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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 21 June 2006

Mercredi 21 juin 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 21 June 2006

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 21 juin 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2005-06.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): First, I would like to wish everyone a happy and safe first day of summer, but I also remind people during the summer to drive safely and operate safely on your holidays. With increased traffic and construction under way, there is a great need to keep alert and to stay safe. Of course, if you drink, the rule is, you don't drive.

While individuals drivers must take responsibility to keep Ontario's roads safe, there is also an obligation on the part of this government. I support MADD Canada's campaign for prompt action on reviewing and improving Ontario's impaired-driving laws.

On June 7, MADD Canada expressed its hope that the new Minister of Transportation, Donna Cansfield, would develop policies and legislation to reduce the number of persons killed as a result of drunk driving. Unfortunately, this spring, MADD Canada warned that up to 75% of Ontario's suspended drivers continue to drive on Ontario's roads. MADD warned that the number of legally impaired, fatally injured drivers rose between 2002 and 2003, the last year for which data is available.

MADD Canada is advocating provincial policies such as a zero blood alcohol restriction for all drivers under age 21, more rigorous enforcement of laws on all under-age drinking, and greater authority for police in enforcing the drunk-driving laws.

I urge this House to support this criticism and to support MADD Canada in their demonstrated and real leadership to protect the public interest. Also, to quote from their release, "We have not seen any real action by the Ontario government on the impaired driving files since 1997." We look to have more action. I wish everyone safe and happy motoring this summer.

O'DOWDA DONATION

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I am pleased to tell the House about a very generous donation. The O'Dowda family gave a gift of \$1 million to the cancer facility at London Health Sciences Centre. The donation will be used to develop the Gerald C. Baines Centre for Translational Cancer Research. The centre will bring clinicians and scientists together and increase their ability to do clinical trials to evaluate new therapies.

I was present at the event in which Rob O'Dowda presented the family's gift to the London Health Sciences Centre. The O'Dowda family was inspired to provide the donation by a \$1-million gift from another donor two years earlier. I hope that the generous donation of the O'Dowda family will inspire many more families and individuals to donate whatever they can to a worthy cause such as cancer research and treatment. It's through generous donations such as the large donation from the O'Dowda family, and also the many small donations given each year by thousands of Ontarians, that research into the causes and possible cure for cancer will be found. I want to thank the O'Dowda family for their generous gift that will help make a significant difference in the lives of those living with cancer.

CORPORATE TAX

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Ontario's high corporate tax rate is killing investment in Ontario. The C.D. Howe Institute reports that Ontario has the most burdensome business taxes in Canada. Needless to say, when it comes to business investment, Ontario is on the wrong track to improve its competitive position. In fact, Ontario's current corporate tax rate is the highest among 36 industrial countries, at 42.2%. A look at Ontario's place among its fellow provinces in key industries confirms this: Ontario's taxes are the highest in the manufacturing sector, the forestry sector, the communications sector and the aggregate sector. Ontario's taxes are second-highest in construction, transportation and storage and utilities.

The Liberal government's tax structure in Ontario is based against corporate growth and investment. The C.D. Howe Institute reports that all is not lost. The government can alleviate the tax burden on Ontario's businesses if they move more quickly to phase out capital tax, reform the provincial sales tax to avoid taxing business inputs and reduce the corporate tax rate. One does not have to look too far to see the effects of Dalton McGuinty's tax regime. Plant closures and layoffs stain

the landscape in Ontario. You'd be hard-pressed to find one member in this Legislature who hasn't had a layoff or a plant closure notice in his or her riding since the Liberals took power in 2003. Three years into its mandate, I have to wonder when exactly this government plans to put business investment in Ontario back on the right track.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I rise in the House to spread the good news that the future is bright for Markham residents and commuters because of the McGuinty government's plan to make commuting easier. The good news is that our government is adding 700 parking spaces at GO stations in my riding of Markham and in the nearby communities of Aurora and Bradford to make room for commuters. Slated for completion in December 2006, these parking lot expansions will allow Markham commuters to get out of their cars and on the GO train faster. Another 300 to 400 spaces will be added by spring 2007 on newly purchased property at Unionville station.

Additionally, we are investing \$3.4 billion over five years in our southern Ontario highways program to help move people and goods faster, create jobs and enrich a growing economy. For residents and commuters in Markham, our southern Ontario highways program will mean less time spent in the traffic and more time to spend with family and friends.

Quick, reliable and safe transportation is vital to the economic success and quality of life for families in Markham and across Ontario. Our transit initiatives are helping make these possible.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is investing in our highways and public transit because, in the end, we're investing in Ontario's greatest asset, our people.

1340

FÊTE DE LA SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Le 24 juin, c'est la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. C'est une fête universelle pour tous les francophones, mais ici en Ontario, c'est une fête qui symbolise notre grand patrimoine franco-ontarien.

Nous sommes plus de 550 000 francophones en Ontario, la plus nombreuse population francophone hors Québec au Canada. Nous avons même notre propre drapeau. En effet, le 21 juin 2001, mon projet de loi demandant la proclamation du drapeau franco-ontarien comme étant un emblème officiel de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario fut accepté. Ce fut un grand moment pour tous les Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens.

Partout en Ontario français en fin de semaine, les francophones se réjouiront lors de la fête de la Saint-Jean, en particulier la communauté d'Embrun, qui fêtera le dimanche 25 juin le 150^e anniversaire de la paroisse Saint-Jacques. Un grand défilé marquera l'occasion.

La Saint-Jean-Baptiste est une fête de fierté pour nous tous en Ontario car notre héritage francophone enrichit celui de toute la province.

Bonne Saint-Jean, monsieur le Président, et à vous tous, francophones et francophiles.

BEACHES INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I rise today, as I try to do at least once a year, to talk about the annual Beaches International Jazz Festival. This year is the 18th annual festival, and every year it just seems to get better and better. I ask people to come out and not only discover Toronto's best-kept secret, which is our beach and Queen Street, which, according to TVO, is the number one street in larger cities in all of Ontario, but also to come out and see some of Canada's best jazz performers. It is without a doubt the largest street party that spans over three days in all of Ontario.

From July 21 to 23, there is PartyGras at the Distillery District. From July 24 to 26 is the Toronto Dominion Canada Trust workshop and lecture on jazz. July 26 is the Ovation of Jazz, which takes place at the Balmy Beach canoe club down at the foot of Beech Avenue. It's \$75 for anyone who wants to attend, and tickets are available through Toronto East General Hospital. July 27 to 29 is the StreetFest. There are 40 bands this year, and they will be playing each one of those three nights from 7 to 11 o'clock. July 28 and 29, at Kew Gardens, they play from 12 to 6. The headliner this year on Saturday is Café Cubano, and on Sunday, Hilario Duran.

I give kudos to everyone involved, especially Lido Chilelli, his hundreds of volunteers, the musicians and, most of all, the neighbours who help make it all happen.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): The land dispute at Caledonia-Six Nations has reached 114 days. The barricades are still up at Dalton Creek Estates. Repeatedly, I've informed this Legislature about the chaos, the mayhem, the violence that has impacted people on all sides. This is a political dispute and a legal dispute, but let's not forget one group of people who have had no say in this: the children.

I'm reading e-mails written by children from area schools. One says, "Maybe if you see it through a kid's eyes, you'll understand more.... I have not been able to go to school." Another reads, "As soon as they hear something bad is going to happen, they freak and send me inside."

Premier McGuinty has repeatedly turned a blind eye and a deaf ear. I ask the Premier, what does he have to say to some of these young people? They made the trip to Toronto today. Some are in the visitors' gallery behind me. Toronto should be a place to visit and have fun for these children.

Children should be concerned with what they're going to do in their summer holidays. They should be talking

about swimming and family vacation. However, in Premier McGuinty's new Ontario, children are worried and scared. I'm sorry and sad to say that this could be the worst summer ever for the children of Caledonia.

HOSPICE CARE

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): We all have something in common in this room: We all came into this world, and we're all going to go out of it, and there's not a lot of comfort level with the latter. We try to avoid it, prevent it, delay it, deny it, but the fact of the matter is that we're all heading out of this world one way or another. Most of us have a vision of doing so at an advanced age after a fulfilling life, at home with our loved ones with minimal fuss or care, nothing too invasive, a time to let go of the physical, which has all been spent, and focus on the emotional and the spiritual.

That spirit is alive and well in Ontario, thanks to Ontario's end-of-life strategy taking root now: \$115 million for palliative home care and the creation of a network of 30 residential hospices across this province, home-like sanctuaries where people can go when home is no longer practical and hospital is not desirable, a place where the necessary supports and care are there and the family can be relieved to focus on the farewell.

In Grimsby, I attended the dedication ceremony for the west Niagara hospice. After many years of work, Dr. Denise Marshall is seeing her dream become a realization, thanks to all the donors, including the McNally family, who are opening their wallets to help build McNally House.

In Hamilton just last week, over 100 people gathered at the home of Iris Berryman, the retired teacher who donated her property for the new Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice. Dr. Bob and his wife, Mildred, both in their mid-90s, celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary putting a shovel in the ground for the realization of a dream.

Hospice care makes sense. It makes soul sense.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Success in our cities: I want to highlight the major accomplishments that have occurred in both my riding of Mississauga East and in Ontario as a whole, due to the key initiatives taken by the McGuinty government.

In terms of investing in our schools, we are providing \$4 billion for construction, repair and renewal, while close to \$100 million is going to schools in the Peel region.

In terms of health care, we have provided \$2.4 billion in new funding for hospitals since we have been elected, as well as focused on decreasing wait times and increasing access to key procedures.

In Mississauga, the government has invested \$43 million for our hospitals, and has also helped Mississaugans get the treatment they need faster.

As part of our record investments in transportation, Mississauga has been given \$65 million for designated bus lanes as well as funding for upgrades to the surrounding highways.

From the results of the last election, it is clear that the Tories were not responsive to the needs of Mississaugans. I have heard nothing but accolades by our Mayor McCallion and city councillors about our government. Obviously, our government has stayed consistent in its pledge to help the development and growth of our cities. I am proud to say that Mississauga has been able to benefit from the steadfast commitment of this government to Ontarians.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Ms. Horwath from the standing committee on estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60(a), the following estimates (2006-07) are reported back to the House as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration:

Office of the Assembly,
Office of the Auditor General,
Office of the Chief Election Officer, and
Ombudsman Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MPPs PENSION ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 132, An Act to include members of the Legislative Assembly in the public service pension plan and to make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à faire participer les députés à l'Assemblée législative au Régime de retraite des fonctionnaires et à apporter des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

1350

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On the heels of the Integrity Commissioner's report yesterday, I'm introducing a bill that would give members of the Legislature the right to join the public service pension plan under the same terms and conditions as any other public servant in Ontario.

MPPs cannot properly protect their families without access to a pension plan. Many former MPPs have found difficulty in re-establishing themselves after leaving the Legislature, having lost some of their skills while serving here.

This legislation also improves severance payments to bring them into line with employment practices in the private sector.

The Integrity Commissioner pointed out the problem yesterday in his report, when he said it is "in the broader public interest that all members receive reasonable compensation for their work in public life. Absent reasonable compensation, the integrity of the institution to which" members "all belong is compromised by the devaluation of the work they do."

This bill is very, very modest in its scope. In all likelihood it will be ruled out of order because it has some money implications. Only one person can address this issue in this Legislature, and that is the Premier of Ontario. I ask him not to follow the example of his predecessors and to uphold the integrity of this institution by being fair to its members and their families.

VISITORS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce Mr. and Mrs. Pong, who are the parents of our wonderful page Clarence, who comes from the great town of Milton, Ontario. Welcome to the Legislature.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR GENERAL

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning the appointment of the Auditor General.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley seeks unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning the appointment of the Auditor General. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Jim McCarter as Auditor General for the province of Ontario, as provided in section 4(1.1) of the Auditor General Act, RSO 1990, c. A35, to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act."

And, that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 21, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1355 to 1400.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 177.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Peters, Steve
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldeep	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brotten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Runciman, Robert W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Ruprecht, Tony
Chudleigh, Ted	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Tory, John
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John	Yakubuski, John
Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): On Tuesday, June 6, the member for Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Runciman, raised a point of order under standing order 23(g) relating to the sub judice rule. The sub judice rule refers to the practice that the House should not discuss matters that are pending or currently before a court of law for adjudication.

Standing order 23(g) states:

“In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:

“Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding

“(i) that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination, or

“(ii) that is before any quasi-judicial body constituted by the House or by or under the authority of an act of the Legislature,

“where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding.”

In his point of order, the member for Leeds–Grenville asserted that the Premier had offended the sub judice rule while answering a question on the topic of the ongoing land dispute in Caledonia. Specifically, the member stated that the Premier's comments had the potential to prejudice the Ipperwash inquiry currently being conducted by the Honourable Sidney Linden.

The member for Niagara Centre, Mr. Kormos, and the Attorney General, Mr. Bryant, also made contributions on this point of order.

Let me spend a bit of time talking about sub judice. Translated literally from the Latin, sub judice means “under judgment,” and while it is a parliamentary convention, in Ontario it is also a specific rule which entered our standing orders in 1970, and was modified to the current version in 1978. This convention exists as an acknowledgement that it is in the public interest, and in the interest of the administration of justice, broadly interpreted, that the Legislative Assembly will voluntarily refrain from debating or discussing matters before courts of law or largely similar judicial bodies.

The principle of the separation of powers in our system acts to ensure that the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government operate independently. The Legislature should never discuss matters before the courts when doing so could undermine the work of the court, the rights of any individual to due process in a neutral environment, or when unproven allegations may irrevocably damage personal reputations.

As the presiding official in this place, it falls upon the Speaker to exercise his or her discretion whether or not to impose restraint upon the assembly when, in a situation

of the type I just described, it appears to the Speaker that members may be venturing too far in their remarks.

The Speaker, however, has two other major considerations in mind when sub judice arises: first, the fundamental parliamentary privilege of freedom of speech and, second, the practical limitations on his ability to be fully aware of every matter before the courts. Let me address each of these important factors.

Freedom of speech is one of the most important and useful privileges enjoyed by members of the Legislative Assembly. The Bill of Rights of 1688 first declared this privilege, and Canadian Legislatures, even before Confederation, likewise claimed it. It was formally conveyed to the Parliament of Canada in the Constitution Act, 1867, and the provinces of Canada have since aggressively and successfully continued to claim this privilege. It is the basic building block of this Legislature.

The Speaker, therefore, has a solemn obligation to uphold the right of every member to speak freely in this place, and would only reluctantly interfere in a debate in certain circumstances. One of these is when matters being discussed fall under the sub judice rule. However, in the absence of a blatant and obvious transgression of the sub judice convention, the Speaker will instead err on the side of the right of members to debate and consider important public issues in the Legislature.

Marleau and Montpetit's House of Commons Procedure and Practice, at page 537, in a reference to the first report of the House of Commons special committee on the rights and immunities of members, explains this application of the sub judice convention as follows:

“... when there is doubt in the mind of the Chair, a presumption should exist in favour of allowing debate and against the application of the convention.”

On the second matter of knowledge of matters before the courts, as numerous of my predecessors in this chair have stated, members can surely appreciate the difficulty the Speaker has, as he cannot be fully aware of every matter before every judicial body. Moreover, standing order 23(g) directs the Speaker to interfere in debate only when he or she is satisfied that continued reference to the specific matter may tend to prejudice the relevant proceeding. This is extremely difficult for a Speaker to gauge.

