. People need to be reassured that as they look to the future, there will be an adequate supply and there will not be blackouts and brownouts. They need to know that as they plan for their businesses, they can plan for their future.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: It's my pleasure to be here and debate Bill 21. It's a pleasure to offer an objective analysis of the Bill. The title of Bill 21 is An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act. I will start with that because that will take some time.

What I want to say about this part is that if inaction is leadership, then the Liberals are leading, because what this bill does in relation to this, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, is to actually not do anything. It does not prescribe anything. It does not force anyone to do anything. So how you can call this part of the bill An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act is beyond me. That is why I said earlier in my remarks that it's delusional. You do little, and what you do is completely inadequate.

I want to start by quoting from the bill around schedule A, the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, as a way of indicating to you and showing to you, fellow citizens, who are watching at 4:25 on a Thursday afternoon that I don't make this up; it's in the bill. When you listen to what I have to say, I hope you will agree with me, even though I know Liberals do not, because they try to distort as best they can their own message.

Here on page 2, it says right from the very first page, literally, where it talks about definitions in the act, and then it goes to:

"Mandatory conservation practices

"2(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require persons who are selling, leasing or otherwise transferring an interest in real property or personal property to provide such information as is prescribed in such circumstances as are prescribed."

Don't be perturbed, fellow listeners, by the language, because it's sometimes legal. What you need to pay attention to is the simple little words that say, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may...." The member from Ottawa Centre has been here longer than I have. He understands this. "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may...." "May" does not prescribe. "May" does not say to anyone, "You shall do." It simply says—

Mr. Patten: We're more existential.

Mr. Marchese: No, it's not even existential. You are inventing that word; it does not apply here. The point is that "may" simply says maybe; maybe we will, good doctor; maybe we won't. The likelihood is we don't know, and the stronger likelihood is that it won't happen. If they wanted it to happen, it would not have said, "may"; it would have required them to do something. It usually would say "shall." The member from Ottawa Centre understands this because he is an experienced politician.

"Effect of non-compliance." It's the next item: "(2) A regulation may provide for consequences if a person fails to comply...." Michael, do you understand this?

Mr. Prue: Yes, I understand.

Mr. Marchese: It's not complicated, is it? "(2) A regulation may provide for consequences if a person fails to comply...." All the Liberal members in this House will understand this, because it's pretty simple. Even municipal councillors who have been here for a short while and other mayors who have been here for a short while will understand this, because it's pretty simple. Even municipal councillors and mayors who have been here for a short while will understand this, because it's not complicated. If you wanted it to have more effect, you'd say a regulation "shall" provide for consequences. It's a simple word. If you want to require them to do something, you say "shall." When you put the word "may," for the Liberals who are interested in listening to this, it means that you probably won't do it, very likely won't do it and you don't require anybody to do anything.

Page 3 of the bill:

"Notice of non-compliance

"(4) A regulation may provide for the manner in which notice relating to the non-compliance is given"—it may, but it won't. It shan't; it shall not; it will not. It does not require them to do it. You fine Liberal members who have been here for a while: You'll understand what I'm getting at. Those of you watching at home, I think you're getting a sense of the drift of the issue.

"Permissive designation of goods, services and technologies"

"3(1) In order to assist in the removal of barriers and to promote opportunities for energy conservation, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, designate goods, services and technologies." Again, to a couple of the Liberal members behind me in the so-called rump, they will understand this. You don't have to be a politician, you don't have to have a university education, I don't think you even need high school education to understand—

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): You don't have to be an NDPer.

Mr. Marchese:—David, the difference between "may" and "shall." You don't. When a parent says something to a child, "You don't have to do this if you don't want to. You may or you may not" versus "You shall," kids understand that. Teenagers understand that.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough—Rouge River): They may not accept it.

Mr. Marchese: They may not accept, but you understand the point. Bas understands the point, of course.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): “You may not do that.”

Mr. Marchese: “You may not do that.” You may do that, you may not do that; you shall, you shall not. But you understand, member from Stoney Creek. We understand each other on this regard.

Let me go on. Same page, page 3:

“Energy conservation plans

“4(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require public agencies to prepare an annual energy conservation plan or, if the regulations so provide, an energy conservation plan respecting such other period as may be prescribed.” The member from Willowdale was asking this today to the minister, because he made the inference through his question that agencies are going to be required to do something. What this says is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require public agencies to require an annual plan. They don’t have to; they may. They’re not required to; there’s no requirement to do anything. The member from Willowdale is a lawyer. He understands what I’m getting at. It is not so complicated, even for some here. I didn’t want to say “even for lawyers.”

Moving on, in terms of contents, “The plan must be prepared in accordance with such requirements as may be prescribed....”

Page 4:

“When acquiring goods and services”

“The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require public agencies to consider energy conservation and energy efficiency....” The member from Willowdale, who is a fine lawyer, I’m sure, would understand the language here that says “may ... consider energy conservation.” It doesn’t have to, is not required to.

Remember, this Bill 21 is called an Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act. You understand why it’s amusing, right, why I mock you on a regular basis? I do so with great pleasure, because when you call it the leadership act, that’s something the Tories would have done. When you were in opposition, we both relished the opportunity to attack the Tories in misnaming bills. When you do it, having learned from the Tories, it’s a bit vomit-inducing, you know? I know that the good citizens of Ontario appreciate what I’m saying. It’s vomit-inducing for you to have protested against what Tories did and for you to do the same. You know what I mean.

1630

“Court enforcement”—or did I skip some? Oh, there’s so much more. “Agreements to promote conservation,” page 4: “The Minister of Energy may enter into agreements to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency....” It doesn’t require them, Bas. It may, but it doesn’t require them to do anything.

“Proposal re order”—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I’m so happy that my fellow member at the back, the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, is enjoying this, because I’m here to please.

“Proposal re order

“(2) The enforcement officer may propose to order the person to cease committing an act or to perform such acts as, in the enforcement officer’s opinion, are necessary to remedy the situation.”

Those of you who are Liberal lawyers, I hope you’re following this and are having fun. The rest of you who are doctors and others should enjoy this because, so far, what I’m reading into the record is not leadership but lack of leadership. It is inaction. Inaction, in my book, is never leadership.

Page 5: “Court enforcement

“(8) The enforcement officer may file a certified copy of an order made under this section in the Superior Court of Justice and the court may enforce the order in such manner as the court considers just in the circumstances.” Again, it’s “may,” not “shall,” “will.”

I go on: “Designation of enforcement officer

“9. The Minister of Energy may, in writing, designate one or more persons who are employed in the Ministry of Energy to act as enforcement officers....” It may designate them, but it’s not required to do so. You understand? I’m reading page after page of what may happen.

Mr. Patten: You didn’t have time to write anything down.

Mr. Marchese: The member from Ottawa Centre, I beg your pardon. Are you interacting with me?

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: “The Minister of Energy may, in writing, designate one or more persons who are employed in the Ministry of Energy to act as enforcement officers....” It doesn’t even designate one. It doesn’t even say, “We shall designate one person to do that.” It might, it may, but it won’t.

Mr. Patten: Maybe more.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, maybe more. Member for Ottawa Centre, come on. You’ve been here for a long while. You were here before me. Come on. “Maybe more.”

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: At least you could designate one. Throw us a little crumb so we can say, “Oh, they’re really serious; oh, my God. They’re going to have one person to enforce.” A little crumb, right? Not even one.

“Classes of persons, etc.

“(2) A regulation may create different classes of persons or entities and may establish different entitlements for, or relating to, each class,” and it goes on and on.

I hope that I have objectively analyzed the bill for those of you who have not had the opportunity to read it because, if you do get a chance to read the bill, even though I read three quarters of that particular portion of it, you will see that it’s not leadership. It’s a laughable kind of designation to call this particular part of the bill “leadership in conservation.” When your minister stands up day after day in that smug little way to say, “Oh, we’re developing a culture of conservation,” and then

you introduce this and you hide behind this and call it a culture of conservation, you leave the citizens of Ontario dismayed, in consternation, wondering what it is that you are creating by way of a culture of conservation. If anything, you're creating a crisis à la Monsieur Snobelen, so that you can say, "Huh, we are here as Liberals to keep the lights on." But good heavens, trying to talk about a culture of conservation when you've actually done so little—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: The Don Valley West member is going to stand up here and defend her position and the minister's position on this. I hope she finds a couple of minutes to defend "the culture of conservation we have so well fabricated here in the Liberal ranks."