The specific case at hand refers to comments made during question period, and here again the authorities in our practice are instructive.

The voluntary nature of the sub judice convention means that every member must be careful to refrain from making comments in debate, motions or questions.

In debate, this self-regulation is essential. In oral question period, Speakers largely rely upon the ministers to whom questions are addressed to decide if further discussion of the matter might prejudice a matter before a court, or other judicial or quasi-judicial body, or tribunal. And while ministers have every right to decline to answer a question which in their view rubs up against the sub judice convention, members in framing questions must also be cognizant of their responsibility in this regard.

Indeed, the very posing of a question may cross the sub judice line, but the conundrum for all is that, regardless of the subsequent actions of the Speaker or anyone else, the damage has already been done.

In the specific case at hand, I have reviewed the Hansard exchange from June 6 between the member for Leeds–Grenville and the Premier. Beyond subjective inferences which a reader might draw from them—which is well beyond the concern of the Speaker—I do not find any of the comments go so far as to concern me with regard to sub judice.

I will end by noting again that the sub judice convention relies for its effectiveness upon the goodwill of all members in voluntarily refraining from discussing matters before the courts or judicial bodies. I think it is worth reminding members that extreme caution should always be the order of the day whenever such matters arise as a topic of discussion in this chamber.

1410

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JOURNÉE NATIONALE DES AUTOCHTONES

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

L'hon. David Ramsay (ministre des Ressources naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones): C'est aujourd'hui la Journée nationale des autochtones, et je suis très heureux de saluer, en cette importante journée, les Premières nations, les Inuit et les Métis de l'Ontario.

Today is National Aboriginal Day, and it is a pleasure for me to rise in the House and extend my best wishes to all First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples living in Ontario on this important day.

Today is a special day for me, as it is the first time I am able to rise in the House on National Aboriginal Day as the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, and acknowledge the significant contribution that aboriginal peoples have made, and continue to make, to Ontario and to Canada.

It is important that all Ontarians recognize these contributions, particularly when we are hearing stories on a daily basis about the situation at Caledonia. Aboriginal peoples across our province have been dealing with difficult situations for centuries. The situation at Caledonia is only the most recent example.

Given these current events, it is important that we take time to reflect on the positive role that First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples play in this province.

National Aboriginal Day is a day for Ontarians to learn more about the rich culture and history of aboriginal peoples in Ontario. Aboriginal peoples have always been a diverse and vital presence in the culture and social fabric of our province. This important day provides an

opportunity for us to acknowledge with gratitude the unique contributions of First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples to Ontario and to Canada.

Cultural workshops and other activities in aboriginal communities help Ontarians gain a better understanding of aboriginal peoples and cultures in Ontario.

J'encourage les Ontariens à participer aux nombreuses activités culturelles organisées par les organisations des Premières nations et des Métis partout dans la province à l'occasion de la Journée nationale des autochtones. Dans ma propre circonscription de Timiskaming–Cochrane, par exemple, un barbecue est organisé à New Liskeard à l'occasion de cette journée spéciale.

I encourage Ontarians to take part in many cultural events hosted by First Nation and Metis organizations across Ontario to celebrate National Aboriginal Day. In my own riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane, for example, an Aboriginal Day barbecue is being held in New Liskeard.

I am very pleased to tell the House that I had the pleasure of celebrating National Aboriginal Day yesterday with the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable James K. Bartleman. It was an event to highlight the Lieutenant Governor's aboriginal summer literacy camps. In addition to the support for the literacy programs of our government, he recognizes the unique needs of aboriginal children and youth.

Last year, the McGuinty government launched its New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs. At the heart of our new approach is the recognition that we must create a better future for aboriginal children and youth. We are committed to ensuring improved opportunities and a better way of life for First Nation and Metis communities across Ontario.

Last November, I had the pleasure of joining the Premier and aboriginal leaders from Ontario to represent Ontario at the first ministers' meeting in Kelowna. This was an historic event, where Premiers from all the provinces and territories, the Prime Minister of Canada and First Nations, Metis and Inuit leaders worked together to find solutions for closing the socio-economic gap that exists between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities.

The McGuinty government continues to support the principles behind the Kelowna accord and will continue to push the federal government to meet its funding commitment.

In March this year, the McGuinty government, with 49 chiefs of treaties 5 and 9, launched a process to establish a Northern Table to help bring greater economic opportunity to aboriginal communities in the north. Establishing the Northern Table will fulfill one of Ontario's key commitments under the New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs.

The goal of the Northern Table is to ensure the active participation of First Nations in establishing a viable economic base in Ontario's far north. Once established, the Northern Table would enhance First Nations' participation in the benefits of resource development and boost

the long-term sustainability of the northern economy. It will build on our government's current initiatives, programs and services. It will be a true partnership that, over time, will include other First Nations across the north.

Later this month, I will be travelling to Big Trout Lake First Nation for the annual Chiefs of Ontario summer meeting. The meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss progress in a number of key initiatives of the new approach since its launch last year. It will also provide an opportunity for the McGuinty government to renew our commitment to strengthening relations with First Nations leaders.

The McGuinty government has shown that it is listening to the concerns of First Nations and Metis people, and we will work together on our shared priorities and goals. We will be working towards building trust and understanding. What binds us together is our common humanity. The McGuinty government is committed to working with First Nations and Metis leaders and the federal government to make a real difference and to achieve real results in improving the lives of aboriginal peoples.

Please join me in showing our appreciation for First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples on National Aboriginal Day. Thank you. Meegwetch.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE
DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE
FRENCH-LANGUAGE
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

L'hon. Christopher Bentley (ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités): Le gouvernement McGuinty a pris l'engagement de faire en sorte que toutes les personnes de l'Ontario aient la possibilité de poursuivre des études postsecondaires ou une formation professionnelle. Nous savons que nous réaliserons seulement notre potentiel en tant que province lorsque chaque Ontarienne et Ontarien pourra réaliser son propre potentiel.

C'est la raison pour laquelle nous faisons un investissement historique de 6,2 \$ milliards, le plus important investissement en 40 ans, dans le cadre du plan Vers des résultats supérieurs, afin d'améliorer l'accès à une éducation postsecondaire de qualité.

Last year, 16,700 French-speaking students were enrolled in post-secondary education in Ontario, more than 12,300 in our bilingual universities and close to 4,400 in two French-language colleges.

There are special challenges in providing high-quality programs in French. It can, for example, be more costly to both develop and deliver these programs.

Our government's Reaching Higher plan committed \$10.2 million in 2005-06, rising to \$55 million by 2009-10, to help post-secondary institutions deliver programs that will improve access to and success in post-secondary education for four groups of students: francophones, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and those

who would be the first in their family to attend college or university.

In January, our government established an advisory committee on French-language post-secondary education. This committee provides ongoing strategic advice to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on how to improve the participation in and success of francophone students in French-language post-secondary education and skills training.

I am pleased to tell the honourable members of this House that the McGuinty government has acted quickly on the initial advice we received from this committee by expanding support for French-language students to ensure they have the opportunity to study in their own language at post-secondary institutions. We've already made a \$3.5-million investment in 2005-06 to support greater access for francophone students by expanding programming at Ontario's French-language colleges and bilingual universities and increasing student supports to improve student success.

This morning I visited the University of Ottawa, where this funding is being used to develop honours programs in life sciences by offering new third- and fourth-year courses in French to complement existing first- and second-year courses. I was joined there this morning by the minister responsible for francophone affairs. The university is also developing an innovative immersion program for improving second-language proficiency that will help students who want to teach a second language improve their skills and be better qualified to enter the job market. La Cité collégiale is recruiting more full-time students and providing increased support to both faculty and students. They're also improving the quality and diversity of French-language programs and expanding links to universities and school boards.

Collège Boréal is enhancing support services for students, including counselling and mentoring, and technological support to improve access to programs and courses through distance education to the college's 25 video conferencing sites.

Francophone access funding will help Laurentian University and its affiliate the University of Sudbury to offer a greater variety of French-language courses and to develop new third- and fourth-year science courses in French, again to complement existing programming so that these degrees can be studied entirely in French.

Hearst College is increasing the number of French-language courses it offers, emphasizing teachable subjects to help increase the supply of francophone teachers. Glendon College at York University is using the investment to increase enrolment in French-language courses and programs and to offer better quality student services.

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There was a second initiative I announced today, and that relates to enhancing the quality of French-language programming at our bilingual universities. The McGuinty government is committing \$4.7 million in 2006-07 to enhance the quality of French-language programming in

Ontario's bilingual universities. This funding will go to help our bilingual universities hire new francophone faculty, provide more academic resources, and improve the francophone student experience by increasing opportunities for student-faculty engagement.

Through this initiative, the University of Ottawa will receive \$3 million in increased support this year, Laurentian University is receiving \$1 million, Glendon College at York will receive almost \$500,000, and Hearst College will receive \$98,000 to enhance French-language program quality. In total, this investment is \$8.2 million to expand access to and improve the quality of Ontario's French-language colleges and bilingual universities and their program offerings.

Our support for French-language post-secondary education will increase in the next four years. We know that enhancing French-language services will go a long way toward helping francophone students achieve their post-secondary goals. We are encouraging all Ontarians to pursue higher education and enhanced skills training so they are prepared for the jobs of the future. We know that a highly educated workforce is necessary to meet our goals for economic growth and prosperity in the future. We can only meet these goals if every Ontarian meets their full potential. These investments to support French-language education will help achieve that potential.

LE SOMMET AIR PUR DE 2006

SHARED AIR SUMMIT 2006

L'hon. Laurel C. Broten (ministre de l'Environnement): L'année dernière, le premier ministre de l'Ontario et moi-même avons coprésidé le premier Sommet air pur, et je sais bien qu'un bon nombre des députés ici présents ont participé à ce sommet. Aujourd'hui, j'ai le plaisir d'annoncer que le deuxième Sommet air pur aura lieu le 26 juin ici à Toronto.

Last year, the Premier and I co-hosted the first Shared Air Summit, and I know many of the honourable members of this House attended the summit. I'm pleased to announce that next Monday, June 26, the second Shared Air Summit will take place here in Toronto.

We've got an impressive lineup of speakers. A committed and passionate environmental leader who spent decades championing the cause of clean air, land and water, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry will be speaking at the summit via live satellite. Dr. Roberta Bondar, neurologist, astronaut, acclaimed photographer and dedicated environmentalist who inspires young people to protect the planet she so strikingly documented from space; Claude Béchar, Quebec's Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, who is leading the province's fight against climate change; and Olympic silver medalist and clean air champion Sara Renner will all be addressing the summit.

This summit was created by the Premier because our government is serious about protecting people's health and improving the air we all breathe. Our government is committed to making Ontario a North American leader in

clean air and climate change initiatives. The Shared Air Summit 2006 provides an excellent venue to forge effective partnerships and build on the momentum we established last year. Leading international experts will bring us up-to-date with the latest research on transboundary air pollution, environmental health and climate change. We'll learn from each other's successes and develop strategies to protect the air here at home, across our borders and around the world. This summit clearly demonstrates that Ontario is a hub for ideas, innovation and solutions.

Nous découvrirons nos réussites respectives et nous élaborerons des stratégies pour protéger l'air au niveau local, au-delà des frontières et dans le monde entier.

Ce sommet démontre clairement que l'Ontario est un centre où prime l'innovation et où l'on génère des idées et des solutions.

Smog, air pollution and climate change are the most critical environmental issues of our time. They need to be at the forefront of public discourse. The science is clear: Air pollution is inflicting serious damage in Ontario, and the effects of climate change are being felt around the world. Air pollution causes almost \$10 billion in damage to our province. More than \$6.5 billion of that is in health costs, and more than half of that comes from transboundary air pollution. The result is thousands of deaths, illnesses and hospitalizations. But these are not just numbers. Each of these statistics represents an all-too-often nameless, faceless person who has suffered the effects of smog and air pollution.

As the mother of two baby boys, I think of their future. We all want our children to grow up with quality of life that is, at the very least, as good as ours. I ask the same questions you do. Will my boys be able to breathe healthy air? Will they be able to enjoy the outdoors every day during the summer? Will they grow up in a world where climate change is no longer a global threat? The answers to these questions must be a resounding yes. We owe it to every Ontarian.

Our government is on the side of Ontario families who want to protect the health of their families, who will not rest until Ontario has the best-protected air in the world. This is why earlier this week we announced our investment of more than \$480,000 in the science of clean air and climate change. It's why we recently announced that we are moving forward on new or updated standards for 15 harmful air pollutants. It's why we've approved the next stage of Ottawa's plans to build a rapid transit system to help get cars off the road, improve air quality and reduce emissions that contribute to smog and climate change. And it's why our government is firmly committed to closing coal-fired energy plants and moving forward with clean, renewable energy.

I've been proud to take Ontario's record of accomplishment to Washington to work with our US partners to reduce transboundary pollution that threatens communities on both sides of the border.

Protecting air quality and fighting climate change are among the defining challenges of our time. In the words

of former US Vice-President Al Gore, we face “a generational mission.” The Shared Air Summit 2006 provides an important forum to talk about the mission—to raise awareness, build partnerships and trigger collective action. By working together, we will create a healthier, stronger future for Ontario and for our world.

I call on all members of the Legislature to join me on Monday, June 26, for the Shared Air Summit 2006.

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

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I’m very pleased to add my thoughts to those of other members of the House on this, the 10th anniversary of National Aboriginal Day.

Today, across this province and across our great country, First Nations, Inuit and Metis people celebrate their cultures, heritage and accomplishments. It is important to recognize the distinct nature of each of our founding cultures if we are to understand their unique and individual contribution to our history.

Recent events at Six Nations–Caledonia underline the need for greater appreciation, awareness and co-operation between and among our communities.

As politicians, we must lead by example, and it is imperative that we improve our own understanding of aboriginal communities by actively participating in celebrations. I myself have had an opportunity to attend First Nations and Metis celebrations, as have some of my colleagues. There are celebrations today taking place in communities across the province. For instance, in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, the Moon River Metis Council is holding an Aboriginal Day celebration at Muskoka Heritage Place in Huntsville. In the neighbouring riding of Simcoe North, MPP Garfield Dunlop is participating in the official opening ceremony of the new Beausoleil First Nation community, sports and recreation centre on Christian Island.

National Aboriginal Day is an opportunity for greater awareness of the contributions of the aboriginal community. Today’s celebration of aboriginal values—wisdom, truth, honesty, respect, bravery and humility—helps to underline the values our cultures share.

I hope all Ontarians take this opportunity to build bridges and strengthen ties between our communities.

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FRENCH-LANGUAGE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In response to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities’ announcement today, we were pleased with the announcement—to hear that the government is finally beginning to pay attention to the needs of the francophone community in Ontario. After years of fighting the initiative of the former Conservative government to support learning opportunities within this valued segment of our popu-

lation, the government is finally coming around to our point of view.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: Thank you, Speaker.

We were disappointed, however, to see that this was just another reannouncement, another photo op to divert attention from the fact that this government is really doing nothing. The minister is the first to admit that this money is not new, that it was in fact part of an announcement made last year. I think the people of Ontario are getting tired of this government’s tactic of announcing and reannouncing programs. If the general public doesn’t catch on, we know the stakeholders are, and they’re getting tired of it as well.

SHARED AIR SUMMIT 2006

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today to comment on the Minister of the Environment’s statement. It’s nice that you’re having this Shared Air Summit occurring next week. It’s always valuable to have the opportunity to talk with the parties about issues that affect us across the border. But your government continues to import dirty US power, and your new energy policy will mean we’ll have to continue to do that for the foreseeable future. But the present Liberal government has never shied away from making an unrealistic promise.