One individual from the Green Energy Coalition came before the committee. What do they say about this act? The first recommendation they make is to say, "We welcome an act, but you have to do something right up front and centre. You have to add a conservation first directive." Can you believe that the government would come forward with a bill they call the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, yet nowhere in the bill is it made clear that it must be conservation first, before you go contemplating big nuclear or big natural gas? That's not in the bill. The bill doesn't say "conservation first," and that's why these groups are critical.

Jim Bradley, the House leader, understands these things. He has been here for so long that he knows the difference between "may" and "shall." He knows that. Any young person aged six and above understands the difference between "may" and "shall"—anyone. So I dare venture to say that 99% of the Liberal members understand the difference as well. I venture. I wouldn't wager my house on it, but I suspect that 99% understand the difference between "shall" and "may."

So I am waiting so anxiously for Liberals to stand up in their two minutes to at least rebut what I have said and to defend how, through this act, you are creating a culture of conservation—and to do so with a smile.

Just to continue on this: not much leadership here. There is the potential for energy conservation plans to be developed for public sector agencies but no details about when, and no details about what the plans would require. The language clearly says that they require nothing.

I want to talk briefly, because time is running out, on the smart meters. Howard Hampton, in committee—I was there as well—raised the question of how much it will cost the taxpayers of Ontario to install these smart meters. The estimates vary from \$1 billion to \$2 billion. I know you don't want to talk about that; I understand that. What I want to say to the citizens of Ontario is, you're picking up the tab. It's going to be on your hydro bill. The government is not paying for it. Many of the members from the rump are not going to be paying for it. Ministers are not going to be paying for it. McGuinty is not paying for it. You citizens of Ontario, taxpayers, are going to be paying for that. It's going to cost anywhere up to two billion bucks for construction, capital costs, to

install these smart meters. Do you know what, Ted? Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, in committee said to all the members who came, "Have you done a cost-benefit analysis?" They all said no—everyone who came forward. "Are you aware of a cost-benefit analysis that may have been done by the government?" Everyone said no. Everyone was asked, "Would you, if you were a businessman or businesswoman, do a cost-benefit analysis on these smart meters if the costs were to be anywhere from a billion to two billion?" and they all said yes. And this Liberal government introduces smart meters without any cost-benefit analysis? These fiscal conservative types—and I know 70% of the Liberals are fiscal conservative types—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Name names.

Mr. Marchese: "Name names." I wait for you to stand and name yourselves.

You introduce a bill without having done a cost-benefit analysis? I pay for it and you simply slough it off? We're not even talking about operational costs; we're talking about capital costs. When this has been done and where it has been done, particularly in California, we discovered that the savings were approximately 7% in terms of energy conservation. Look at the cost. Look at the cost without any cost-benefit analysis, and then you say to me, "Ha, we've got California as a great example of our \$2-billion expenditure, and we're not even talking about operational costs."

This is great for the companies that want to install meters, but I don't know how it's going to be good for the majority of people whose savings are only going to be what, Michael, a buck or two? I'm waiting for my good buddy Michael to give us an example of someone who has installed a meter. Her savings at the end of the month were \$1.50, \$1.27.

Mr. Prue: A dollar fourteen.

Mr. Marchese: God bless. And that individual is going to be paying about, what, \$600 for that meter? God bless. Savings of \$1.50—this is good politics. I am telling you, you Liberals are great leaders in nothing. If this is leadership, we are in big, big doo-doo, my friends.

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What you all want is to get into nuclear, you who introduced Darlington and cost taxpayers of Ontario \$15 billion at the time; it jumped to \$22 billion by the time we were in it and by the time the Tories were in it. You Liberals who initiated Darlington are now on your way to introducing yet \$44 billion worth of nuclear. You haven't even analyzed the problems of what you're going to do with nuclear waste—Britain has about \$150 billion worth—of how to decommission that very dangerous nuclear waste. You don't even know where to put it. It's dangerous if anything should happen, and the cost is astronomical.

You think it's good. You think this is leadership, as you talk about your culture of conservation, where you've done nothing. I have proved to you by my reading

of your bill that you have done nothing and will do nothing by way of energy conservation.

Mr. Patten: The only party in 30 years that has provided alternatives.

Mr. Marchese: I'm looking to the member from Ottawa Centre to stand up in his two minutes and rebut. I look forward with pleasure to the rebuttal from some of the Liberal members.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes, for questions and comments, the member from Stoney Creek.

Ms. Mossop: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the presentation by the member from Trinity–Spadina. It's always a challenge too, because he's always so colourful and entertaining.

I have to do just a couple of fact-checking pieces here. It was the Tories who started Darlington, and by the time the Liberals came around, it was cheaper to finish it than to stop it, so just a clarification on that one piece there. Also, the NDP government did some absolutely magician-like work with the debt, doubling in five years what had been created from Confederation to the time they came to power. That's remarkable work. The other thing is that the NDP cancelled all funding for every conservation program there was at the time.

I sat through the public hearings on Bill 21. What I heard was that what we have in this province, in this society, is a culture of waste. We have to address it, and we have to be free to address it in many ways. We have to create a conservation culture, and we have to do it through education and we have to do it through tools. We are engaging generations of people who do not understand the responsibility for resources. People who have lived through the Depression, who have lived through wars, understand the need for responsible use of resources, but generations of people don't understand it. They had a jolt, if you'll excuse the term, when we had that blackout a few years ago, that all of a sudden that magic button was going to disappear. How could that happen? There is actually a need to have responsible use of our resources. We have to create that culture through many education programs, and we have to be creative in doing it. We have to engage young people, who look at the world differently than many others, through technology and through a number of initiatives.

I'm going to leave it there, but I would just remind them that it was the NDP that doubled our debt and cancelled all funding for conservation.

Mr. Chudleigh: I'll be looking forward to the member from Trinity–Spadina's response to that. I noticed he was taking notes, I say to the member from Stoney Creek.

I think the member from Trinity–Spadina is pointing out the same kinds of things that we've heard from this side of the House, that we've read in the press and seen throughout the debate on this somewhat contentious piece of legislation, that smart metering has an appeal to it, and if people understood how this fits into the government's overall plan, I think there might be a great deal of support for something that is going to help people

conserve. I think the problem is that there doesn't seem to be an overall plan. There doesn't seem to be something that pulls it all together.

We saw the freeze, we saw the price cap, we saw the promise to keep the price cap, and then the price cap came off. We've seen sporadic announcements for some energy generation. We've heard some rumours about doing environmental assessments east of Toronto for new nuclear plants. We have heard about the refurbishing of the Bruce plant, four units up there. We hear little bits and pieces, and there might very well be a plan in the background; somewhere back there, somebody might have a plan. But if you are governing the province for the benefit of the people of Ontario, I think it behooves you, and I think it is something the people of Ontario deserve, to know what that plan is.

Mr. Prue: As always, it is a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Trinity–Spadina. Not only does he give really excellent renditions; he is entertaining at the same time. But I listened to what he had to say about the bill itself. What he had to say, all of the members should listen to.

When the word "may" is used, it generally indicates that the office or the official, the bureaucrat who carries it out, has total latitude whether to do the actions contained therein or not. In this particular case, it falls to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I listened to my friend from Stoney Creek. When she admonishes her son, saying, "You may not do that," I would suggest that although she may tell her son that, she should properly, if she is to teach her son good English, use the word "shall," because "may not" is grammatically incorrect.

Ms. Mossop: It's permissive.

Mr. Prue: No, it is not permissive. It is grammatically incorrect if you are telling someone that they are not entitled to do it. In any event, I'm sure she would not, nor would her party, use that in any kind of bill that we have before us. There is nothing in there that says you "may not" do it. It says that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may choose to do something, and then in all likelihood will choose not to do so.

My friend from Trinity–Spadina went on to talk about a number of things, and he ended up with the whole fiasco of nuclear. I would just like to comment on that for a moment. This government is embarking on a place where we ought not to be going. Most of the jurisdictions in the world are seeing that this is far too expensive and fraught with far too many difficulties. I do not believe the people of Ontario are prepared for the \$40 billion or so that this is going to cost. We are still paying for the expenses of the past. Please don't do it again in the future.

Mr. Leal: I listened very carefully and intently to the member from Trinity–Spadina. Again, the issue of the cost-benefit analysis has come up on several occasions. I want to reiterate, it's the old line: "My mind is made up. Don't confuse me with the facts." The facts are that the largest pilot in Ontario was completed by the LDC in Chatham-Kent. One thousand homes installed smart meters. They were able to retrofit the existing meters.

They acquired a technology that would allow them to do that. All-in costs were \$1.29. They achieved the targeted savings the LDC in that area had put forward as their program. Deloitte, whether you like that accounting firm or don't like that accounting firm, have verified all the dollars that were used during that pilot study of 1,000.

It is interesting that the member from Kenora–Rainy River never talked about that presentation, and he was with the committee when we visited Chatham–Kent. They just kind of sloughed that one aside, because that verifies what smart meters will allow us to achieve in Ontario.

During their term of government, from 1990 to 1995, conservation programs were out; the purchasing of rain-forest was in. And that's fine; that was a political decision. They looked at the cost-benefit analysis of acquiring that rainforest in Costa Rica. Based on that cost-benefit analysis, I'm sure, they decided to get rid of the conservation program and acquire the rainforest in Costa Rica, on the advice of Maurice Strong, whom they hired at that time to provide strategic advice on that acquisition.

So if you take the time to look at the facts of the pilot studies that have been put forward in this area, the results tell you that smart metering is a smart initiative for the province of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker: It's time for reply.

Mr. Marchese: I am pleased that the member for Stoney Creek finds me entertaining. I am pleased that the member for Peterborough also finds me entertaining.

I object to the member for Ottawa–Orléans saying that, "It would nice if he were factual." You will have noted, those of you who were listening, that I spent approximately 15 minutes talking about An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, and not once did Madame from Stoney Creek address or refute any of the points I made; not once did the member for Peterborough address or refute any of the points I made around there. They're very factual.

I was hoping that the member for Ottawa–Orléans, who said, "It would be nice for the member for Trinity–Spadina to be factual," had a comment to make by way of refuting what I said with respect to this particular act that I was reading from. I read from your bill. I didn't invent it; I didn't make it up. I read from your bill. I couldn't be any more factual if I read page after page of language speaking to "may" or "shall." There is no "shall." No one is required to do anything. Everything is "may."

So while the member for Stoney Creek talks about a culture of waste and that we must address it, I looked at this bill and I was wondering what she is doing. It's not there. There's nothing there. She says, "Oh, wouldn't it be nice to engage in education around conservation?" I looked at the bill to find education. It's not there. They invent things: "The NDP did this, the NDP did that. Oh, we're talking about education. Oh, there's waste. We have to fix waste." It's not here in your bill. I'm reading from your bill. These are the facts and you're unwilling to speak to the facts. So please, Liberal rump, stand up

and speak to the facts for once. It would do me a lot of good.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Zimmer: It's my pleasure to respond to the member for Trinity–Spadina. I know that the member for Trinity–Spadina stands over there, and whenever he speaks he looks into the camera and he has this expression that he addresses "the people of Ontario." He holds out his arms and he looks into the camera and he says to the people of Ontario, "Listen to me; listen to me." We often think of the member for Trinity–Spadina—yes, he's entertaining and yes, he's dramatic, but he has a problem with the facts.

We're not supposed to say unkind things about members opposite, so let me just offer this observation. I think the member for Trinity–Spadina has a truly interesting and, in many ways, complex relationship with the facts. Let's just leave it at that: that you have a very complex relationship with the facts. Perhaps with the appropriate counselling and so forth and so on you could resolve that complex and, in many ways, dysfunctional relationship with the facts.

What this bill is all about is asking the public, the people of Ontario, to be partners, to join with us in energy conservation. I just want to make a couple of remarks about the legislation. There are two parts to it: the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, which is one part, and the second part is a bunch of legislative changes that are going to support the smart metering initiative.

Let me just make a couple of comments about the conservation leadership aspect of it. What we're doing is encouraging the people of Ontario to join with us in this public exercise. We're all going to join together and do what we can in conservation. It's another important piece to our plan to build a conservation culture. I talked about that this afternoon in my question to the Minister of Energy.

What we're trying to do is lay a foundation for conservation culture and build on that conservation culture. I used the example of blue boxes in my question this afternoon. A number of years ago, the idea of everybody having a blue box for putting their garbage and bottles out just struck me as a bizarre idea. I thought, "That is really kind of trivial. We're going to have every home in the city and the province putting their bottles in a blue box and setting their bottles out." But a number of years later, the blue box culture is just second nature to us, the same way that it's second nature to us not to smoke in public places, not to smoke in people's homes. Well, the blue box culture has built on itself, and we now have green boxes for some things and we have grey boxes for newspapers. That has become a part of our culture.

Similarly, what this legislation is going to enable us to do is to lay the groundwork for that culture of conservation. I rather expect—and I say this to the member for Trinity–Spadina—that if we have this debate and we talk about this issue, 10 years from now these conservation culture ideas that are the groundwork of this legislation are going to be second nature to us all. They're going to

be second nature to you. I would urge you, five or 10 years from now, to play a tape of your remarks that you've been making this afternoon. You'll have to say to yourself, "I can't believe that I said that. I can't believe that I was so negative. I can't believe that I didn't have more confidence in the people of Ontario to get on the conservation culture bandwagon."

Now, the act and its leadership component, and then in the technical amendments to the legislation to enable the smart metering, are all feeding into that conservation culture. We've got to start talking about changing the culture of conservation because in the last analysis, we're the end-users of the energy—all of the members opposite, all of our businesses, all of our government buildings. Those government buildings and those businesses and our homes don't operate by themselves. They're not energy monsters. They've got human beings behind them. I and my wife manage my household, the member opposite manages his household. In the businesses, the building managers manage the buildings. In the individual citizens—in their minds, deep in their hearts—we have to instil the conservation culture. If we do that, I'm certain that we'll see dramatic results in the use—in the unintended, almost negligent, careless use of energy. To the extent that we can conserve that energy through building on a culture of conservation, we're all going to be the better. Conservation culture is a part of a greater gestalt. This legislation validates it; this legislation pushes us in that direction. This legislation says, "This is where we want to go." I invite the members opposite to join us in building that culture. Support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mario Sergio): Questions or comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Thank you to the member for the rendition on the bill. I guess my problem with the bill is not so much how it affects me but how it affects my people at home. I find that with the government legislation it's always very important to consult with the people at home as to what they believe will be the impact if this bill was passed.

Maybe the government could answer these questions in further debate on the bill. The other morning I was asked how much it was going to cost to put these smart meters in the home and who was going to pay for that. Of course, the answer is, "Well, we don't know what the cost is going to be. It can vary anywhere from \$1.25 a month to \$5 a month." Of course, we know that the users of electricity are going to pay.

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My friend Doug Holden says, "Well, explain to me, at \$5 a month for the meter and at \$45 a month for energy that I pay, how am I going to save that \$5 by getting up in the middle of the night to do my dishes?" He says, "It just doesn't work for people like that." If it's mandatory that he must take that meter and he's only using that much energy, it's not going to be a great conservation method. At the same time, how is it going to be good for him to be asked to pay \$5 a month in order to save less than \$5 a month in energy?

There are questions like that all over. A man who served most of his life on the PUC came into my office and said, "I don't know about this bill, this smart meter stuff. I don't see anything smart in what's being suggested in this bill. We have a metering system in the city of Woodstock that works wonderfully with pay-as-you-go. The meter actually shows how much power you're using and when you're using it. You pay for it when you buy it at the average price of what the generators are making." I think some of these things need to be looked at. We have to save people money, not make it cost more.

Mr. Prue: I listened, of course, intently, as I always do, to the member from Willowdale. I would gladly be persuaded by what he has to say about a conservation culture and about how all of us have to do our own thing, if only I thought that the government, of which he is a part, was doing its part around conservation.