Surprisingly, to the people across, it was my colleague Elizabeth Witmer and our government that made the decision to close the Lakeview plant in Mississauga in 2001. In the future, please feel free to credit Mrs. Witmer and the Conservative government when you go around flaunting your 33% decrease in toxic emissions.

Unfortunately, your air pollution strategies have about as much credibility as your 2003 election platform. The truth is that while you were out there smiling for the Lakeview photo op, you were still importing power from dirty, coal-fired plants in the United States.

I quote Minister Broten from June 7, 2006: “Transboundary air pollution is responsible for more than half of our smog. It alone costs \$5.2 billion every year and causes more than 2,700 premature deaths.” But while you’re making a speech, your government is still contributing to transborder air pollution by purchasing power from the States.

This is the most convoluted, backward air pollution reduction strategy I have ever heard of. Surely you’re not going to flaunt this well-thought-out strategy internationally. We will be a laughingstock. Your efforts are true Liberal “someday” policies: Someday we will affect climate change; someday we will reduce air pollution—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): It’s very puzzling that a Minister of the Environment who has been busy undermining Ontario’s fundamental environ-

mental laws would want to speak about climate change today, one week after the McGuinty government broke their promise to close Ontario's coal-fired plants, the source of 50% of all the greenhouse gas emissions in the province.

As we've pointed out a number of times, the McGuinty government has no climate change plan. The David Suzuki Foundation emphasized this point last year in their report, *All Over the Map*, and the Suzuki report was issued before Dalton McGuinty acknowledged he was going to break his promise to close down coal.

Just last week, the Sierra Club of Canada issued their annual Rio Report Card, which grades federal and provincial governments on environmental issues, including climate change. And what was the McGuinty government's mark on the climate change report? "F" for failure. Only one other province got an "F", and that was Alberta, but the McGuinty government has the nerve to stand up and lecture others about climate change.

The Sierra Club states in their report from last week: "The original commitment to shut down coal-fired power by 2007 was a significant factor in the McGuinty government winning the 2003 provincial election. This embarrassing policy retreat has numerous negative aspects.... Ontario's annual death count from air pollution is unlikely to be reduced from the annual figure of 5,800 premature deaths as reported by the Ontario Medical Association."

Having shelved 50% of the emission reductions that the McGuinty government promised but failed to deliver leaves their Kyoto commitment up in smoke. In the process, the McGuinty Liberals have made Ontario the scourge of the country in terms of combating climate change. We know the Minister of the Environment is failing to protect the environment on many fronts. Unfortunately for Ontarians, action on climate change has now become another of the mounting McGuinty government failures.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to say just a few words in honour of National Aboriginal Day. Across Canada and across Ontario, aboriginal people are celebrating their contributions, cultures and struggles for self-determination, for vibrant languages and cultures and for healthy, thriving lands and communities.

Today, I especially want to honour the people from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug community, who have walked 2,000 kilometres here to Queen's Park to protest against the activities of the McGuinty government—a McGuinty government which continues to permit and encourage mining exploration on their traditional lands despite the fact that the people of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug have said to the McGuinty government that they do not want mining activity and mining exploration at this time.

I want to salute the walkers from KI for their courage and their determination, and I say to the McGuinty

government that it is time for you to keep your promises to First Nations.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I too want to take an opportunity to signal that this is an important day to all First Nations residents of the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, far too often they've been disappointed by this government, as they have been for many, many years, when it comes to living up to basic treaty rights and treating those communities with dignity. We have seen example after example where First Nations have been left behind to live in Third World conditions, where governments have decided to do nothing to advance their needs as a community. I say, on behalf of the communities I represent and that other members represent, that we need to take those issues seriously, we need to put our dollars where our mouth is and we need to make sure that we fund the needs of those communities.

We also say to this government, in the wake of what's going on in Caledonia, that they waited too long to deal with this particular issue, and as a result of that, this issue has gotten way out of hand. The government would have done better to listen to what people were saying in the local community before all of this blew up into what it is now, and maybe we would not be where we are.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE FRENCH-LANGUAGE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Sur la question du Collège Boréal, je dis au ministre que vous avez une chance aujourd'hui de faire quelque chose sur le bord de la programmation. On vous dit que c'est un pas positif, mais on vous rappelle que vous avez des responsabilités envers les fonds capitaux. On vous demande de finalement financer le Collège Boréal, qui peut faire—

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

VISITORS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to ask all members of the assembly to join me in welcoming two busloads of residents who have come to Queen's Park from Caledonia.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to ask all members to help me welcome the family of page Evan Dailey—Tim, Elizabeth and Evan's brother, Cameron—here in the visitors' gallery today.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask all members to welcome the people of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug who have walked 2,000 kilometres to be here: Mark Anderson, Wally Moskotaywamen, Dylan Morris, Fred Sainnawap, Rene Begg and Dustin Quequish.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Today, the people of Caledonia—and some are still here in the House with us this afternoon—decided to pay you a visit, the mountain coming to McGuinty, as it were. The people here tell us that they've come to ask for your help. For months on end, they have lived in fear in their own communities and even in their own homes. The lawlessness that has taken place on and off now for more than 110 days has left them in a very dire state, and they feel there is no one looking out for their safety and that of their families. They quite frankly feel abandoned.

A week after you set conditions, and then abandoned them in large measure, five of the seven people with outstanding arrest warrants remain at large, including one individual with attempt murder, forcible confinement and assaulting police officer charges levied against him, among other things. The land you're trying to buy continues to be occupied, with no end in sight. What do you have to say to these people who have come here to ask for your help?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I was very pleased to have the opportunity earlier today to meet with representatives of Caledonia, as were my Ministers Ramsay and Cordiano, who had the opportunity to meet with representatives last evening. They have agreed to meet on a weekly basis with representatives to ensure that we are completely in the loop, and I think just as important, that they're in the loop as well with respect to our activities.

Progress has been slow, but it is undeniable. We have brought barricades down. We have reached an agreement with the local developer to purchase the disputed land. We have recently invested \$1 million more in relief for local businesses, bringing the total to \$1.7 million. The community liaison table is again meeting today, as well as the main table. I am also pleased that a second arrest was made earlier today, and I understand that the police are continuing to pursue the necessary—

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

Mr. Tory: It really sums it all up, that just about a year after the letter you received warning you about this, more than 100 days after the occupation began and weeks after we started asking when ministers might sit down with these people and communicate with them on a regular basis, now—more than 100 days later—you're starting weekly meetings. Better late than never, but it sure would have been better if they had started a lot earlier than now.

Premier, I ask you this: How do you think the people of Caledonia feel when they read articles, like the one in

today's Toronto Star, about the lack of law and order in Caledonia and the powerless OPP officers who have apparently been ordered to stand down in many of the instances we've seen? We have a quote in the Star from an OPP officer, who, for reasons we would all understand, remained anonymous, but who told the Star, "There were physical assaults taking place in front of you and you can't do anything about it. The OPP is a joke in terms of Caledonia." What do you have to say to people about this and about what the police officers have clearly—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It may be that the leader of the official opposition is somehow privy to insider information with respect to what directives have been issued by the higher-ups in the OPP to the police, but that's not information that we have. He keeps making constant references to a state of lawlessness. If there is advice or information that he has regarding policing activities at Caledonia, then we would greatly appreciate it if he would share that advice, those recommendations he has for the police, here with this Legislature.

Mr. Tory: I have been very pleased to share with the Premier advice with respect to the role he could play in asking all sides, all corners of this community, to come in and be told by him that lawlessness will not be tolerated and that negotiations will not continue in the event we see this continued lawlessness in this community. I was simply quoting an OPP officer, who, for obvious reasons, remained anonymous. And he talked not to me; he talked to the Toronto Star, so you should take that up with them if you think they manufactured that quote.

Your whole approach on this, whether it's the weekly meetings we hear about today or anything else, has been to wait as long as you can, do as little as you can, show weak leadership and hope the whole thing goes away. Even your compensation package to business is out of touch. You have offered business owners a small amount—one of them claims to have lost, by himself, \$100,000 since this began—and yet you can come up with a sum in the millions you won't tell us about to buy the land.

When will the people of Caledonia, from all corners, expect to see you stand up and speak up for the rule of law applying to all people at all times—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health will come to order. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Apparently the leader of the official opposition has some particular advice or recommendations, which he is not prepared to share with us, for the police. I appreciate that my friend likes to quote unnamed sources, but here's somebody who is prepared to admit to who they are. He's president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, Karl Walsh. He is quoted recently in a Christina Blizzard column: "Walsh says he appreciated the government's hands-off approach to policing in Caledonia and says the opposition ... should stop playing politics with the standoff." That comes from

the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

I would ask that the leader of the official opposition kindly take into regard the advice of the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, who says that he is playing politics with the standoff.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: I have a new question for the Premier. I will tell him now that I will continue to stand up here, day after day, as long as we're here, and, when we're not here, I'll stand up elsewhere and put the questions to you—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition ask the question. He's the only person who has the floor.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: You would prefer that nobody asked you any questions about this whatsoever, including the one I'm going to ask you now about the cost of the land that you are buying in Caledonia.

Today, you've repeatedly refused to tell the taxpayers how much money you're going to pay for this land. Today, there seems to be some confusion as to whether the deal that you announced last Friday with such fanfare is a binding agreement with a price or something much less, which you exaggerated for political purposes. Is there, in fact, a binding agreement which has been concluded and executed, and if there is one, will you tell the taxpayers what the price is that was paid for the land? Stop hiding behind excuses and be straight with them about their own money.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There is, in fact, a binding agreement to purchase the land, but the leader of the official opposition has a hard time accepting good news and signs of real progress.

We've got the Argyle Street barricades down. We've got the Highway 6 barricades down. We have, in fact, reached an agreement with the local developer to purchase the disputed lands. We have invested close to \$2 million now in additional supports for the communities. We have put in place a community liaison table, which is meeting as we speak, and specifically, today, they're talking about developing guidelines for a relief program for residents in the houses that are directly affected by this situation. Last week, there was the arrest of one individual. Just today, there was an arrest of a second individual. The main table is also meeting today to find out how we can best address the longer-term issues.

The leader of the official opposition has difficulty accepting it, but there is some good news here.

Mr. Tory: What I have more trouble accepting is that there are five out of seven people who have arrest warrants sworn out for serious matters still at large. The land is still occupied. The barricades there are still up, and perhaps most important of all, the people who are here today, in many cases, because they told me and I'm sure they told you, they are afraid to be in their own

homes in the province of Ontario. They're worried about what's going to happen when the schools are out this week and their kids are on summer holidays. So, yes, there may be some good news, but there are a lot of things left to be done in this whole thing.

We're told that one of your pieces of good news about the land transfer—and I think we'll have to see about that when we actually have the details, if we ever get them—may take six months to conclude, so that could mean six more months of disruption on the part of people in this community. The chaos would continue. On top of that, of course, you refuse to tell us the price. Can you tell us: What is the timetable for this land to change hands? Can you guarantee people from all corners of this community that this land deal you're in the middle of doing, without a price apparently, will be concluded—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We will continue to discuss this with the vendors of the land.

Let me tell you a little bit more about what informs our thinking and inspires our efforts in this regard. This development company, the principals of which are two brothers from the community of Caledonia, is caught up in a situation which is entirely not of their making. We feel a responsibility to help them in this regard to ensure that they do not suffer financial losses, because if we were to do nothing, they would suffer very significant financial losses. So we feel this sense of responsibility. We are sitting down with these developers and making sure that they do not suffer financial hardship as a result of circumstances which are entirely beyond their control.

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Mr. Tory: The Premier told the House earlier that there is a binding agreement in place. As he would know—he's a lawyer—a binding agreement will have in it a purchase price and a closing date. You've repeatedly refused, and I ask you one more time, to tell us what the purchase price is and to abandon these flimsy excuses you're using not to tell us how much taxpayers' money is involved. Tell us, then, what the closing date is as well. And while you're at it, perhaps you could tell us what the total cost of this fiasco is going to be, because there are estimates now circulating to the effect that the total cost will exceed \$100 million, including the cost of the land, the cost of the policing, the cost of the compensation, and all the other costs. If that's not the right number, tell us what the right number is, tell us the price of the land, and tell us the closing date in the binding agreement you said you've signed.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Leader of the Opposition is, if nothing else, colourful and inventive. I have no idea whatsoever, and I would speculate that neither does he, with respect to this \$100-million figure he has just floated.

We will continue to work with the community. We will do everything we possibly can to resolve this in a manner that is peaceful. I think the leader of the official opposition has now made it perfectly clear that his preference would be that we had not entered into nego-

tiations with the developers, that we had allowed them to flounder and suffer serious financial hardship. That's the approach he would bring. We bring a different approach on this side of the House. We feel a sense of responsibility to sit down with the community, to sit down with the developers in particular, and to ensure they do not suffer financial hardship.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, you are a lawyer, your ministry employs a whack of lawyers, and at the cabinet table you are surrounded by lawyers, so surely you can answer this straightforward question: Under Ontario law, when are you supposed to notify the public about any changes to environmental regulations: (a) before your government passes the regulation into law, or (b) after the fact, as you have done with your secret regulation that exempts your \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme from a thorough, proper and effective provincial environmental assessment? Which is the correct answer?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I know the leader of the third party would prefer to tie up the OPA's IPSP in a never-ending process, which would see not a single new windmill built, no small hydro dams, no biomass facilities built for years and years to come, because that is the legacy that his government left.

Ontarians are telling us that it's time to get on with addressing the electricity needs of this province, and to do so in a manner that benefits the environment. Our record to date speaks volumes. We have already signed contracts for 1,300 megawatts from wind, landfill methane and biogas, another 660 megawatts from small hydro, and 4,375 megawatts from natural gas. I will continue to advocate for increased use of cleaner electricity such as solar, small hydro, natural gas and biomass, and we will tackle the challenges facing our province and deliver a clean—

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

Mr. Hampton: I'm shocked. Despite the fact she's a lawyer and she's surrounded by lawyers, the minister couldn't answer the question, or should I say, wouldn't answer the question. The correct answer is (a), you're supposed to notify the public. But you simply overlooked that part of Ontario law.

It's your responsibility to stand up for the environment. You failed to do that. It's your responsibility to make sure Ontario's environmental laws are respected and observed. You failed to do that. It's not your job to rubber-stamp \$40-billion nuclear mega schemes by putting out a secret regulation exempting them from an environmental assessment. But what's even more bizarre is that after you recognize your mistake, you try a silly public relations move, like asking people for their comments after you've already passed the regulation in secret.

I have a simple question for you, Minister: Why didn't you post your regulation to exempt the McGuinty government nuclear mega scheme before you passed it, as required by Ontario law?

Hon. Ms. Broten: It's the leader of the third party's job to criticize and it is my privileged position to represent the interests of Ontarians.

Let me tell you what we have done since we became government. Since we've come to office, OPG's emissions of CO₂ have been reduced by 15%, NO_x have been reduced by 34%, SO₂ has been reduced by 28%, and mercury has been reduced by 33%.

We are not stopping there. We've also taken actions to reduce the volume of vehicle traffic on our roads by investing \$838 million in public transit in the GTA alone, create a 1.8-million-acre greenbelt to limit urban growth, double the retail tax rebate, require 5% ethanol content in gasoline by 2007—and the list goes on. Our commitment stands: We will replace Ontario's health-threatening, coal-burning generating stations with cleaner sources of electricity, despite—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, here is your record: You secretly exempt Dalton McGuinty's \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme from a proper and thorough Ontario environmental assessment. When the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario says that you are breaking Ontario law and trying to duck accountability to the people of Ontario, you simply deny it. Then, when things get too hot, you, after the fact, say to people, "Give us your comments on the regulation even though we're not going to change the regulation."