I only have to go as far as the David Suzuki Foundation to find out what they're saying about your government and your complete lack of conservation on the entire energy file. The David Suzuki Foundation says three things:

(1) You need to "develop a climate change plan with ambitious GHG emission reduction targets," something that you have completely, within your first three years, failed to do.

(2) That foundation says that you have to "rely entirely upon conservation, energy efficiency and renewables for new power, rather than natural gas and nuclear power." You are embarked on a \$40-billion program of nuclear power, and you have enraged the citizens of my community by threatening to put in a mega-gas-fired plant on the Portlands, something that's going to destroy the dream of a generation.

The David Suzuki Foundation goes on: (3) "To implement policies to encourage the purchase of fuel-efficient vehicles and discourage the purchase of gas guzzlers." You've never talked about it. You've never done anything about it. You've never forced the automakers in Ontario or the imported car dealers to do anything about it. Then you stand here and talk about a system and a program that is going to have, at best, a minuscule effect.

I'm looking to the long term too. Anything we can do to save power is a good thing, but I am not convinced, with a cost of between \$1 billion and \$2 billion, that there's going to be real bang for the buck, something that is really meaningful that you could do if you only had the courage to undertake it.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I'm delighted that the member who spoke previously to me raised the question about what we are doing as a government with our own buildings. I'm happy to review some of the things that we're doing.

In April 2004, the government announced a four-point plan to meet our target to reduce electricity in government buildings by 10%. We're upgrading our own facilities. We've got lease enhancements that require the government's private sector landlords to reduce energy use in leased spaces. We're engaging the public. We're

inviting citizens to help us attain our target. For example, we're asking people to report electricity consumption after 8 o'clock at night. We've asked our employees to help us out with this. We're engaging public servants in government-wide efforts to raise internal awareness.

The most important thing we're doing, though, is the building upgrades. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, through the Ontario Realty Corp., has identified several building upgrades and retrofit projects that include such initiatives as chiller replacements; lighting upgrades; building controls; heating, ventilation and air conditioning—HVAC—improvements; and the deep lake water cooling project in Toronto. The deep lake water cooling project will air-condition the Legislative Building, right where we are today, and other provincial government buildings in Queen's Park. That will save an estimated 9.8 million kilowatt hours. These projects are well under way. We're going to save, in total, 43 million kilowatt hours.

We are walking the walk; we're not just making promises. I think it's important that the people of Ontario understand that and that the member from Beaches—East York understands that as well.

Mr. Chudleigh: Conservation is a key word. The member spoke about the blue boxes and about how conservation gets into our society, in a way. I think that when the blue boxes were introduced, it was a voluntary thing. You could go down to the corner and pick up your blue box. You could use it if you wished; you could not use it if you didn't want to. This system that you're introducing is not that way at all.

You might be going into this system kicking and screaming but you're going in nonetheless, and that can be a problem when trying to implement a new way of thinking for society at large and society in general, especially when, along with this implementation of smart meters, the cost of electricity is probably going to double for most of the people in Ontario. The costs that you're talking about implementing, the costs that were in place for this year for the pilot projects—a maximum of 9.3 cents and a minimum of 2.9 cents were the costs that were in place for this year. When this program starts to be implemented on April 1 of this year, they're going to be readjusted upwards, and there is going to be a significant readjustment upwards.

Most of the numbers that I've been able to glean on the pilot projects—and I tell you, the information is not very easy to find—the information I've been able to find is that there might be a 2% saving. On a \$70 or a \$100 monthly electrical bill, a 2% saving doesn't pay the cost of the installation of the smart meter. So there are a lot of unanswered questions here, and even the pilot projects haven't been very well communicated.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Willowdale has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Zimmer: I want to thank the speakers.

The member from Trinity—Spadina referred to David Suzuki. He said that David Suzuki said such and such.

One thing David Suzuki did say and did push away at was this idea of conservation, conservation, conservation.

This government is showing some leadership in conservation. Let me remind members that we committed, as a government, to reduce our energy use in government buildings by 10%. I can report to this House that we've achieved that target. We're 70% towards achieving the 10% reduction. That's what leadership is all about.

We all have a part to play in conservation—however large, however small. I think it's time for the opposition parties to stop being negative on this issue and opposing. Any kind of conservation, any little bit of conservation, is worthwhile for each and every one of us, from whatever party, to join in. Become a part of the solution. I say to the members opposite, you can go to your homes and you can conserve just a little bit. This legislation helps—with the smart meters, for instance. If you can just conserve a little bit, that is an objective contribution. That's not just talk; that's not just opposing; that's not just carping about things that you're unhappy about in the legislation. Go home, put a smart meter in and save some electricity for Ontario. Join us in becoming a part of the solution. That's what this legislation is all about. It's about leadership. We're going to press forward with this. Join us; become a part of the solution.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 55, I'd like to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, February 27, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 53, the Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act.

On Tuesday, February 28, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 210, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 36, the Local Health System Integration Act.

On Wednesday, March 1, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 210; in the evening, government motion number 9.

On Thursday, March 2, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 53.

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2006 (continued)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L'ÉNERGIE (suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Barrett: I welcome the opportunity for further debate and I do wish to make some comments on Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act.

I was very pleased that the Ontario Legislative Assembly, through the justice committee, saw fit—the decision was made by the subcommittee—to hold hearings in Simcoe. Hearings were held in the town of Simcoe in Norfolk county. We had a good selection of deputants come forward: agriculture for one, the Power Workers' Union and a couple of individuals. Although the deputants, when they approached the witness table, commenced with a presentation on the advisability or inadvisability of smart meters, another thing that really was ever present in the back of their minds and that did come out in their testimony was their concern for the impending closure of the very large Nanticoke plant, the co-generating station, which would be I guess 14 or 15 miles down the road from the town of Simcoe.

The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture kicked off the hearings. I've known the speaker, Frank Sommer, for a number of years. He is the backbone of the Haldimand federation. Frank made it very clear that he is concerned about justice and therefore felt it was very important to come into town from Kohler and address the justice committee. He reiterated something that we are hearing right across the province of Ontario, that our farmers, out of necessity now, have to compete globally, and the overriding concern for many of our farmers is access to power, specifically electrical power, at competitive rates. They request and put responsibility on this government to give "access to rates comparable to those in neighbouring jurisdictions." Corn alone, for example—we import that commodity from various states south of the border and from the province of Quebec. What's very important when you do any comparative analysis is you have to realize that whether it be an American farmer or a farmer in Ontario or Quebec, 80% of the input costs in farming today in one way or another are related to energy—not only electricity, but fuel. The cost of diesel is now very significant, especially in the cash crop sector.

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: The member for Halton indicated, "What about fertilizer?" and the nitrogen component of fertilizer. We are very dependent on natural gas. Again, I would think in debate in this House, people now understand the price-supply relationship between electricity as a form of energy and natural gas as a form of energy and the relationship between these two. I hope to get into that shortly.

The farmers in our area, in their deliberations on Bill 21, don't necessarily dispute the alleged aims of this legislation: energy conservation. No one is arguing against that, or the potential for benefits of the smart metering of electricity, if that can be accomplished. There's interest in the ability of the conservation authorities to further exploit hydro-electric resources.

One thing that came out during the hearings in Simcoe—I know it made headlines. The member for Trinity-Spadina made mention of the cost. Howard

Hampton, when he was in the town of Simcoe during our hearings, made mention of the cost and threw out figures of \$1 billion to \$2 billion to put in the system. As with the NDP, we raised the question, where is that cost-benefit analysis? There is so much riding on the significance of energy, especially with respect to our economy. I think of the importance of a cost-benefit analysis for smart meters; I think of it in many ways as a risk-benefit analysis because there is an awful lot of risk.

The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture makes it very clear, speaking on behalf of farmers with neither the specific technical expertise or legal expertise to comment in detail on a piece of legislation like we have here today, Bill 21. They are concerned, as the member for Trinity-Spadina and those of us in the opposition are very concerned, that when the proposed measures are fully implemented, how much it is going to cost?

Later on during the day, we had a presentation from the CAE Alliance. The CAE stands for Clean, Affordable Energy. Their researcher, one of their main spokespersons, the chair of the alliance, is a woman named Carol Chudy. I've heard her speak a number of times, both in Simcoe and down in the Sarnia-Lambton area, where there is a very real concern about the inadvisability of shutting down what has been identified as the fourth- or fifth-cleanest coal-burning plant in North America and substituting natural gas, a fuel that now has been identified as being in dwindling supply. Some estimates indicate the commercial availability of natural gas may have a window of maybe only eight or nine years.

Carol Chudy addressed this issue of cost. With regard to cost, she indicated that "the Ministry of Energy" estimates "the installation costs to be about \$1 billion," but on top of that, maintenance and monitoring costs have to be factored in. I don't have those figures. The other important thing we should all bear in mind: "There is no net reduction in power" usage by using smart meters: "The Ontario Power Authority includes an estimated 500 MW for planning purposes." The point, and I want to repeat this, is that the overall "load is not reduced"; it's just used at different times; "it is shifted to less load-intensive times of the day," obviously in the evening, something that naturally occurs in my home. Part of my heat comes from electricity. I don't have air conditioning, but during the evening, we do turn the heat down. If I had air conditioning, and I think of the hot summer we had, it's natural for less air conditioning to be used in the middle of the night in the summer. Obviously, heating and air conditioning are two of the major contributors to the demand on our electricity supply.

Carol Chudy gave some figures: "The initial cost for the meter is estimated to be about \$500 for each household, plus monthly fees for monitoring and processing of information." This comes from energy experts. "The key word here is 'estimate,' because no firm costs and benefits have been determined.... In order to determine savings (or added costs), for affected ratepayers, as well as the province," a number of factors also have to be taken into consideration. The monitoring of smart meters

will obviously require the installation or the upgrading of telecommunications infrastructure. Again, that suggests continued upgrades at further cost to the consumer, whether that consumer, by extension, be the ratepayer or the taxpayer.

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Also, when we take a look at the cost of smart meters we have to factor in the cost of job losses to those who currently read meters. This must be factored into the overall economics. In communications that I've received from both Norfolk Power and Brant Power locally, and from the county of Brant, is the concern if these distribution companies were to lose the metering function, and if it is by extension transferred to the homeowner.

I made mention of Norfolk Power and I just want to continue on a little bit on the cost. If you farm in Haldimand county you are very cost-conscious. That is a tough place to farm; it's Haldimand clay. You can measure the economic history over the last 100 years; the population of Haldimand county is pretty well the same today as it was in the early 1900s.

Mr. Chudleigh: Tough going.

Mr. Barrett: Tough going, and it's tough to convince these farmers of some of the new ideas like this. They "are not convinced that all opportunities for incentives and persuasion for energy conservation have been fully exploited...." They are very concerned about what they consider a complete surrender "to the intrusive regulatory approach being proposed in ... Bill 21," and more specifically in schedule A.

They took a look at the description of schedule B in Bill 21, and they find it "difficult to visualize the final form in which the smart metering entity will emerge." They make the observation that, "The smart metering entity opens the door for the creation of yet another large and costly bureaucracy...." And it was just yesterday that we were debating LHINs, the local integrated health services network. Many of us took a look at the very large scope of these so-called neighbourhood networks. I know my neighbourhood, the LHIN 4 that my farm is in, is a neighbourhood of \$1.3 million. I have another piece of property, a hunting property, just a few miles away and it's in LHIN 2, and that's a neighbourhood that stretches from the tip of Long Point up to Tobermory. That's something like 400 kilometres. It would take six and a half hours to drive that distance. That suggests a very large administrative bureaucracy to administer.

By extension, what I'm hearing from Haldimand county farmers, through smart metering, is "yet another large and costly bureaucracy that could turn into an all-encompassing stand-alone organization with unprecedented powers to impact on" the everyday life of a Haldimand county farmer. The bill allows for the creation of infrastructure that is also pretty well guaranteed to be very costly, not only to install, but to maintain. "Given past experience with government mega-projects, costs are likely to be several times the current estimates." We have a \$1-billion cost estimate. We're hearing figures thrown around of double that amount. The suggestion is, "Per-

haps gentler, less coercive ways are available to provide the benefits of smart metering technology...." And the recommendation to the justice committee was to set it up on a voluntary basis. We leave it up to this government to make the final decision on that one, but that's one suggestion.

There is a concern "that Ontario may be embarking on an experiment...." This is coming from people down in the Haldimand and Norfolk area who went through a 25-year experiment with regional government. It probably seemed like a good idea at the time, back in the 1970s. Obviously, that was something that, while it was a gleam in a bureaucrat's eye, at the time seemed to make sense. There were projections for massive industrial growth in this county, which I made mention saw no population growth for 100 years. One off-the-wall projection was an increase in population of one million people. That didn't happen. It took my colleagues and our government when we were in power to terminate that particular experiment.

What I'm suggesting is that a very, I guess would say, conservative farmer down our way, speaking on behalf of a number of other very conservative, discreet Haldimand county farmers, is concerned about what they see as an experiment that may set them on a course that would put them on an even less competitive footing with their neighbours. When I say "with their neighbours," it's with their neighbours across the border and in Quebec. As I mentioned, I am concerned because we have figures now, whether you're farming across the border or in Ontario, that 80% of your costs, in one way or another, are energy-related.

Mr. Frank Sommer, in his testimony, had further suggestions and a number of measures that could be made to stave off the electricity supply crisis, which I think this government is now recognizing, and perhaps is reflected in what I consider some of the more draconian aspects proposed in Bill 21 on the demand side. The following measures were suggested to attain more cost-effective results, without what they say is a heavy-handed approach being proposed in this bill: "(1) A legacy dating back to the cheap electric power days of a generation ago has left us with thousands of homes that are still being heated by resistive electricity."

I know this for a fact. I built my own house with my father's assistance about 25 years ago. At that time, the Ontario government had a very significant advertising campaign. It convinced me to install electric heat.

Mr. Chudleigh: How did that work out?

Mr. Barrett: Well, I'll tell you, I have two wood stoves in my house now, and I just bought a third one. So how did that work out?

When you build your own home, you build a fairly large house. It was all two-by-six, and totally insulated. But I can tell you, apart from perhaps some of my colleagues who live in town, you don't get natural gas lines running out in the country. We have a number of gas wells on our farms for commercial production, but we can't get hooked up.

Interjection: Why not use solar?

Mr. Barrett: I'm relying on electricity to some extent. I spend so much time up here that I rely on my wife to bring in a lot of the wood. She can bring in a cord of wood in an afternoon; that's not bad.

The member opposite made mention, "Well, why not solar?" I built my own house; I built a passive solar home.

Again, coming from the Haldimand farmers: "(2) A natural gas distribution network in rural Ontario, allowing conversion from electricity would increase the energy efficiency of the province immensely." Again, it's much more efficient to do your cooking and heat your home with natural gas than to use electricity. Natural gas is a really valuable commodity. I am concerned if we are going to run out in eight or nine or 10 years, as some of the deputants informed us during these hearings.

Let's take a look at the supply side: "The premature commitment to phase out coal generation of electric power is in no small measure responsible for the expected supply shortage." I can tell you, knocking on doors this summer during the heat wave, there were a number of people at home who were expecting a shortage. They knew their electricity was coming across the border. We share the same airshed. They could see the pollution coming across the border. We're right down on Lake Erie. The southern end of my riding is the Pennsylvania border. Granted, it's out in the middle of Lake Erie, so we're 40 miles across, but we are probably the front line as far as being downwind from the Ohio Valley.

1730

On the supply side: "(2) While we agree with the objectives to reduce emissions of coal-fired electricity generation, we are not convinced that leading-edge technology for reductions have been fully explored." Again, everyone in this Legislative Assembly is now aware of the clean air technologies that are available and have been installed on many of the units, certainly at the Lambton-Sarnia plant. Two SCRs have been installed down there, the selective catalytic reduction units. Two selective catalytic reduction units have been installed at the gigantic Nanticoke plant. Sarnia-Lambton has the scrubber technology, which allows them to remove virtually all of the sulphur from their coal. They use a higher sulphur content coal. Nanticoke ships in coal from Powder River basin in the American west, a very low-sulphur coal. This is not to say that this government should not have the wherewithal to continue to add scrubbers and continue to install the selective catalytic reduction.