Again, Minister, you're supposed to stand up for the environment. You're supposed to ensure that Ontario's environmental laws are observed; you're not supposed to be the one breaking them. When are you going to resign, Minister?

Hon. Ms. Broten: The leader of the third party wants to argue process. He is from a party of convenience. It's convenient to raise the concerns with respect to the EA process and the IPSP now, but it's the very same approach and decision we made with the coal replacement plan, and he did not have any concerns at that time.

We want what Ontarians want: a healthier environment for our kids to grow up in. We want to get rid of health-threatening coal burning in this province, and we are not going to let the third party's selfish politics threaten our kids' health. That's my commitment to the people of Ontario: to move us forward as part of a government that is going to build clean, green electricity as we move forward. That's what our commitment is to the people of this province.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: My question is to the Premier. In 1975, Ontario became a national leader by bringing in a visionary Environmental Assessment Act. In 1993, Ontario was an environmental leader again, with a visionary Environmental Bill of Rights. Both laws were designed to make sure that important government deci-

sions that can affect the environment and affect the economy and affect society aren't made in secret. They're designed to ensure that these decisions are debated in front of the people of Ontario.

Premier, if your \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme plan is so good, why are you afraid to subject it to the level of scrutiny that previous Ontario governments have maintained for decades: a thorough, proper and effective Ontario environmental assessment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The fact is that this particular plan, and the work of this particular plan, have been and will be subjected to an unprecedented level of opportunities for the public to comment and for a full and thorough environmental assessment to take place.

The leader of the NDP knows full well that every new generation facility in the province of Ontario will be subject to a full environmental assessment. He would have us believe otherwise, but the fact is, there's a law in place that says you've got to do that. When it comes to nuclear generation, of course, there will be a federal environmental assessment. But when it comes to anything else, whether it's a new gas-fired facility, wind turbines or expanded hydroelectric, that is subject to a provincial environmental assessment. So I don't know where he's coming from when he would have Ontarians believe that there will not be a full environmental assessment, because the fact is, there will be. It's the law in Ontario.

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Mr. Hampton: The only environmental assessment that will happen will be the very weak federal environmental assessment that your own Minister of Energy says is inadequate, that your own Minister of Energy says needs to be improved and brought to a higher level.

The other thing you've tried to say is that you're going to turn responsibility for reviewing your nuclear mega scheme over to the Ontario Power Authority. Who is there? Why, Jan Carr, your former fundraiser. Mr. Carr opposed the coal phase-out from day one, opposed any further investigation into cost overruns at the Pickering nuclear station and spent his time during the last election gathering money for you on Bay Street.

Premier, can you explain to the people of Ontario how your former fundraiser, Jan Carr, will do a better job of protecting the environment and the public interest than a thorough, proper and effective Ontario environmental assessment?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, every new generation project will become the subject of a full environmental assessment. The leader of the NDP doesn't want to come to grips with that, but I think I have some sense of why it is that he wants to have the plan itself become the subject of an environmental assessment. That plan would be modified and ideally improved every three years when it's subject to a review. If we were to put the plan itself and every review through a two-year environmental assessment, we would never, ever make progress in Ontario when it comes to putting in place new generation. I

think that lends us some real insight into why it is that the leader of the NDP is not prepared to accept that every single project must be subject to an environmental assessment; rather, he would like to see the plan and every subsequent revision, modification and improvement also subject to an independent environmental assessment, which will effectively grind all—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you're wrong. I just want to see the McGuinty government observe the environmental protection laws of Ontario. That's all I want to see. But what have we seen? We saw Dalton McGuinty promise to close coal plants—didn't happen; up in smoke. You promised to freeze hydro rates—increased those by 55%. Then you promised to protect the environment. Now you've been caught in an unprecedented violation of Ontario's most important environmental laws and you're telling Ontarians to trust your former fundraiser to protect the environment or trust a federal environmental assessment process that your own Minister of Energy says is weak and needs to be improved.

Premier, that's your record. Can you tell us why any sane, rational person in Ontario who has witnessed all of your broken promises would trust—

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP is nothing if not entertaining. But on this side of the House, we've got to take responsibility for making sure we have in place a reliable supply of clean, safe, affordable electricity. We put forward a plan that we believe to be balanced and responsible. We are calling upon the Ontario Power Authority now to move ahead with that plan. That will be subject to a number of reviews, including the fact that it has to be presented to the Ontario Energy Board, and every single new project—and I know the leader of the NDP understands this but he fails to come to grips with it—will become the subject of a full, complete, thorough environmental assessment. The leader of the NDP doesn't want any new generation in the province of Ontario. We differ in that regard and we look forward to moving ahead.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Premier: Today we talked to busloads of Caledonia residents and they have questions for you. Premier, you can have a backyard barbeque. These people are frightened to go into their backyards. The barricades are still up. Five warrants are still outstanding. This morning, on the front lawn, we heard that children are eating their lunches under their desks. Things are worse now than they were February 28, not better.

Their questions: Is it now government policy to negotiate from a position of weakness, no matter how many laws are broken? Secondly, why did you start talks when your very own conditions have not been met?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I think as the member knows, my colleague Joe Cordiano and I met with representatives of the alliance last night. We certainly heard first-hand much of what you've also been telling us in the House here. We're very sympathetic to the disruption that has been caused to people's lives in Caledonia.

I want to inform the member that as we speak, Jane Stewart is in negotiations today and concentrating on the issue of disentanglement of people there. We understand the activities on the occupied site are causing disruption to people's lives there. We don't want to see any of that intimidation that's going on and we are determined to put an end to it. That's what Jane's job is this afternoon.

Mr. Barrett: Thank you, Minister. I continue my questions to the Premier. It may go back to you. I don't see the Premier now.

Two conditions were set for negotiations. Neither have been met. The barricades are still up. We're not seeing any co-operation in handing over the five suspects.

On Monday, your Acting Premier said, "The barricades are down." Yesterday, your Premier cited "progress in getting barricades down," an admission by your government that your Acting Premier was wrong. There's a reason for those signs outside this morning that say, "McGuinty sold Caledonia for 30 pieces of silver. How much is your town worth?"

Premier, your constant flip-flopping has put you in a position of weakness and it's clear you don't really mean what you say. If you can hear me, if you do strike a deal, how will all sides know that you'll keep your word?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: The member likes to nitpick over wording and vocabulary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): No.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Well, he does. First of all, we had an occupation, and he knows that. The land was occupied. So we've always considered the Douglas Creek property as an occupation. Then, when things went not the way we wanted and we saw some barricades set up—the transportation corridors and the hydro corridor were barricaded—we talked about the barricades for all those transportation corridors and they are down. Now we're dealing with the occupation.

You've got to know—and you understand with the arrests today—we're making progress. Last week you were talking about seven defenders at large. Well, now it's five. So we're making progress. You should be helping us and supporting us to make this progress. The police are doing their work. They are doing their job. There's co-operation between the professional force on the reserve and the OPP, and the job is getting done. We're doing the job now.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Acting Premier: The Mikisew decision of the Supreme Court of Canada last November clearly requires

governments to consult and accommodate First Nations prior to allowing resource development activities on First Nation traditional lands that could impact First Nation treaty rights. Yet members of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug are being forced to come here to protest and are being sued for \$10 billion by a mineral exploration company, Platinex, because the McGuinty government failed to fulfill its duty to consult and accommodate the First Nation.

My question is this: When will the McGuinty government live up to its constitutional and legal responsibilities and accommodate First Nation rights to consultation and accommodation instead of forcing them into the courts?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): As a result of those Supreme Court decisions cited by the leader of the third party, the government of Ontario took an internal exercise with all ministries, working with all the lawyers in all the ministries to bring an interpretation forward as to what the responsibilities resulting from this court decision would be with each ministry in its responsibility to consult with First Nations on all the various aspects involving treaty and aboriginal rights.

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We have completed that exercise internally and are about to engage the First Nations leadership in Ontario to get some agreement as to what those protocols should be in all the areas that affect their lives. So what we want to do is get some agreement as to whatever the issue, whatever the project, so that we have a set of protocols established and agreed to ahead of time, as that's the way we need to consult with First Nations people.

Mr. Hampton: I want to get this straight: You have a constitutional and legal responsibility recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada. You now admit that you have not even produced yet the guidelines for consultation and accommodation, yet the McGuinty government gave a permit to the mining company to go into the traditional lands of this First Nation. It sounds to me, by definition, like the McGuinty government is already in breach of its constitutional and legal responsibilities. As a result of that, though, the First Nation has to pay the price: They're getting sued for \$10 billion.

My question is this: After you finish with your speeches and your platitudes, when are you going to do something about your own breach of your constitutional and legal responsibilities with respect to this and other First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I would say that we're not in breach at all, because we have the duty to consult on these protocols, and that's what we're about to do. We're not about to just impose them upon First Nations and say, "This is now how we're going to consult in the future"; we are going to engage in a dialogue to make sure we are on the right track and make sure they agree that these are the protocols we need to adopt.

That's what we're going to do: We're going to do that consultation with First Nations people instead of imposing it upon them, as this party would probably want to do.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This past August, my constituents in Sault Ste. Marie heard the great news that they would be getting a new hospital as part of the ReNew Ontario program. This is so important for the people of the north because they have historically had difficulty accessing health services.

Minister, when someone is diagnosed with cancer, getting access to treatment close to home so they can have support from their loved ones is crucial. How will the Sault Area Hospital's expansion affect those who are in need of cancer treatment?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Through the incredibly impressive and aggressive advocacy of the honourable member, it is true that we're moving forward with a long-awaited new hospital in Sault Ste. Marie, something that all members would know the community has been in need of for a long time.

One of those most novel elements of it, one that I think we should all celebrate, is that it addresses head-on the real challenges that people in the north particularly face—that is, with respect to travel distances. I'm very proud that the Sault Area Hospital will include a pilot radiation bunker. This will build on the skill set that's available in Sudbury, which is already supporting cancer work in Sault Ste. Marie, but will enhance those services so as to provide care for people in a more timely and efficient manner.

It's all about wait times in a certain sense, but more particularly it's all about providing care closer to home. The best health care is that which you find close to home. I'm proud that, as we move forward on the new Sault Area Hospital, that will include a pilot radiation bunker.

Mr. Oraziotti: I want to thank Minister Smitherman on behalf of our community for his tremendous support in helping us to address Sault Ste. Marie's health care needs.

Last month, Minister Caplan and Minister Gerretsen announced the renovation and expansion of the Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario at Kingston General Hospital. Terry Sullivan from Cancer Care Ontario said that more cancer centres have been built in the last two years than ever before in Ontario.

With the Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario slated to begin construction in 2008-09, can you elaborate on our progress to improve access to cancer treatments across Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: One of the impressive results we're producing is, in a certain sense, based on an unfortunate circumstance, and that is that too many in our communities are suffering from various forms of cancer.

But we have been able to announce and to move forward with a very, very substantial rebuilding program and an additional capacity program with respect to cancer. This is bringing new facilities, as I mentioned, to the Sault Area Hospital, to Niagara in the Niagara Health System in St. Catharines, to Newmarket at Southlake hospital, to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, and expanded capacity at the Ottawa Hospital and Kingston General.

I'm pleased to say that in addition to the capital, as part of our local share announcement that came recently, our government will be covering 100% of the costs for eligible new major radiation therapy equipment.

We're partners with these hospitals in our regional cancer system, which is designed to provide care in a timely way and close to home for individuals. We're making sure that the government is resourcing these initiatives as part of our very ambitious program, ReNew Ontario, that is bringing Ontario's hospitals up to date.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources. I recently reviewed an article by Andy Houser, former MNR director of fish and wildlife, which appeared in this month's Ontario Out of Doors magazine. Mr. Houser comments extensively on the MNR's soon-to-be-released fishing regulations and the 20 newly created fish management zones. He says, "After weeks of painstaking review and meetings with the OFAH and my former employer, MNR, I can tell you that I believe the proposed new fisheries regulations are fundamentally flawed. The new zones do not provide the necessary foundation for conserving Ontario's biodiversity related to fisheries and aquatic ecosystems." He suggests, "It is time for the minister to direct his staff to go back to the drawing board."

Minister, given the far-reaching implications of the new fishing regulations, will you take the time to get this right and delay implementation of these new regulations?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): This is why we're doing it, and we want to get it right. Basically we had a fishing regulation book that was maybe six inches thick and nobody could understand it. It was very difficult to enforce, and we didn't actually think it really protected the biodiversity of Ontario. What we wanted to do is to simplify that and to design some fish management units that were based on ecological reasons, considerations based on type of lake, water temperature, climatic zones, so it was really based on the sustainability of that area.

It's science-based, and I think that's what's important. This is the first time this has really been done in Ontario. We think it's what is required in the 21st century to sustain our fishery, and I'm very proud of the accomplishment that we're about to launch.

Mr. Miller: Minister, your former MNR director describes your ministry's attempt to reduce the number of divisions from 37 to 20 new fisheries management zones

as “a major error in understanding and judgment,” which will have the result of creating more exceptions instead of reducing the number from the now 2,900 exceptions. He says, “They combine areas of vastly different geology, physiography and lake morphology; vastly different fish communities and community structure; and fisheries with vastly different pressures and management objectives.” Mr. Houser points out that, “The amalgamation defies logic and sound fisheries management.”

Coupled with reductions in stocking programs, the new fishery regulations will have a significant negative impact on tourism and angling opportunities for people across the province. Why are you rushing to implement the regulations, which clearly do not reflect sound conservation management? Why don't you take the time, take an extra year and get it right?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: As the member knows, when we embark on such major changes like this, we obviously post all these recommendations for public comment. You've just given me some public comment there that can be considered, just like the other recommendations we have received from our Environmental Bill of Rights posting. So we are looking at all of that now and we are going to consider all this information, because we do want to get it right. I just want to assure the member that that's the ultimate goal here, to simplify the regs, but to get it right so that we have a sustainable fishery in Ontario.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. In Thunder Bay, Bombardier has a world-class factory for the manufacture of transit rail cars, subway cars and streetcars. The city of Toronto wants their new subway cars built in Thunder Bay because they're very satisfied with the quality products produced by the workers at the Thunder Bay plant. The mayor of Toronto and the TTC commissioners of Toronto have taken a lot of heat for this decision because critics claim it would be cheaper to build these subway cars in China.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party ask his question.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, the mayor of Toronto and the TTC commissioners have been standing up to sustain and maintain good manufacturing jobs at the plant in Thunder Bay. Can you tell me why the McGuinty government hasn't been standing up to sustain and maintain those jobs in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for the question. The Toronto Transit Commission, or the TTC, is the proponent involved with the transaction; it has nothing to do with the province. The province has absolutely no ob-

jection to municipalities engaging in whatever decisions they make. Obviously, we would like to see that it is in the best interests of the taxpayers' dollars. There is nothing that prohibits municipalities from coming to the agreements they have come to. It is not in the province's jurisdiction.

Mr. Hampton: So the mayor of Toronto is fighting to sustain jobs in Thunder Bay, the TTC commissioner is fighting to sustain good-quality manufacturing jobs in Thunder Bay, but the McGuinty government doesn't care if these subway cars are made in China, the McGuinty government doesn't care if hundreds more people at the Bombardier plant get laid off.