I'm looking at you, Speaker. Have I run out of time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Yes. It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently for the entire 20 minutes. It was a very good speech. There is much of what you have said with which I can agree, and I'm going to talk about one thing you said with which I agree, and then another where I, quite frankly, have some very real difficulties.

That part with which I agree was around the discussion you had about Carol Chudy and the costs she said would likely be borne by this government in terms of installing smart meters throughout the entire length and breadth of the province. I have yet to see a cost-benefit analysis from this government, and I am surprised that any government would contemplate the \$1 billion to \$2 billion that it has estimated it's going to cost to equip each and every home in this province. I'd like to see what that is because it takes a long time for people to pay back \$1 billion to \$2 billion. That is an awful lot of money, even for the 13 million people that we have in this province. For the number of households and the number of homes, that is even more.

I have heard that it's only going to cost \$1.50 or \$1.60 per month on your electricity bill, but I haven't heard how long that's going to take. Is that for 10 years, 20 years or forever? If it's forever, \$1.60 per month forever seems to me to be an awful lot of money to spend. I have to say that I have not heard—even though we've asked several times—how much money was saved in that study. The one piece of evidence that I saw, which was a news clip, showed that the woman, after having been on the system for a month, after having gotten up after midnight to do her laundry and her washing and everything else to save the money, saved \$1.14. I'm going to talk about that in my own speech. So if it costs \$1.60 and you save \$1.14, I don't think people are going to be very happy with the conservation.

The second point—and I've got five seconds—is coal-fired generation. I really think that the Conservatives should get off that wagon.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I remember as a consulting engineer going around to municipalities and having those big arguments about whether we should have water meters: "Everybody can waste as much water as they like or use as much water as they like," etc. Electrical meters haven't changed in probably 50 or 60 years. Now these smart meters are available and other countries are bringing them in. Energy conservation is extremely important, so it's time to get on the bandwagon and to move ahead. This legislation permits our provincial government to do that. It's extremely important legislation. A smart meter in every home will certainly bring conservation to the attention of every home in Ontario. The savings will certainly be there. It's been proven in other jurisdictions and will certainly be shown in our own.

I'm also proud of what the government has done to date in reaching the objectives they set for 10% energy savings. That's extremely important. We're 70% of the way, and this is just a little over two years into our government. That 10% savings is coming through looking at energy as a very important resource, as a resource we must conserve. As has been stated by the former Minister of Energy and the present Minister of Energy, every kilowatt saved is just the same as building new generation.

We are on the right track. This is the right direction to go. Energy conservation will become something important to every Ontario home, and we will achieve the objectives we've set. We will have energy self-sufficiency in this province, something that we haven't had for many years because of the decisions of previous governments. But this government is moving ahead with the right decisions, and certainly the smart meters are part of that.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm pleased to be here in the House and listening to this debate. It's very interesting indeed. I just wanted to comment on the comments made by my friend from Beaches–East York and, indeed, my friend from London North Centre, coming before and after the speech from my friend from Haldimand–Norfolk. The member for Beaches–East York talked about the fact that there is no answer to the question of how long it might take to pay back the amount of money he talked about, the billions of dollars.

I worry even more about a question that comes before that, which is that when the minister had her press conference announcing this bill—again, it was one of those press conferences held with great flourish and great fanfare—she didn't even know what the number was, let alone how long it was going to take to pay it back. Even to this day, when it's weeks and months after the press conference, and the meters are supposed to be installed shortly, there are no specs out there for anybody to build these meters or to supply these meters to the government. There are no details. She had no details when she made the announcement.

This is a government that's very long on being able to make the statements of what they're going to do and they're going to have millions and thousands of meters, but when you say, "How much is it going to cost people? How long will it take to pay them back? Is that a good deal for people? Do we even know what the total number is that's going to be paid back?" there is no answer.

Similarly with the comments from my friend from London North Centre. The fact is that if you said to the minister, "How many buildings are being retrofitted? Where are they? How many new lighting systems have been put in?" I suspect the fact would be that the statements made by the member for London North Centre suggest that there are a lot more of these projects going on than is in fact the case. There are probably very few. This government talks a good game on these kinds of things. They're big on the PR, they're big on reading you back segments of the plan, but when it comes time to actually be accountable for how much the meters are going to cost, how long it will take to pay them back, what benefits they will have, how many buildings are being retrofitted, how many new lighting systems have been put in, they're suddenly bereft of any answers, and that speaks to the greatest question of all about this government, which is a lack of real accountability. People want to know those answers because it's their money and it's their life, and this government is unable to provide them.

Mr. Chudleigh: To the point: My benchmate made a wonderful speech and much of it revolved around listening to Haldimand county farmers and to the wisdom that comes from those men of the soil. I mentioned to him after his speech that you won't go too far wrong listening to people who consider their crops, who consider their lives, who consider what they're going to do very, very carefully.

Their concern about natural gas and how long that natural gas is going to be available in Canada, estimates of eight to 10 years out—I hope that's a little short. I hope natural gas will be around for a bit longer than that, given the infrastructure that we have built around that commodity. I can well remember estimates back in the 1970s—maybe it was the 1960s—when people were talking about natural gas. We had so much natural gas in this country, it was going to last for 300 years. I well remember 300 years of natural gas. Now we're getting estimates of eight to 10 years. It's difficult, when you get such huge variations, to know what you're going to do with the infrastructure that is built around that.

Again, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk mentioned that a good cost-benefit analysis has not been done on this issue. We've heard so many times that people would have far and away more expense than they would have savings, and that's of deep concern around this piece of legislation.

1740

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Barrett: I appreciate the comment from the member from Beaches–East York. It is quite heartening to hear an NDP member talk about cost-benefit analysis and trying to achieve savings. I will repeat that, I find that quite heartening.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans made mention and reminded us that he is a consulting engineer. It's interesting that after the hearings in Simcoe I sat down that evening with about 30 engineers and technicians, Power Workers, Steelworkers, people who are in the business. Not all of them testified before these hearings and I just think there's an awful lot of weight that needs to be put on the science and technology of these kinds of issues.

The member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey—the one phrase that comes to my mind from his response is, "People are looking for answers." People down my way did a lot of work to prepare for these hearings and they have some answers.

The member for Halton made mention of the Haldimand county farmer, and whether that person be male or female, we do have to listen to that kind of grassroots input. My grandmother was very strong in the Women's Institute movement. She would go to a Women's Institute meeting just down the sideroad from the north end of our farm, the Marburg Women's Institute, with some great ideas that she had probably read about. She would come home at night, after being shot down, and say to me—my grandmother was a bit of an activist—"Never, ever underestimate the wisdom of a farm woman."

I appreciate, as I said, that the Legislative Assembly did hold hearings in a small town and got some rural input, and I hope that's listened to.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has assented to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access / *Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur l'arbitrage, la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le droit de la famille en ce qui concerne l'arbitrage familial et des questions connexes et modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne les questions que doit prendre en considération le tribunal qui traite des requêtes en vue d'obtenir la garde et le droit de visite.*

Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act / *Projet de loi 206, Loi révisant la Loi sur le régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario.*

ENERGY CONSERVATION
RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2006
(continued)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ
EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION
DE L'ÉNERGIE
(suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: I can see that I have again a truncated period of time here, so I'm going to try to do it as quickly as I can and hopefully finish my speech in less than the 20 minutes so that it won't come back on a second day.

I want to talk about the cost-benefit analysis for a moment, because I think that is key to what we are looking at in this particular piece of legislation. It is trite to say that every single one of us agrees that we have to do more to conserve. We have to conserve energy. We have to conserve our resources. We have to stop being wasteful. We have to do everything within our power as a government or as individuals to make sure that we do not squander the wealth of this planet and certainly of our Ontario and this Canada within our lifetimes. It has to be made available into the future for our children and our children's children.

Having said that, I want to know how this metering is going to accomplish that before I can wholeheartedly say I support it. The reason I have some doubts is, number one, there is no cost-benefit analysis. It's been said by other speakers and it's been said by me. I know that in my house, before we go out and determine whether it's time for a new refrigerator, a new car or a holiday, we look at the cost, we look at the benefits that are going to be derived from it, we see whether we can afford it and we see whether in the long term something else can be done that's cheaper. I am not ashamed to say that sometimes I buy used goods because used goods can be half the price and can service me for my entire lifetime. I do that because we have to know what is being spent and in the end whether we are getting the value that comes from it.

I haven't heard that. I haven't heard from any government person how much this is going to cost. I haven't heard it from the minister and I haven't heard it in debate, and I've heard all of the debate either by sitting in the chair or being here in this room. I have yet to hear a single person outline the cost of providing five million or six million or 10 million of these units across Ontario. I'm not sure how many households, how many businesses, how many structures, how many buildings or how many government offices there are, but there are a lot. Whether that number is seven million or eight million or 10 million, I don't know. I don't know how much it's going to cost to put all of this in, nor do we have any idea how much the average saving per household is going to be.

Ms. Wynne: We have to start, Michael.

Mr. Prue: The question is, we have to start. I'm going to get to that in a minute.

Ms. Wynne: No, it's a statement. We have to start.

Mr. Prue: I'm going to get to that in a minute—we have to start.

I have to know whether or not the potential is there for savings before I will recognize or support the expenditure of potentially billions of taxpayers' dollars. I have to know that there is a reasonable opportunity to expect that the money can be saved.

The reason I'm squeamish, the reason I question this is because for a while, for some a of five years, I was a hydro commissioner. I served on the board of East York Hydro, as it existed prior to amalgamation. I spent five years sitting weekly in company with an engineer, an accountant, a couple of hydro commissioners and other people, sitting around a table trying to make hydro work. We tried to make it cheap, we tried to make it plentiful and we tried to do whatever we could for the community to make sure the service was provided.

One of the very laudable goals we had was to put in smart meters. We put in smart meters in East York. I still remember that one of those smart meters went into the home of Jack Christie. Jack Christie was the chair of East York Hydro. He was a man at that time well into his 80s. He is in his 90s and is still alive today. I'm sure he would like to come down and tell the people in the Legislature

the experience that East York hydro had with the smart meters.

I will acknowledge that the technology of 10 and 15 years ago that was installed in Jack Christie's house may not be the technology of today, but I will tell you that the technology then and the cost then was kind of expensive. It was expensive to put in these smart meters. We put them into Jack Christie's house and into four or five other people's houses, people who agreed to put them in, not to have the cost of their electricity reduced but simply to see how much electricity we could use and whether we could shave off that portion in peak demand, because that's really the important thing for the electrical system. It's not how much electricity you're using, but that the reality is that you're not using it when the peaks go too high. Those peaks are primarily in the summertime, with a secondary peak around the Christmas period. Those are the periods about which we must worry as a province, because when the blackouts and the brownouts occur, they are likely to occur at those points.

We put in the smart meters to see whether we could cut the peaks and lower the cost of electricity overall, by convincing people to do their laundry, dishwashing, heating and any number of things that were electrically generated at those times. Jack Christie came back month after month and we had discussions around the table at the East York Hydro-Electric Commission about the efficacy and the desirability of continuing the program and how much it was going to help. I have to tell you that the results were disappointing. The results were disappointing from Mr. Christie and from some of the others, although I think Jack was the person who was most likely—and his wife at the time. She has since died; a wonderful woman. They were keen, even though they were in their 70s at that point, to go out and do the laundry after 10 or 11 at night. They were keen to do the dishwashing late at night. They were keen to turn off the air conditioners. He had a heat pump. He tried everything. He was keen to shave off as much electricity as he could. We found out in the end that, yes, he was successful. He used almost the same amount of electricity overall, but he was able to cut those periods in the day, particularly between 3 and 5 o'clock or 3 and 6 o'clock, when the majority of electricity and the peak hit in East York.

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We discovered, though, that although he cut the peak for us, the savings that he made as an individual homeowner, and those of the other five or six people who were on board doing it at the same time, were negligible. The reason I'm saying that is because I haven't heard how much is being saved or how much was saved in those 1,000 families. Although I've asked, I have yet to hear anyone stand up in this Legislature and detail how much was saved.

The only piece of evidence that I have to date was a CBC news item on this very issue. I watched it intently; it was about a five- or seven-minute news clip. They catalogued a woman over the period of about a month

with a smart meter. They showed her doing her laundry at night. They showed her getting up early in the morning and turning on the dishwasher and the other electrical appliances. They showed her using all of the electricity at appropriate times when the costs were down, when the cost per megawatt hour was at its minimum. And they showed, at the end of the month, her getting the two bills, because that was part of the plan: the one bill as if she had not done it all of this time, and the other bill when she carried it out and did her very, very best over that period to do the right thing. When she opened up the bill on the news, you could see the disappointment on her face. She saved \$1.14 in the month; she saved \$1.14 by putting the kids to bed and doing her laundry late at night, by waking up early in the morning and by doing a hundred things.

What did she say? She was disappointed about the \$1.14, but she said she would do it because she believed she had an obligation to her children and the environment. But I have to ask you: She saved \$1.14. How much is she going to have to pay for the meter? We've heard \$1.60.

Mr. Leal: It's \$1.29.

Mr. Prue: All right. We've heard \$1.29 that you pay to have the meter, and \$1.14, after doing all the work, that you save, which means that it costs you 15 cents in the end. It means that people will have literally no economic incentive to want to do this. They will have to pay the \$1.29 literally forever, because there does not seem to be an end to the program, and if they stay up late at night to put the laundry on and get up early in the morning to take advantage, they will have to literally change their lifestyles to lose 15 cents a month.

I cannot believe that the public will be hugely interested in this. There has to be a better way. What I'm telling you is, I am not opposed to putting in the meters, but you have to detail how much it's going to cost and, in the end, how much money is going to be saved for the average consumer. I do not believe that a great deal can be saved, quite frankly, from my own experience in East York from individual homeowners.

Where we did find there were great savings was in some of the industrial applications. Remember, in this province even today, 80% of the electricity is used by about 20% of the people who get it, and 20% of the electricity is used by the other 80%, which is ordinary people living in their houses, primarily.

We need to do things that are going to save the money, and perhaps the smart meters might be very useful in industrial-commercial applications. I want to tell you that the government should go there first. We should go there and find out how much money can be saved. If the money can be saved, if the cost of the equipment comes down, if it does not become cost-prohibitive and actually cost more than the savings, which is, I am afraid, what is going to happen, at least at the outset, and make a lot of consumers angry, then I think—

Interjection: Lower the expectations.

Mr. Prue: Yes, you will lower the expectations. You will lower it to say that this is just another government boondoggle that doesn't work, and have people reject it. You have to do other things.

I listened to what the member from Kitchener-Waterloo had to say—I think it needs to be talked about as well—about the costs to tenants. Tenants right now largely are unmetered. There are metered tenants. I know, because we did that in East York too. We metered tenants, and we found out that the metering of tenants did in fact save the landlord some money. But the tenants bitterly complained about their lot in life, because you see, they could not replace the energy-inefficient refrigerator. That was the landlord's responsibility. The landlords saw fit not to do it, but to charge them the electricity for running an antiquated refrigerator and/or an antiquated stove and/or antiquated air conditioning. They charged the tenants when they plugged in space heaters because of drafty windows, because of leaky roofs. None of those things were within the power of the poor tenant to resolve.

If you're going to put, and you're going to advocate putting, these kinds of meterings into apartments, I want to tell you that before you do that, you had better pass a bill that requires every landlord in every multi-residential apartment unit in this province to replace those 20-year-old fridges, to replace those stoves, to replace the air conditioners, to fix all the drafts and the windows, and to fix the leaky roofs and anything else that is not energy efficient, because only then should the poor tenant have to succumb to what you're trying to make them do.

They have no choice. Most tenants are not rich people. There are some exceptions. I have some apartments in the former East York that are renting for \$2,000 a month, but most of them are rented for \$1,000 or less. The people who live in them are not rich, and they cannot afford, nor should they pay—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the local health integration networks. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow the parliamentary assistant to the Minister

of Health to reply to the notice of dissatisfaction issued by the member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? It's agreed.