Provincial government money is going into the purchase of these subway cars. Provincial government money went into the purchase of the rail cars for the Ottawa transit system. Some of those Thunder Bay workers would have paid taxes. Minister, do you really believe you don't have any responsibility to try to maintain and sustain good rail transit manufacturing jobs in Ontario at the Thunder Bay plant?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I say to the member that the Premier, in fact, wrote to the mayor last year and indicated that he had absolutely no objection to the decision that city council took. It is a responsibility between the two municipalities in terms of the agreement they have. It has nothing to do with the province. All we would ask is that any decision be made in the best interests of the taxpayer and that there is value for money.

PROTECTION FOR FARM WORKERS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Labour. I understand that at the end of the month—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need to be able to hear the member for Chatham–Kent Essex.

Mr. Hoy: Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, I understand that at the end of the month your ministry will bring about a very significant change that will impact farming in Ontario. This change will affect all paid farm workers, including migrant farm workers.

We all appreciate the important role the agricultural sector plays in the economy of our province. However, it is widely recognized that working on a farm can be dangerous. While fatality and injury rates in the agriculture sector have come down in recent years, the lost-time-injury rate remains high by comparison to other high-risk sectors.

Minister, can you now tell us what you are doing to protect the health and safety of our farm workers?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member, because he represents one of the most diverse agricultural ridings in this province.

June 30 of this year will be an historic day in this province, because no government has ever moved forward in bringing agricultural operations under the Occu-

pational Health and Safety Act. That's something we should all be extremely proud of because we recognize that agricultural work can be extremely dangerous. It's high-risk, and we need to ensure that farmers and employees of farms recognize the importance of working in a safe environment.

We know that this act is going to help reduce injuries to farmers and farm families. We are very proud of the fact that this was developed in consultation with the agricultural community, and I want to thank the community for coming forward to ensure that this important initiative took place.

I think it's important—my colleague on the other side raised this issue—that this will apply to migrant workers as well. Over 16,000 workers come to Ontario every year to assist in agricultural operations. They will now have the right to know about workplace hazards, the right to participate in workplace health and safety decisions and, most importantly, all farm workers who are paid will have the right to refuse—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Hoy: This is an important new regulation. I know that our government is committed to enhancing the health and safety of all Ontario workers, and this initiative proves that commitment. I also know that this initiative will help the Ministry of Labour achieve its goal of reducing workplace injuries by 20% by the year 2008.

Minister, could you also tell us how you are going to let those who work on farms, and those who own and run farms, know what the new regulations mean and how they will be enforced?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I think this clearly demonstrates how, as a government, we're moving forward in getting out of silo mentalities. We're working very closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on this initiative. OMAFRA is playing a key role in helping to get out there and play an education role. As well, the Ministry of Labour will be responsible for enforcement. I'm proud to say that we have 14 inspectors who have been specifically trained in some of the challenges that exist within agricultural operations, including the very important area of biosecurity.

We've moved forward on a number of fronts, and this is going to be an ongoing process. We recognize the unique nature of agriculture, but at the same time we recognize that it is incumbent on us as a government to work with the agricultural community to make sure that we look after our farm workers. I reiterate that, come June 30, all paid farm workers in Ontario will have the same type of protection as is available to other workers in this province.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I was pleased yesterday when you stood in the Legislature and expressed your concern that foreign countries have created an uneven playing field for

farmers in Ontario. But the farming community and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have been calling on you for months to put a freeze on the BSE CAIS clawbacks, just as the federal government has done in provinces where they administer the stabilization program. The inaction of your government is most definitely creating the uneven playing field for the farming community in Ontario.

My question is, when will you finally address the CAIS clawbacks with Ontario farmers and give them the even playing field with farmers across Canada that they deserve?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm happy to have the opportunity to clarify for the honourable member exactly what the clawback is about. When BSE occurred, money was advanced to certain farmers, and when the calculation was done it was realized that there was an overpayment. So farmers came to our government and said, "Rather than do what other provinces that don't administer CAIS have done"—they have employed collection agencies to go after their farmers for the overpayment. Our farmers have said, "Please don't do that. When there is a payment due, simply deduct the amount owing from our payment that's going out." That is the agreement we have reached with our farmers.

When you talk about a level playing field and treating farmers in Ontario fairly, we have sat down and talked with them and that is what they have asked us to consider. We think that is a great advantage—

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

Ms. Scott: It's the OFA that has requested this. The federal government has put a moratorium on this clawback because right now farmers are in need; they can't pay the bills. So the OFA and farmers have asked, in this time of need, that that clawback be delayed, as the federal government has done.

Minister, will you commit today to put a hold on that clawback, because right now the farmers need the money? The federal government is part of that program, and they have done that in the provinces where they administer the stabilization program.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I have had the opportunity to speak with the president of the OFA and to remind him that the arrangement we have in place in Ontario is a result of requests from the farming community. This is what they wanted. They did not want collection agencies going after them.

In addition to that, the federal government has said they're going to suspend the requirement to pay interest until December of this year, while the province of Ontario has not charged, does not now intend to nor will it charge interest on those overpayments. So we believe, as the farmers in Ontario believe, that they have negotiated a reasonable agreement. If the honourable member wants to call my office and ask for a briefing on this, we would be very happy to provide it. We would have provided it to you before today so that you would have

had this information. When it comes to a level playing field, we believe the way we are working with farmers in Ontario is—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Minister of the Environment: Minister, you know about the growing and unregulated sludge dumped on agricultural land on Church Street in Fenwick. Your ministry hasn't tested the sludge, your ministry hasn't performed hydrological monitoring, both of which were recommended by your expert panel that reported to you 18 months ago. Mayor Leavens of Pelham and folks down there want to meet with you. They're concerned about their environment. When are you going to meet with Pelham's mayor and concerned residents?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I appreciate my friend opposite's advocacy on behalf of his community. Let me share with this Legislature a little bit about the good work the Ministry of the Environment is doing as they continue to work with the folks in this community. The ministry staff have inspected the site 12 times since the beginning of May 2006, including once in the late evening and another time in the early morning, because we hear different information with respect to issues at different times of day. The inspection on June 6 confirmed that the owner took steps to ensure surface water from the site was not migrating off the site. The ministry staff confirmed odour off-site on June 5 and instructed the owner on June 6 to undertake measures to address the matter. The ministry staff are continuing to and will continue to respond to the public concerns and monitor the site regularly.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, a drive-by does not constitute an inspection. The sludge mountain is growing on a daily basis. Your expert panel identified this as high-risk material that should be subject at least to a certificate of approval. You're sitting on your hands while the folks down in Pelham and Fenwick are scared to all get-out about their environment, their health, their water and your lack of action. Time is of the essence. The question, Minister: Please, when will you meet with Mayor Leavens and concerned citizens? When will you meet with them?

Hon. Ms. Broten: As I said to my friend, ministry officials are active, and actively meeting with that community to address this very serious issue. At the same time, the ministry is reviewing and examining the expert panel very closely to determine how best to implement the recommendations from that expert panel. We know this regulation has been in place for a lengthy period of time and it is important that we review the science behind it, that we work hard, and in light of the panel's recommendations, that we bring forward comments and concerns from the community. We care very much about the community in Pelham, and folks in my office are working very closely with that community. We look forward

to tackling this challenge together with the community of Pelham.

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday the member for Burlington made claims in this legislature that Nipissing University is renegeing on offers to students accepted to the teaching program. As the member of provincial Parliament representing the riding of Nipissing, I'm very proud of Nipissing University and the quality education it provides to students from across the province and across Canada. Its faculty of education is particularly renowned and very popular. The graduates of this program are sought after by boards of education across the province, and in fact across the country.

The member for Burlington painted a very negative picture of Nipissing University. This is a university that was recently acknowledged by Maclean's magazine in their university student edition as the number one university in student satisfaction in overall quality of education, and fully 85% of graduates surveyed responded that they would recommend Nipissing University to their friends or family. Minister, can you provide some detail around the issue of acceptances to Nipissing University's faculty of education program?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I think the member from Nipissing is right to be proud of Nipissing University. They provide an excellent education.

I think what the member from Burlington appeared to suggest yesterday was unfortunate. What happens in an application process is simply this: Universities send out a lot of applications and they know they won't get back as many confirmed acceptances. What happened in this particular year is precisely because of Nipissing's reputation. More students accepted a place in Nipissing's education program than have in the past, so they had an excess. Nipissing has confirmed with us that they will be providing a spot in their education program to every single student who wishes to take it. They reminded the students that they also have an education program in Brantford—

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

M^{me} Smith: Comme vous le savez, l'éducation est très importante pour notre gouvernement.

Teaching is an important profession that's very well respected. I of course am very proud that so many students want to pursue this rewarding career at Nipissing University.

Yesterday in the House, you referred to the fact that our government is continuing to fund an additional 1,000 spaces for students wishing to become teachers in our province. Can you tell us more about this funding and how it will help our government achieve its commitment to improving education throughout the province?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'd be happy to. Several years ago, it was identified that we would need extra teachers to implement programs such as the program of the McGuinty government and the Minister of Education to reduce class sizes in the lower grades. We have been funding an extra 1,000 teachers for each of the last three years, and this will continue this September. Nipissing is one of the beneficiaries of that extra funding. That is a demonstration of our commitment to ensure that we have enough teachers.

I want to say a few more things about Nipissing University. Nipissing also has a teacher education program at Brantford. They've had that for years; in fact, since 2002. What they have offered to students who live closer to Brantford is that they can get their teacher education closer to home, saving them money, with just as good an education. It's a win for students and a win for the university. It's a good-news story all around.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. After doing nothing with regard to installing emission controls on our coal-fired power plants for three years, we now hear from the Premier that it will take until 2008 for the OEB to approve your integrated power supply plan. Minister, have you ordered Ontario Power Generation to immediately begin to install emission control systems, or will you turn your back on the environment just as you turned your back on the supply situation in this province for three years?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The orders were very clear. We've asked the power authority, first of all, to give us recommendations on an orderly removal of coal. We continue to not believe in clean coal. We believe that coal-fired generation should be replaced in as predictable a time as possible. So that order is very clear and very direct.

I'd also point out that I don't believe the Premier said that the report would come back in 2008; it's a little difficult to predict that. What I have said is that we believe it will come back possibly in late 2007, but again, they haven't had a particularly good record in getting the facts accurately or properly.

I would suggest that we all ought to be committed to cleaning up the environment. I would suggest that it's highly appropriate. The orders we directed the OPA to—

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

Mr. Yakabuski: In anticipation of your diatribe in your supplementary, I'm going to get ahead of you and let you know what you haven't done about emissions in this province.

You're going to talk about Lakeview, which was closed by Elizabeth Witmer, by order: "On April 30, 2005, it must stop burning coal." Elizabeth Witmer ordered that, not you. You had to follow the law or you would have had to change the law.

You're going to talk about emission reductions, which you have done nothing about in this province. All the emission reductions in this province have been as a result of the closure of Lakeview, or OPG doing their due diligence and seeking the best efficiencies to operate those power plants.

1540

Minister, for three years you did nothing to deal with the smog-contributing components of coal emissions in this province. Are you telling the people that that is exactly what you'll be doing in the future?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: That's an interesting little story. The one thing the Tories forgot when they ordered the closure of Lakeview was to do the transmission work that had to be done to accommodate it. So it was phony, absolutely phony.

Here's what the Tories did on coal-fired generation: nitrous oxide, from 1995 to 2003, a 25% increase. What happened under the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government with nitrous oxide? Nitrous oxide was down. CO₂: a 56% increase under the Tories, and a 15% decrease under McGuinty.

In short, everything that should have been up under the Tories was down; everything that should have been down was up.

Everything with the Liberals that should be up is up, and everything that should be down is down—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"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 often think of the community nursing home in Millbrook and my mother-in-law, Madge Hall. I'm pleased to present this to Daniel.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

"Whereas the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) predicted that by March 31, 2005, 53 children's aid societies throughout the province of Ontario will have served approximately 31,000 children and their families who are not protected under the jurisdiction of Ontario's Ombudsman; and

"Whereas clients of children's aid societies often feel intimidated from completing complaints procedures out of fear of being labelled by child protection professionals as 'uncooperative' or 'mentally unstable,' putting access to their families at risk; and

"Whereas a report titled Voices from Within: Youth Speak Out, written by the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy, states that 'complaint processes in place through legislated requirements appear to have a built-in bias in favour of the caregiver' and where the report goes on to state that 'often, each step up the complaints ladder seems to simply legitimize the decision made by the person previously reviewing the complaint. There is a lack of independence and impartiality in reviewing complaints. Using the advocate to facilitate a more unbiased review is often discouraged by staff'; and

"Whereas, on August 27, 1992, the standing committee on the Ombudsman heard from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies that, in their opinion, the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman should not include their own member children's aid societies; and

"Whereas on November 4, 1992, the standing committee on the Ombudsman heard from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), which at the time had a membership of 105,000, which supported the inclusion of children's aid societies within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to help expose compromising gaps within child welfare services; and

"Whereas in 1988 and 1992, when reviews of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction over children's aid societies were previously conducted, no non-professional members of the public presented their opinion on this issue compared to today, where the general public have much greater access to notices of committee hearings through the increased use of Internet and e-mail, further enabling them to participate in such hearings;

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

"That the government of Ontario enact legislation giving the Ontario Ombudsman's office jurisdiction over all of Ontario's children's aid societies who are licensed under the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services to provide child protection services in order to ensure that the most vulnerable citizens of Ontario are better protected through an external, non-biased complaint review process."

I send it to the table via Hartford, the page.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I have a petition on behalf of a number of my constituents in Willowdale. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are concerned with the lack of workplace safety and protection for workers in Ontario,

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

"To review and amend the specifications of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to make it mandatory for all employers in Ontario to participate in and contribute to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board."

I support this petition, I affix my signature and I deliver it to page Evan.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I want to thank Milva Biffis and Gaynor MacLeary for sending me this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

"Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

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

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

I went to St. Paul's from kindergarten to grade 8, and my mother taught at this school for 33 years. I obviously agree with the petition.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today in support of the Honourable Minister Mike Colle in his role as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

“In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

“Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

“Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

“Whereas through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

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

“That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature.”

I support this petition and will affix my name to it.

RECYCLING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by a great number of good folks in the province of Ontario.

“Whereas waste from Ontario public schools that could otherwise be recyclable is contributing to increased landfill sites; and

“Whereas diverting waste is critical to sustaining a healthy environment now and in the future; and

“Whereas there is a need to encourage recycling initiatives in all schools; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by the geography club from Georgetown District High School under Making the Grade will require all Ontario school boards to have two recycling bins in each classroom, one for paper and one for drinking containers. As well, cafeterias must have adequate recycling containers outlining items acceptable to be recycled;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the private member’s bill that will amend the Ontario school boards education act to divert waste from Ontario high school classrooms and cafeterias.”

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

1550

ENERGY SUPPLY

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was contributed by Sonny Sansone of Scarborough, certainly one of the most prolific of petition contributors, for which we thank him. It’s also mercifully brief. It reads as follows:

“Whereas in the past, the McGuinty government has committed itself to the protection of the environment and to creating a culture of conservation;

“Whereas energy prices continue to rise on the international market making it difficult and costly for Ontario’s citizens to continue their daily lives and work;

“Whereas energy prices will continue to rise as non-renewable sources of energy become less abundant;

“We, the undersigned, therefore encourage the” Ontario “government to continue to invest in energy sources for the future that will be renewable, cleaner for a healthier environment, and less costly for Ontario’s citizens.”