The Chair recognizes the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I was so dissatisfied with the answer—there are many answers one could be dissatisfied with; in fact, there are no answers at all to many of the questions that are asked in this House, and I think that really stands in the way of the kind of accountability people have the right to expect in this House.

I was asking questions today that I think are important and that go to the very heart of the LHIN legislation, because the LHIN legislation is presented over and over again, and promoted over and over again by the Premier, the Minister of Health and the members of the government party as being something that is going to in fact turn over more responsibility and give more responsibility and more say to the local people. My questions have been very simple. They have been questions that have gone to the essence of the claim made by the government members that local people will have more say. All I ask is this: If they're going to have more say, to go back to the first question I asked the Premier today, why does this bill give his minister, or any Minister of Health, the power, for example, to override, without a hearing, without any checks or balances, and accountability agreements can then be imposed on these LHINs? Why does the minister get to decide that, if this bill is all about giving power to people at the local level?

The answer that was given was that the Leader of the Opposition "is sorely mistaken in this regard. Our made-in-Ontario model will empower local communities," and on and on it goes. In fact, if you look at the bill, the section of the bill expressly says that without a hearing, without anything else, the minister can just order that his idea of an accountability agreement is the law. That's it. What kind of local decision-making, what kind of local influence is that?

So then I moved on to ask the question about section 28. Section 28 is the section that allows the minister to issue integration orders. They called it "integration orders," I think, to try and cover up what it really was. But if you look at that section, it talks about the fact that the minister can issue an integration order, for example, ordering that a hospital be closed; I think I've got the section number right.

I asked the Premier, "Well, why, if you are not planning to close any hospitals, would you have to give your minister that power?" For that unilateral power, again, to be exercised, I think he has to get advice from the LHINs. We all had a little chuckle today. I think the leader of the third party asked a question about, "What kind of independent advice are you going to get from the people that you hand-pick yourself to advise you?" In this case, all he has to get is advice, but he can then, regardless of what that advice is, issue an order closing a

hospital or amalgamating a hospital with another one—no public hearing, no oversight by cabinet, no nothing, just an order from the Minister of Health.

1800

Again, if the purpose of the bill is to give power to local people to make decisions in the best interests of their local region, why is the minister now getting this power? I asked the Premier this question, and he said to me, in this instance, that I must be wrong in making the assertion that they are creating this power, because he said, “Well, how did the previous government close hospitals if the power didn’t exist in the present law?” This was a source of great dissatisfaction to me too, because it proves the Premier has not read the legislation and doesn’t know what the current law is that his government is proposing to change. I think when he comes into this House, I would say with respect, he has an obligation to be informed on these matters.

The fact of the matter is—I was discussing it with the media outside—that today, in the legislation, in the Public Hospitals Act as it exists today, there is no power that is equivalent to that giving the minister the right to issue an order closing a hospital; there is no power today in the law. That is a fact. The Premier indicated to me that I was mistaken or I was misinformed or whatever, and then he suggested that the hospitals that might have been closed in some previous day were closed illegally.

Again, I’m dissatisfied with that because I think that if the government wants to bring forward legislation bringing about what I believe to be the biggest centralization of power in the history of the Ministry of Health, if they want to do that, that’s fine; we can all come here and debate that. But don’t do it under the guise of creating some mechanisms and some bodies that are supposed to empower local citizens, and then have the bill filled with clauses that give unilateral, arbitrary, unchecked power to the Minister of Health, which is exactly what they’ve done. He can close hospitals, he can cut off services and he can amalgamate hospitals unilaterally, without a hearing, without anybody knowing anything about it.

Almost the worst example of all to me, as someone who spent years of my life raising millions of dollars for the hospital sector in this province, is the fact that he can issue an order, under section 30, transferring a charitable gift that someone has given directly to a particular hospital to some other hospital somewhere else. He can just do that—no hearing, no consultation with the donor and no court approval, which is the case today. Under the law today, it would have to be done through the courts.

I say to myself, what kind of decentralization is that? What kind of regional decision-making is that? It’s wrong. They’re misleading people when they say it’s about local decision-making. It’s all about centralizing power in the office of one man, the Minister of Health, and that is wrong too. It’s absolutely, positively wrong, and they’re not being straightforward with people when they suggest otherwise.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I’m pleased this evening to rise and respond to the concerns that have been raised by the leader of the official opposition with respect to Bill 36. My understanding is that the leader of the official opposition is in fact a lawyer, although we recognize that he hasn’t practised for many years. But I will happily take him through the legislation and the history of this legislation in order for him to completely understand what it is that we are trying to do here with Bill 36.

As you may recall, back in 1995 the Mike Harris government introduced the Savings and Restructuring Act. It was introduced by the Treasurer of the time, Ernie Eves. It was passed in 1996. Under the Savings and Restructuring Act, the minister was given the broad power to fund hospitals in the public interest. The minister was also given the power to reduce, suspend, withhold or terminate funding to a hospital if the minister considered it in the public interest to do so. These amendments also permitted the minister to direct hospitals to cease to operate, to provide specified services, to cease to provide specified services, to increase or decrease the extent and volume of specified services, to take all necessary steps required for a hospital amalgamation, or to make any other direction if, in each of these cases, the minister considered it in the public interest to do so.

Here is where we differ very much from the previous government: The regulation also authorized any person, group of persons or body to issue directions in the place of the minister, subject to any prescribed conditions. That created the Health Services Restructuring Commission. As we well know, they crossed our province in the mid-1990s and created havoc in our health system. Many of you will recall that they ordered the closing of not one, not two, but 28 hospitals in our province. Among them, they closed the following hospitals: Brantford’s St. Joseph’s Health Care System; the Northumberland Hills Hospital; the St. Mary’s Hospital in London; the Perley Hospital in Ottawa; the Ottawa Salvation Grace; the Pembroke Civic Hospital; the Peterborough St. Joe’s general hospital; the Toronto Central Hospital. I could go on. It was a litany of hospital closures under that government. They seem to suddenly forget how that happened.

In 1999, there was an amendment to the Public Health Act. However, the powers that were created under the Savings and Restructuring Act were maintained under section 6 of the Public Health Act for those hospitals that were affected by the restructuring commission. So, Mr. Tory, I would suggest that you may want to go back and look at section 6 of the Public Health Act, which stands today and which gives the minister the powers that I have listed under the Savings and Restructuring Act of 1995. It’s still in place. It’s still very clearly there.

Under section 28 of Bill 36, our legislation, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services, we note that “After receiving advice from the local health integration networks involved, the minister may,” and the previous speaker has outlined some of the powers that the minister may

enlist. However, it is after receiving the advice of the local health integration network. That advice is outlined, and the plans that are put in place in order to create transparency—a word that I know the official opposition is not familiar with—and accountability are set out in sections 14, 15 and 16 of the act.

I would invite the leader of the official opposition, if he'd like, to take a look at the legislation under section 14. We provide for the creation of a provincial strategic plan: "The minister shall develop a provincial strategic plan for the health system that includes a vision, priorities and strategic directions" for the plan. Under section 15: "Subject to subsection 16(1), each local health integration network shall"—that's each network—"within the time" decided by the minister "develop an integrated health service plan for the local health system and make copies of it available to the public at the network office."

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): Transparency.

Ms. Smith: There is transparency. They have available the plan.

Not only that, but section 16 of the act—again, I say to the leader of the official opposition, if he'd like to follow along—outlines the obligation for community engage-

ment, a concept, I know, very foreign to the official opposition but very familiar to our party and our government. "A local health integration network shall engage the community of diverse persons and entities involved with the local health system about that system on an ongoing basis, including about the integrated health service plan and while setting priorities."

So again, there is an entire system set out in the legislation to provide for accountability, for clarity, for transparency. I would just like to end by quoting the Minister of Health, who the other day very eloquently spoke about our new legislation:

"When we give more power to communities, when we ask the debate to be an open one, that is transparent, where hard decisions are made in the full public eye, we will have created more of a system and we will have fundamentally done what is most important of all; that is, to take this cherished gift, this thing called medicare, this best expression of Canadian values, and make it better because we will have returned it where it came from"—

The Acting Speaker: Have your seat, PA. Thank you.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, February 27, 2006.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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