Who could disagree with that? I’ll ask page Tyler to carry it for me.

RECYCLING

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): I’m pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas waste from Ontario public schools that could otherwise be recycled is contributing to increased landfill sites; and

“Whereas diverting waste is critical to sustaining a healthy environment now and in the future; and

“Whereas there is a need to encourage recycling initiatives in all schools; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by the geography club from Georgetown District High School under Making the Grade will require all Ontario school boards to have two recycling bins in each classroom, one for paper and one for drinking containers. As well, cafeterias must have adequate recycling containers outlining items acceptable to be recycled”—sounds like a lot of bureaucracy—

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the private member’s bill that will amend the Ontario school boards education act to divert waste from Ontario high school classrooms and cafeterias.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition and present it to the Legislative Assembly, and to Clarence, one of the pages here.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition speaks to a very important issue: identity theft. It reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services:

“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,” that is, “(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 agree 100% with this petition, I am delighted to sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

These petitions have been brought to me by many family councils and long-term-care residents in the riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, and I thank them for that.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have one more petition today. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

“Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians’ access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government’s efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams.”

I support this petition, and I am delighted to sign it. I’m going to give it to Evan to present to you.

RECYCLING

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It’s a pleasure to be able to present as many petitions as I have today, and it’s fortunate that I have them to present. This one reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas waste from Ontario public schools that could otherwise be recyclable is contributing to increased landfill sites; and

“Whereas diverting waste is critical to sustaining a healthy environment now and in the future; and

“Whereas there is a need to encourage recycling initiatives in all schools; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by the geography club from Georgetown District High School under Making the Grade will require all Ontario school boards to have two recycling bins in each classroom, one for paper and one for drinking containers. As well, cafeterias must have adequate recycling containers outlining items acceptable to be recycled;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the private member’s bill that will amend the Ontario school boards education act to divert waste from Ontario high school classrooms and cafeterias.”

I’m pleased to sign this and present it to Madeleine, one of the pages who will be leaving here tomorrow and will return to her school in the riding of Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (LEARNING TO AGE 18), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ÉDUCATION (APPRENTISSAGE JUSQU'À L'ÂGE DE 18 ANS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 13, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 52, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act / *Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation concernant l'apprentissage des élèves jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans et l'apprentissage équivalent et apportant des modifications complémentaires au Code de la route.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I understand the last debater was finished on the last occasion. So, new debate, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 52. Just for those listening, this bill is in I believe third reading, and this will be 10 minutes. We're getting close to the end of this session.

Bill 52 is a bill that I feel in its general sense has good intentions, but it's an administrative thing. Some of the education experts and professionals I've spoken to in my riding believe that there may be some implementation problems, and I will attribute those names. But for the viewer today, Bill 52 was introduced by then-Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy on December 13, 2005. We're getting close to the end of this session, and I think it indicates that the House leaders as well as the McGuinty government just aren't sure what to do with this bill.

1600

That leads me to bring forward a few ideas or concerns that need to be addressed. For the viewer, it's An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. That's quite a unique combination—the Highway Traffic Act as part of an amendment to accommodate education reform—but that says a lot about this bill and its approach, trying to force children to stay in school. That means first admitting that the current traditional school system doesn't meet the needs—some would use the word “failed”—of some students in the public education system. That's a very strong and important admission.

I had the privilege recently to speak to the new incoming, now installed, president of Durham College, part of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, a great leader. In fact, she was very involved in the Rae

report on post-secondary reform. She's now the new president of Durham College. In speaking to her, they're quite willing and ready to play a role in providing this badly needed service of a formal education process for staying in school to 18. The problem, as I understand it, is that the money flows with the student, and if it's an elementary or secondary student we're talking about, the money flows through the school board. As such, the money would have to be transferred, as allocated—the per pupil grant and other grants that go with that student—to the college or university. The grants for the secondary student are lower than the grants to a post-secondary student, that is, a student in the college or university system, the provincial grant that's following them. So they need to iron out some of those transitions to make the appropriate learning spaces.

I look at some of the successes in our colleges and other places—alternative learning—for students who may not be enthusiastic about the traditional secondary school learning environment and who need the stimulus of alternative choices.

It comes to mind that if I look at the skills training centre, part of Durham College at Whitby, the program I have witnessed to be very successful there is what is referred to as the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, OYAP. I was there at the first graduating class, and then-Minister of Education John Snobelen, who is himself an interesting fellow. In that graduation of the Ontario youth apprenticeship program were high school students who were actually getting credits attending a college-type environment. I think that's a good illustration of what can happen if you allow imagination and innovation to prevail, providing these opportunities for students.

But it fails to address some of the issues as well, and these need to be put on the record. I think of the bureaucracy that under a Liberal government could be created for the attendance monitors and the bureaucrats that might be highly paid people monitoring this keeping of the kids in schools. I wonder how the Toronto board of education would deal with this. It would probably hire another superintendent at \$130,000 or \$150,000 a year to look after several people who would be doing this program, taking more money out of the students' pockets, so to speak.

It is going to burden employers who may find that they have inadvertently broken the rules by giving a part-time job to a young person. How sad; bureaucracy run amok. The learning-to-age-18 law doesn't recognize that there are many exceptional reasons why young people are not in school even though they are under 18.

For example, they may need to be at the family farm or the family business at certain times. I think these are personal decisions. We have to remember that, to be fair, 18-year-olds are able to make other decisions sometimes, their families are working with them on careers and career choices—time-outs, if you will—if things aren't going that well at home or in other situations. They may be facing illness; they may have an injury from an accident or other emotional situations that could be affecting

their ability to attend school. We can't micromanage people's lives.

As I said initially, I would not find fault with the intent, being the parent of five children, all of whom are certainly over 18; I dare not say how old because it will disclose how old I am, which might date me.

They may have completed their first steps of home-schooling, independent study, using mentorship activities to write a correspondence type of program. At the same time, they may need to have access to a car and, not being in school, a licence to drive to get to some of these other alternatives, certainly in my riding of Durham and in other parts of Ontario.

It seems to me that this was written by some kind of bureaucrat of a nanny state who lives in an urban area. Those who write this stuff must all live in Toronto. They have no idea what's happening in northern and rural Ontario, and that disappoints me. They think that one size fits all. As I said, it's well intended, but the administrative part of it leaves me somewhat wondering. The bill does not recognize the fact that travelling by car is necessary in rural and northern communities, and, as I have said, the one-size-fits-all mentality is rampant throughout the bill. There will be an attendance and enforcement bureaucracy, as I have said, and we're not sure of the cost of that.

I would like to pay tribute to the hard work of the boards in my riding, especially at this time as they're doing their final report cards as well as winding up the school year. At the top of that list, of course, would be my wife, Peggy. My wife, Peggy, and I were at her retirement dinner, in fact, this past Friday. The Ontario English Catholic separate school trustees' association, or the separate school—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): OEFTA.

Mr. O'Toole: OEFTA, yes. They had a reception, and it was very much enjoyed by some of her peers and friends. It was a very, very nice event technically. We were there, our son Andrew was there, and friends of hers from school were there.

I'd also like to pay tribute to the work done by the trustees in my area: Nancy Coffin and Cathy Abraham, trustees with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board; and George Ashe and Granville Anderson, trustees with the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board. As some may recall, George Ashe himself was a former cabinet minister who served in this very Legislature, representing the riding of Durham West from 1977 to 1987. I'd also like to thank Joe Corey and Frederick Jones of the city of Oshawa and Kathy LeFort from the townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge, who serve on the Catholic district school board of Durham; Steve Martin, who's the trustee from the Scugog district school board; and, as I said, many of the teachers that are retiring this year and moving on to careers in volunteerism, for instance, and other alternatives.

At the end of the day, this Bill 52 is about students. To some extent, it fails to recognize that and tries to force

this one-size-fits-all on some students. I'd be happy to look at some of the innovative approaches of independent learning, career learning, skills learning. That's the future. There's more to be done on this bill, and that's why I feel that Bill 52, in its currently drafted format, fails to make the grade.

This government is going to have to force this bill through, as far as I'm concerned, because it just doesn't give the boards and the post-secondary facilities the resources they need—and the private sector could provide some of the skills training. That private sector could be the unions, which have training facilities that are able to provide skilled trades, whether it's electricians, plumbers, pipefitters or workers in the energy sector, which is one of the shortage sectors. So maybe there's not enough direction in this bill.

Certainly the punitive action of suspending licences for children not in attendance at school sets the wrong tone completely, so for that reason, if nothing else, I'll have some difficulty trying to support this bill when I think of the great work done in my riding of Durham by the people I've mentioned here today, especially my wife, Peggy, who is retiring as of next Friday, I believe. Anyway, with that—

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): She's a good teacher.

Mr. O'Toole: Yes, she is a very good teacher.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's always enjoyable to follow the member from Durham in the speaking order. I've gotten to know the member, and he and his party, of course, have never seen a plan to improve public education that they didn't want to oppose. But there comes the dichotomy, because Ontarians innately believe in public education. Ontario was the first place in the world to make public education not merely a privilege, not merely a right, but in fact an obligation.

1610

Ontario's employers know that tomorrow's employees have to keep pace with the field that they are in, be it in construction or in academia. Whether they work with their minds or with their hands, in tomorrow's world, learning is everything. The best time to learn how to learn, the best time to absorb the good habits that make up lifelong learning, is when you're young. That's why this bill says you've got to keep learning until you are 18.

But learning doesn't mean sitting in high school. Learning doesn't necessarily mean sitting in a classroom. Learning is synonymous with such things as private sector initiatives, such as apprenticeships, such as training courses, things that could be provided in a number of non-traditional settings. Bill 52 recognizes that one size doesn't fit all. That's why it gives students so much choice in the manner in which they continue to learn.

One last point that the member brought up had to do with whether or not the suspension of drivers' licences for students who wouldn't learn was effective. It already works in Massachusetts, which is one of the best of the jurisdictions for learning in North America. It already works in California and, for heaven's sake, it also works

in Tennessee and West Virginia. This is a bill that takes some of the best practices accumulated in education across North America and brings them home to Ontario. It's a good idea.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm pleased to comment on the discussion of Bill 52. I must say that I think everybody would like our youth and our children to go to school as long as possible to fulfill their potential. However, I have my doubts as to whether this bill will result in any further learning by individuals who are not motivated in that manner.

You can't force a person to learn. Keeping them in school is one thing, but one has to look at the effect on the other students. There are many students, the vast majority, who are there with an urgency to learn, to fulfill their curiosity in life. If there are those, however, who are there on the basis of force, in effect, because if they don't show up they can't drive an automobile and are subject to fines, what type of effect will they have on the learning environment in a classroom? I think it will be disastrous.

On that basis, I am always concerned with the unintended consequences of legislation that superficially seems to accomplish its goals. Its aims are laudable. As I said, I have no complaint. I would like our children to go, not to 18, to any age to fulfill their total potential. But I am concerned about the ill effect on the learning atmosphere in classrooms.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The Minister of Mines and—

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: Northern Development and Mines.

The Acting Speaker:—Northern Development.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: That's okay, Speaker; you forgot about it when you were in power as well.

Anyway, I want to comment on the speech from the member of Durham to say I fundamentally disagree with what he said. However, having said that, I want to outline a few of the reasons I disagree. It is very, very important that we learn to 18. In fact it's very, very important that we believe in lifelong learning. Lifelong learning maximizes opportunity and does everything possible to ensure that we always get the best out of our society.

I want to talk about learning to 18 for a second because I want to use a couple of examples. Learning to 18 doesn't mean that it has to be traditional learning. Learning to 18 can mean that we have varying circumstances when and how students can learn.

I want to highlight the example I saw just recently. It is a partnership between Confederation College, Weyerhaeuser and the union. What they're doing is skills development. It isn't clearly skills development to age 18 and beyond, but what it does is maximize potential, and this is what this bill does. We all know in this House—every one of us agrees that each individual is an island unto himself or herself and that from that individual we can maximize the potential of the province of Ontario and the country of Canada.

In conclusion, I want to ask the member to convey my regards to his wife, Peggy, on her retirement. Peggy has

been a long-time teacher. She was a very effective teacher, no doubt. We wish her a very happy and healthy retirement.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the member for Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm very pleased that the members from Mississauga West and Cambridge, as well as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—particularly his comments are relative because he was a professional teacher for a number of years. I have the greatest respect for that. Your views, I think, were quite appropriate.

In fact, we started out by saying that on this file, learning to 18—we do live in a knowledge-based economy. As such, there's an important signal to be sent to young people that knowledge is going to be an important requirement—skills specifically—in an economy that's digital, wired and information-based, and exponentially growing so that you're going to have to keep track. Literacy and numeracy have been a focus of many governments ever since the Royal Commission on Learning. I suppose that was the fundamental of making sure that people have certain standards, and educators—even the curriculum rewrites and reviews, which should be an ongoing thing because of changing information, changing knowledge.

What tools can be used both in the classroom and in a testing mode? How do we prepare people for the new worlds of work, and relationships and expectations in the world of work?

This bill sends a correct signal, but it doesn't provide the appropriate framework. As I said, it starts with that punitive thing. If you're not conforming, you're going to lose your licence. Well, that doesn't address the needs of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke or Brockville or Bowmanville or Clarington. To me, I think that's what's missing.

I would only say that it also needs to make sure that home-based schooling, alternative parent choice models are fully integrated into the Minister of Education's plans for the future. One size does not fit all. This bill certainly doesn't go in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member from—just hold on—Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I actually border on a very small portion of the riding where your fine parents, who recently celebrated their 60th anniversary, reside. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. Sometimes that's difficult to get, in this chamber.

It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 52 today. My objections are exactly the same objections that were raised by my colleague from Durham and other members of our caucus. We object to the notion that in the province of Ontario in 2006, the McGuinty government seems to feel that it is not only their privilege but their duty to somehow engage in social engineering to the nth degree. So they brought in this law that they're going to keep you in school, by law, until you're 18 years of age or else

you're going to pay the price, such as not being able to get a driver's licence or losing the driver's licence you already have. And if an employer offers you employment, they're in trouble too.

1620

Again, being very repetitive—maybe I could get a cup of water there, please; thank you very much—we all agree, without any hesitation, without any reservation, that you're going to be far better off if you stay in school longer, as opposed to leaving school earlier. There's no question of that. You're going to be a lot better off if you drive safely. You're going to be a lot better off if you don't drink excessively. You're going to be better off if you don't smoke. You're going to be better off if you exercise and stay in good physical shape, because a strong body means a strong mind. But if you don't exercise, we will not take away your driver's licence. Even though, if you become unhealthy due to lack of activity, you could be a drain on our health system, we're not taking away your driver's licence if you make that choice because—do you know what?—this is Ontario, and you have a choice.

I guess the big concern is: What does this government really expect to achieve by that? They talk about massive changes and massive improvements. The record in the province of New Brunswick would indicate otherwise. They brought in mandatory staying until age 18 some five years ago or so, and they've seen no improvement with regard to the dropout rate in New Brunswick because it's not enforced. In 20-some states, or a large number of states that have laws to that effect, they have seen an increase in the length of time that people stay in school of about six weeks—not two years; six weeks.

Given the fact that this government has brought in all kinds of laws such as pit bull legislation and all kinds of ideas like that but they haven't put any money on the table to ensure that they're enforced, I think we can expect that the same thing would apply to this law. However, in those rare cases that they do enforce it, it will be discriminatory at best, because it will not be level and it will not be even. So someone will pay the price. Someone will lose a driver's licence and it'll be hailed as some kind of a great example of McGuinty's social engineering and how we've got teeth in our law. But for the most part, it won't happen.

Why it should not happen is because we do have choices. There are some people, particularly in rural areas like where I live—those choices they make: They don't intend to go to university; they don't intend to head to the city to get a high-paying job. They like that rural way of life. They're going to stay there, and they want the simple, uncomplicated life that their parents led, that they may choose to lead as well. I'm not suggesting that they're going to be as economically advantaged as they might otherwise be, but that is their choice. If they're content to live a frugal life and they feel that they can provide that with the employment that they can get prior to the age of 18, then it is their decision to make that choice. I wouldn't agree with it, I wouldn't be making

that choice, and I can assure you that my children won't be making that choice. However, my children won't be making that choice because I dictate to them; my children won't be making that choice, because they've come to the conclusion that an education, for them, is important. They know that their lives will be better the longer they stay in school and keep learning prior to making that final decision as to what kind of career choice they're going to make.

Again, it comes down to the fact that that will be their choice, and they will make that choice. We've already had many discussions with them about what some of their choices might be, and they've clearly indicated they will not be dropping out of school prior to graduation.

I'm just reading an editorial about this law in the *Globe and Mail*. It basically says that the Premier is engaging in his usual antics of social engineering, which he loves to do. He kind of has this idea that he can basically do the thinking for people in the province of Ontario. He's done a great job of it: He thought he could shut down coal plants in 2007. As a matter of fact, he promised to, unequivocally. He said he would do it by 2007, and then he was clearly shown that he was wrong on that. He won't admit he was wrong on that; he's got a whole new spin. The political spinmeisters have been working overtime trying to salvage the energy minister, who is treading water; the environment minister, who is sinking like a stone; and the Premier himself, who has decided he's simply going to put his head in the sand and hide behind barricades. But their day of reckoning will come as well; no question of that.

A driver's licence is something you earn by showing that you are qualified. You have done the necessary training, passed the necessary tests and indicated to those who are qualified to make the determination that you are fit to drive on the highways of Ontario. The way you should lose that driver's licence is if you have shown, by the practices you have chosen to engage in while driving or as a driver, that you no longer have the right or no longer should have the privilege of driving in the province of Ontario because you no longer qualify under the required terms in order to have a driver's licence. That should be the sole determinant of whether or not you are licensed to drive in the province of Ontario, not whether you're in school.

The McGuinty government talks about some fluffy, very non-detailed things about what they're going to provide or what options you might have, but they're just "mays" and "maybes." There's nothing definitive there at all. If people are going to be faced with huge fines, employers with huge fines, parents with fines, children with losing their driver's licence, which they worked so hard to get, and earned by being safe on the roads and practising safe driving methods—that they should lose that because they don't fit the McGuinty mould of the new Aryan race in Ontario with regard to the social engineering they would like to fit everybody into is, I think, absolutely unfair and wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I've had an opportunity, and it was a pleasure, to speak to this bill on a previous round of discussion. I found before that this bill was disturbing. I know that the intent, on the part of some who put it forward, is probably good. But I cannot see in any way, shape or form that withholding a driver's licence from someone who has not completed their secondary education is a productive way to encourage people to learn. It's punitive, and frankly, as has been said before in this House, if someone gets their driver's licence at age 16 or 16 and five months and then quits school, this bill will be of no consequence to them. So there are loopholes in this bill, there's a misguided approach to this issue and frankly, more profoundly, there's the whole question of why kids drop out of school in the first place.

If you look at the bulk of those who drop out of school, they are people who come from households that face profound social or economic problems. These kids don't need to be punished to keep them in school. What they need from the beginning is support for their social lives, for their family lives, so that they have the family resources, the personal resources to stay, to be interested, to have a clear sense of the course of their lives. This bill will not address that.

1630

Recently, I've had to talk to people in my riding who run parent-child centres. They are starving for funds. Parents come to those centres desperate for the kinds of supports that they can give their children, that those centres can give their families, and those centres cannot provide enough support to people. Quite literally, people are running down the street to get to centres before they get filled up. This bill will not correct the fundamental problems we face.

Mr. Leal: I listened carefully to the comments of the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. In 2006, you just can't afford to have people dropping out of school in the very globalized, competitive world in which we live when the need to have a skill set is ever-changing and more demanding each and every day. Bill 52, learning to 18, is a key component in having people ready to meet the challenges in today's economy.

For the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to talk about this bill and make a comparison to the Aryan race is a low blow. To think of the worst part of the connotation of that word from a country, Germany, from 1933 to 1945 is one of the lowest comments that I've heard in my two and a half, almost three, years of being in this place. It's absolutely wrong to make that comparison with this particular bill. It's out of character, out of touch and totally unnecessary in this chamber.

When you look at the components of Bill 52—the opportunity to develop a program to keep those kids in a structured setting to acquire those skills to be able to compete—I think that is very important. My wife is a teacher and she knows that there are some students who don't really prosper within the fixed academic environment and they're looking to an alternative—skills train-

ing, an opportunity to learn outside that structured environment—and that's what Bill 52 is all about. I'm very pleased to be able to support it. It's a good step forward, and I think those kids will benefit from the opportunity with an alternative learning program.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members for Toronto–Danforth and Peterborough.

One part of the bill that I failed to address—another issue as to why the government shouldn't have this provision in the bill in the first place—clearly indicates what confidence they lack in the programs they institute in our schools. If you really, truly have confidence that what you're offering students in our schools today is positive, interesting and exciting, then you're not going to have the issue of people dropping out of school.

But this government's only action, instead of ensuring that the environment, the curriculum and everything associated with a student's education in Ontario today has the essential components of interest, excitement and enticement, was to make the choice: "Do you know what? That's too challenging for us. We're not going to worry about that kind of stuff. We're going to make it the law that you stay here in school until you're 18 years of age or we're taking away your driver's licence. You don't learn"—believe me, there are places to learn other than school—"if you're not here in school; you don't drive." That's the rule of the McGuinty Liberals in Ontario. It's clearly wrong. It's clearly punitive. It is social engineering. Whether the member for Peterborough likes my particular reference or not, it is still social engineering and they should be ashamed of it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): These are, as you know, 10-minute rotations, so we don't have an awful lot of time to get our views on the record, but I do want to say that our caucus is very concerned about elements of this legislation. I don't think anyone would disagree with the basic premise of encouraging young people to stay in school and get the best education possible to ensure that they can access opportunities in what is becoming an increasingly complex world. I think we all share that goal and that objective. It's the way you go about achieving it and, as my colleague mentioned, the social engineering involved in this initiative that I think disturbs us. It is punitive and leaves out of this equation a number of important groups. It could seriously damage families, especially in small-town rural Ontario, who could be impacted by initiatives embodied in this legislation.

I want to mention one of the contributions we've made to this process as an opposition party, which is our insistence that the bill go out for public hearings this summer. We also requested that it go into smaller communities in the province, and that has been agreed to by all three House leaders. The communities have not yet been selected. All parties will have an opportunity to

participate in that selection, but it will be in smaller communities. I'm not sure how we define that. I guess that's a discussion that will take place at the subcommittee level, but we feel it's critically important because that's where so many concerns surrounding this legislation are coming from.

I've been sitting down over the past few weeks with representatives of home schooling groups in my riding who have, I think, very significant concerns about the failure to reference home schoolers in this legislation. I know that a lot of people are, shall we say, educrats, who look down on home schooling and don't think it's an appropriate education for many young people. I can only say that the young people I've observed who have gone through home schooling, including my brother's children, have done extremely well. My brother's daughter is entering college this fall. Their son is in second year of university and hopes to go to into engineering at Waterloo when he graduates from the university or college he's attending in the United States right now.

I think they have very valid concerns that they're getting quality education in many of these situations, and there's no recognition of that in this legislation. They have valid concerns about the whole issue of compliance. The board of education is being granted compliance, and we know that boards of education are competing for students now, especially in the public system but also in the separate system. Private schools as well are competing for those students. We see occupancy levels in schools dropping; there's pressure on to close schools. I think there's a valid concern about the objectivity of boards of education having this responsibility to ensure compliance. Also, by failing to recognize compliance, they have the power ultimately, I guess, to deny the driver's licence to that individual.

Again, I think this is all reflective of the lack of consultation and consideration of small-town rural Ontario by the McGuinty Liberal government, and we've seen it time and time again. I've raised it in this House, others have as well, the failure of their members who represent small-town rural Ontario to speak up on behalf of their constituents. I predict that's going to come back to bite them a year from now when we go to the polls.

1640

They are doing the "Yes, ma'am," "No, ma'am," routine here, under the direction of the spinmeisters in the Premier's office who wouldn't know rural Ontario from a cabbage. They've lived in Toronto all of their lives. We see this cabinet dominated by members from the city of Toronto—almost half of the cabinet representing one urban area in the province of Ontario. These are voices who, instead of doing the role they were elected to do, representing the folks who vote for them, who put the money in the bank for their paycheques, are getting direction from the folks sitting under the Speaker's gallery to "Stand up now when we tell you. Sit down now when we tell you," with scripts to read, with the lob ball questions that we see in here.

I know many of the people over there are very, very good people. They're very, very competent people, quali-

fied people who've had significant experience before they came. Here they have to get up, forced by the Premier's office to get up and give these prepared speeches or ask these prepared questions which have been produced by the minister's office—

Interjection: They're embarrassing.

Mr. Runciman: They are embarrassing. They should be embarrassed. In fact, in many respects they should feel a degree of humiliation, because that's the reality. That's one of the reasons why so many Ontarians—I would say, Canadians—feel so turned off by politics. They look at the Legislative Assembly in Ontario as an example where this sort of thing is going on: "People we vote for, people we elect, do not represent our interests once they get there. They represent the interests of the political masters of their particular political party." When we see that increasing interest in actually voting, they say, "Why the devil should we vote? Why should we bother going out to the polls?" Because they know it's not going to make a difference. These people who get here—and I think we've all been guilty of this—and then do not stand up and fight for what they believe in and what their constituents elected them to fight for: This is an indication of it.

Rural Ontario: If you're representing rural Ontario, you have to be concerned about these restrictions. Someone who is missing school may have very valid reasons that they want to have a part-time job and are not getting to as much school as they may have. This is part and parcel of the history of rural Ontario. What you're going to do is take away the driver's licence from that individual in the family, and that may be critically important in terms of maintaining the economic well-being of that family. There may be health challenges within that family in rural Ontario, and they are no longer going to have a licensed driver, perhaps. That's one possibility, a spectre that has to be raised as a real possibility. There's no consideration for that sort of thing.

The other element of this is fining an employer who hires someone who has dropped out of school or is missing school at a level that has upset someone in the board of education. That employer, believe it or not, could be fined \$1,000 by this government. This is the sort of heavy-handed approach we expect from this Liberal government. We've seen their foot soldiers going out and pouring bleach on egg salad sandwiches, threatening to close down farmers' markets, threatening to close down church dinners. This is the mindset of Liberal McGuinty Ontario. They do not have any understanding and respect for the traditions, the history, the culture of rural small-town Ontario. That's the reality.

Interjections.

Mr. Runciman: You can get upset about it, but that's the history. That is the history of this government in three years in office. Talk about what's been happening in rural Ontario. Who went in and poured bleach on egg salad sandwiches in Windsor? They're operating under the McGuinty Liberal government, where they can go out and practise social engineering, which you continually

endorse as a government. That's the kind of interventionist government we have in the province of Ontario now. We're talking about a Liberal McGuinty government: tax and spend, tax and spend. And they know best.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Remember your boot camps that didn't work?

The Acting Speaker: The member from Ottawa Centre will come to order. Order, please. There are 38 seconds left on the clock. Please let the debater finish his debate. The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: We all know that Liberals are big tax-and-spenders, but they're also a party that has this sense of knowing what's best for every average citizen. They know what's best. If it means you can't continue with a church dinner or a potluck dinner to raise money for the folks, that's the sort of—

Mr. Patten: That was changed.

Mr. Runciman: No, it's been temporarily put on hold because of public heat, because the Toronto Star put it on the front page of the paper. That's why you've put a temporary halt, so you can pass the election. You're playing the people of Ontario once again for dupes, like you did in the last election. You've broken over 50 of your promises and now you're trying to play them for fools once again. They're not going to buy it this time.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Yakabuski: Boy, I'll tell you, that was something from the member for Leeds–Grenville. We can always expect an enlightening speech from him.

I'm actually not going to speak directly on the bill. I'm going to take this opportunity, in these two minutes, to thank the legislative interns. Today is their last day. I was very fortunate to have one of them, Jon Feairs, in my employ for the last session or portion of this session. What a tremendous benefit that was to me, and I'm going to say, what a great program. I can only speak directly about Jon, but I want to name them all here: Jon Feairs, Jacqueline Locke, Meghan Warby, Brian Wetlaufer, Dan O'Brien, Ana Curic, Nicole Goodman and Marc Peverini. All eight of them—absolutely fantastic. I had a chance to meet them all. I had a chance to talk to them all on different occasions. What a tremendous program, and what a great group of young people we had here this past session.

As I said, today is their last day. They're going to London. They're going to be taking in some sessions at the House of Commons in England, and I think that's going to be a tremendous experience for them.

As a first-timer when it comes to having derived the privilege and the benefits of having one of these interns work in our offices, I just want to give my unequivocal endorsement of this program for the Legislature here in Ontario, and continue to support it and thank each and every one of the sponsors—there are too many to name here—who ensure that this program continues to operate here. I tell you, it's a fantastic program. Every one of the people in this Legislature who have not sought an intern in the past, I encourage them to do so when the next group comes to the Legislature. You will not be dis-

appointed. They're a tremendous group of people—a tremendous program.

The Acting Speaker: I allowed that to go through although, technically speaking, it was not referring to the member's speech, but it appeared that there was much unanimity in the House for you to say it. I would remind you that questions and comments should be related to the speech by the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: I want to take this opportunity to reference something from an interjection from the member for Ottawa Centre, who talked about the strict discipline camp facility turnaround and said it was a failure. I'd just like you to know that recidivism rates dropped dramatically in that facility. One of the more emotional times I had as the Minister of Correctional Services was a mother coming up to me and embracing me, saying to me personally, "Thank you for saving my son." That's the kind of thing that was, I think, working very successfully, which, for political reasons, the McGuinty Liberal government closed down.

They've also had a very different attitude with respect to young offenders. We're seeing police now who are instructed with a pre-charge diversion. We had a situation, I was told, where a police officer chased a 15-year-old who had stolen a car. They caught him 35 minutes later, and his penalty for that was a warning letter.

Fifty per cent of the young offender beds in this province are now empty, and youth crime is not being reported. That seems to always get the member from Ottawa Centre perturbed. The facts are something quite different from what he tries to put on the record on a regular basis.

I put my views in place earlier with respect to this legislation. I think it's wrong-headed. I think it impacts negatively on rural and small-town Ontario, but that is becoming a trademark feature of this Liberal McGuinty government. They're simply not paying attention. They are in many respects ignoring rural and small-town Ontario. The backbenchers who represent that part of the province are simply not doing their job, not standing up and fighting for the people who put them in this place in the first instance. I think that's being recognized throughout the province and will be acknowledged come October 2007.

1650

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Are there any other members who wish to participate in the debate? Seeing none, and in the absence of the member who moved the motion, on May 31, Ms. Papatello moved second reading of Bill 52.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I definitely heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There being more than five members, call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

I believe I see the deputy whip approaching. I have here from the deputy whip:

June 21, 2006, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Papatello for the second reading of Bill 52, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, be deferred until deferred votes, Thursday, June 22, 2006.”

It is signed by Dave Levac, MPP, chief government whip.

That vote will be deferred until tomorrow.

INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT
(ONTARIO HOME ELECTRICITY
RELIEF), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI DE
L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU (AIDE AU
TITRE DES FACTURES D'ÉLECTRICITÉ
RÉSIDENTIELLE DE L'ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 20, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 117, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide for an Ontario home electricity payment / Projet de loi 117, Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu pour prévoir un paiement au titre des factures d'électricité résidentielle de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The member who had the floor on the last occasion not being present, we'll go in rotation. Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to speak to this bill on third reading. So that people at home know what we're talking about, I want to give a brief explanation of it.

As we all know, the McGuinty government has increased hydro rates for residential consumers by close to 55%. This is after Dalton McGuinty promised to freeze hydro rates. For many people, this has created real financial hardship, and not only that, but when you add up the increase in the hydro rate, plus the increase in transmission rates, plus the increase in distribution rates, plus the debt retirement charge—the debt retirement charge is the cost of paying for those nuclear plants that, even though they were built 30 years ago, haven't been paid for yet—and then you add on the GST and the PST, what most people have discovered is that their hydro bill has actually doubled from what it was a few years ago.

So for many people who may have had a hydro bill of \$80 a month, they're now seeing a hydro bill of \$160 a month. On an annual basis, \$80 a month times 12 months is \$960 a year coming out of people's pockets. At the same time that people have seen their hydro bill go through the roof, their incomes have not increased. Somebody who's trying to make do on social assistance has not had a \$960 increase in their ODSP cheque. Similarly, somebody who's working for minimum wage

has not seen a \$960 increase in their paycheque on an annual basis either.

Keep in mind, it's not just hydro rates that have accelerated through the roof under the McGuinty government. If you live in a city like Toronto and you're trying to use the transit system, transit fares have gone up. Heating: The cost of heating oil or natural gas has gone through the roof, and so have a lot of other fees.

So somebody who's trying to live on a modest income or a low income or fixed-income seniors who are trying to live on a pension have seen their hydro bills escalate through the roof, and many people simply can't afford to pay. We know this by the unprecedented number of people who are having their hydroelectricity disconnected. Just today, we had a number of people here from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation. First Nation communities are seeing a raft of disconnections of people from their hydroelectricity because they simply cannot afford to pay these drastic increases in their hydro bill.

The McGuinty government, because they recognize they're in trouble on this front, has proposed—get this—a \$60 rebate: not \$60 a month, but \$60 for the whole year. You'd only get that \$60 if your income is less than \$14,000 a year. In other words, if you're living below the poverty line—and \$14,000 a year for an individual person is certainly below the poverty line—the McGuinty government says that you'll get a \$60 rebate for the whole year.

What I want people at home to know is that New Democrats, when this went to committee, proposed that this rebate be doubled to \$120; the least we thought we could do would be to double it to \$120. So we proposed doubling it from \$60 a year to \$120 a year. What I want people at home to know is that the members of the McGuinty Liberal government voted against that. A McGuinty government that has increased residential hydro rates by 55%, a McGuinty government that has doubled people's hydro bills, a McGuinty government that is probably hitting low- and modest-income people and seniors living on fixed incomes for an extra \$1,000 a year on their hydro bill, voted against a hydro rebate of only \$120 a year. I want people to know that so that the next time they hear Premier McGuinty giving one of his speeches filled with platitudes about how much he cares about low-income people and how much he feels the pain of people who are struggling on modest incomes, they know that members of the McGuinty government voted against a hydro rebate of just \$120 a year for low- and modest- and fixed-income people. For that, I say, shame; shame on members of the McGuinty government—the same members of the McGuinty government who've given the chief executive officer of Hydro One a half-million-dollar pay increase this year alone.

I just want people to know that. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I appreciate the comments that have been made by the leader of our

party, the leader of the NDP. I have to say that I find this bill very hard to believe, very hard to take seriously. We know the burden that high hydro costs put on homeowners. You have to have a reasonable and stable price for electricity, but we have a government that is committed not only to high prices for power but prices that don't need to be set at the level this government is proposing to set them. The reality is that the poorest people in this province are getting a very small rebate in a situation where this government is planning to consistently crank up the cost to invest in nuclear power plants that will be extraordinarily expensive and that have already proved to be extraordinarily expensive.

Anyone who gets a hydro bill will see on that bill a line for debt charges—I've been talking to people; it's \$10 or \$12 a month. "Debt charges" is a very neutral and friendly euphemism. What this is is a dead reactor tax. This is a charge for nuclear reactors that wore out at 25 years, not at 40 years as was promised. In fact, people are paying, in that dead reactor tax, an amount far beyond the amount they're getting back in this rebate, and they're going to continue to get soaked for the dead reactor tax for many, many years to come, because we're talking about \$19 billion to \$20 billion. Having seen that, this government is embarking on yet another nuclear adventure that is guaranteed to destabilize electricity prices in this province.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to comment on the address by the leader of the third party, the member from Kenora–Rainy River. We're supporting Bill 117, the energy rebate bill, because that's the only vehicle we have to see that these people get some money. But I share the comments of the leader of the third party: It's a very small rebate—\$60—and it declines from that \$14,000 income level to where, at \$23,000, there is nothing. For a family, it begins at \$120 but declines so that if your income is \$35,000, it is nothing. This simply isn't sufficient, given the 55% hydro rate increases this government has foisted on the people since coming to office. That is shameful in itself, after their ironclad promise not to do so.

The other thing is that this could have been accomplished a lot better through tax relief for people and individuals, not the politicization of an energy rebate. It also could have been a credit on their hydro bills. But no, the McGuinty Liberals are going to make sure they get as much political mileage out of this as possible. They want to make sure they send those low-income people a cheque; small as it may be, they want to send them a cheque. But the irony of it is that if your income as a family of six is \$34,000, the cheque is going to be \$10. It's going to cost the civil service and the taxpayers of this province a lot more to write that cheque than the cheque is going to be worth. This is politicking.

We agree that the people need a rebate. They need help from this government, which has foisted on them the highest and greatest tax increases in the history of this province. Yes, they need help, but this is politicking. This is not the way it should be done. Tax relief for the people is what should have been done.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any further questions and comments? Seeing none, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments. In response, I want to say that I have to agree with my Conservative colleague Mr. Yakabuski. We all see that this is not going to compensate people in any realistic way for the incredible increases in their hydro bills. It is not going to make a great deal of difference to somebody who is struggling on minimum wage and has watched their hydro bill go up by \$1,000 on an annual basis, that they're going to get maybe a \$60 cheque in the mail from the McGuinty government. There's no real compensation here.

I think my Conservative colleague has hit it: This is the McGuinty government mailing out a cheque in the 12 months before an election. This is what they used to call, in the good old days, a little bit of vote buying, or an attempt at vote buying. But let me tell you, those same lower-income folks who might get that \$10 cheque from the McGuinty government are not going to forget that it's the McGuinty government who whacked them with a most regressive and unfair health tax, a health tax that increases the provincial income tax. A single mom who's got an income of, say, \$26,000 a year, the McGuinty government increased her provincial income taxes by 25%. Imagine, somebody who is struggling on a very low income, the McGuinty government has increased their income taxes by 25%. Now the McGuinty government thinks that if they send this person a \$5 cheque in the mail in the 12-month run-up to the election, they can be bought. It's not going to happen.

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

Mr. Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. As I said in my questions and comments section, it's very hard to take this bill seriously. It is not an electrical policy. It's a policy that has something to do with sending cheques out to people with "province of Ontario" stamped on the envelope and stamped on the cheque, but in no serious way can be taken as reflective of anything to do with energy policy. We know that in the targeting, this goes to some of the poorest families in Ontario, simply reflecting the reality that those people need help, that they're hard pressed, that they're under tremendous pressure to stabilize their income, stabilize their family situations. Frankly, I don't think any party in this House is going to vote against this. But that doesn't mean that it's not very clear that the purpose of this has everything to do with sending that cheque out with the logo of the province on it and not really touching on energy policy.

However, since it is called an electricity rebate bill, I do want to talk about the policies of this government that are impoverishing these low-income families, that are making their situation far more difficult than it should be, because this government is pursuing a reckless, high-cost strategy for electricity that causes hardship for these families and I think will cause profound hardship to the economy of this province.

If you look at the strategy before us, the reality is that the heart of the strategy is nuclear power. Those people

who are going to get this cheque, as I said in my comments, are probably already paying more than the value of the cheque in what is euphemistically called a debt service charge or debt retirement charge. More accurately, it's a dead nuclear reactor charge. I've talked to a number of people. Their charge comes to about \$10 to \$12 a month. Let's assume that people who have incomes of less than \$14,000 a year are using so little electricity that their charge is actually five bucks a month. So, in one year, the maximum rebate from this program will have been eaten up by this dead reactor tax.

What this whole rephrasing of the nuclear debt allows nuclear salesmen to do is come in and say, "Well, our power is cheap, the cost is stable. You make that large capital investment upfront and then, over time, you've got very well-priced power." But the reality is that this province is stuck with a charge of somewhere in the \$18-billion to \$20-billion range for nuclear power plants that died before their time. When these plants were brought forward, their predicted lifespan was 40 years. All of the calculations around the charge for electricity, around the amount of money to be set aside for waste, were based on that 40-year life span, but the reality is they only lasted 25 years. So the \$20-billion charge that everyone in this Legislature and everyone in this province, every little business, every manufacturer is carrying—they're paying for the profound nuclear mistakes made in this province. And we are about to launch ourselves again into another nuclear adventure. We're going to throw the dice and hope that this time the dice will come up the right way, that we won't get burned. Frankly, I don't see how you can, in conscience, do that.

1710

It's no surprise to me that the Minister of the Environment exempted this project, what the Premier calls a plan, from the Environmental Assessment Act. How would it stand up to scrutiny? How would it stand up to witnesses appearing before a panel charged to find the best course of action for this province? We know it wouldn't stand up. It would be torn apart. The numbers would be presented, the analysis would be put forward, and any fair-minded panel looking at the evidence would have to conclude that a nuclear adventure for Ontario, round two, could only result in very high cost for very poor service.

Instead of a full provincial environmental assessment to allow public scrutiny, what we get instead is a \$60 rebate. I don't think that's a very good deal. I don't think that's a good deal for the people of Ontario. It's certainly not a good deal for the people with low incomes who are paying money now for electrical heating in their homes, who are paying for electric-fired hot water. What they're getting is the shaft, and this rebate is not going to help them the way they need to be helped.

When we think about nuclear power, we think about these concrete costs that are already embodied in the charge we get on our bills, and we think about this dead nuclear reactor tax that's tacked on to the bills, but there are other costs, liabilities that this province has assumed,

that will or may show up on people's tax bills at a later date.

Risk and liability: In Canada, there is an act that caps liability for nuclear accidents, and they're capped at \$75 million. So if you have a nuclear reactor that blows out—let's say there's no explosion, but a major accident that causes release of radioactivity—the cap of liability for the operator is \$75 million while the reactor itself is probably going to be in the \$500 million to \$1 billion range, likely higher. The insurance is far smaller than the value of the asset itself.

Look at the United States. They have to cap the liability for reactor accidents as well, but their cap is set at \$13 billion. That's beginning to approach the scale, the scope of costs if you had a major nuclear accident in North America. The liability here, the cap, is \$75 million. So who gets to pick up the tab? If you're watching this show now and you live in Ontario or you have a business in Ontario, if you run a school in Ontario, you will know that the taxpayer will pick up the tab.

We're essentially providing free insurance to the nuclear industry. We're not charging them, but we're on the hook. If things go wrong, it's going to come back on us. People will say, "We, the people, own the nuclear power plants. It makes sense that we self-finance." I'm not aware of a fund out there that's building up to deal with such an accident, but I do know that private companies that go into the nuclear field want to be covered by that cap. When Bruce nuclear was privatized, when British nuclear came in, when private financiers came in, one of the things they did was to go to Ottawa to make sure that the legislation that covered the liability cap extended to all of those who had a hand in that plan, so that if you were a major bank in this country, you didn't have to worry that you were going to blow your brains out and go bankrupt should there be a major nuclear accident. Many people have said to me, "We don't have accidents with Candu reactors. We can't. They're wonderful." I would say to you that people who loan billions of dollars don't assume that these plants are error-proof, they don't assume that they're accident-proof; they very prudently think about their shareholders, they very prudently think about the financial stability of their companies and, believe me, they act to make sure they are covered. They act to make sure that they have that umbrella of liability coverage over top of them so that we the taxpayers are stuck, so that if anything goes wrong, we pick up the tab.

I asked the Premier a month ago or so if he could guarantee that there would be no nuclear accidents. For anyone who's been in this House and listened to question period, they'll know the routine quite well: We were reminded of the virtues of Candu reactors; we were told that was scaremongering; we were told that we were safe, that only Soviet reactors have problems—not mentioning Three Mile Island. So we should assume that we are carrying a large liability, and should that liability ever come due, should the dice ever roll the wrong way, the people in this province who got their \$60, their \$40 or

their \$10 or \$20 will, like all the rest of us, be stuck with a very substantial cost. I'll take the American number: \$13 billion. Well, we're already covering \$19 billion to \$20 billion on our electricity bills. That is very large.

We're also covering the cost of waste. We put aside about \$400 million a year, and I understand there's about \$7 billion being carried on OPG's books to pay for the cost of waste disposal. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization estimates the cost of disposing of nuclear waste in Canada at about \$24 billion. The overwhelming bulk of that is here in Ontario. So we've got another \$13 billion that we have to set aside over the next few decades to deal with the cost of that waste, and we still have that other \$20 billion to pay off. Setting aside liability, we have big burdens that we're carrying that provide real problems for our economy and real problems for our electricity costs, and yet this government has decided that, notwithstanding all of the errors, all of the problems, all the pigeons that have come home to roost from the last generation of nuclear reactors, we're going to go full tilt once again and hit that nuclear button and get going.

Last night I had an opportunity to be on a television call-in show, Goldhawk Live. It was very interesting to me, because one of the guests was from the Coalition for a Nuclear Free Peel. He was talking about the fact that there's actually a proposal to burn low-level nuclear waste in Peel at an incinerator. I find it extraordinary to think that anyone would seriously propose to do that, but it was fascinating to me to find out that it has already happened at the Bruce nuclear power plant. There's an incinerator, and when they have low-level nuclear waste, they shovel it in and burn it. The effluent comes out the stack. You get radioactive waste, diluted to a wonderfully low level, I'm sure, just spread over the countryside.

1720

How can one assume that there's any responsible approach to protection from nuclear contamination in this province if that sort of thing is allowed to go on? What sort of approach is that? Is that even vaguely sane? I would say that an approach that is evident in this kind of policy, in this kind of step, shows that this government has completely abandoned any responsible approach to electricity and has decided to take a risky and expensive approach to providing power to this province in the future.

I'll take another example, Mr. Speaker, one you're quite familiar with: the Portlands Energy Centre proposed for the waterfront in east-end Toronto. Well, \$700 million for 500 megawatts of capacity—most of us don't deal day-to-day with the cost of megawatts of power. It's a fair-sized facility. Seven hundred million dollars is a lot of bucks. The reality is that Toronto Hydro has been able to put in place a program that is reducing the demand for electricity in Toronto by 250 megawatts at \$40 million. I would say that \$40 million to reduce the demand in this city by 250 megawatts is far more cost-effective than anything that this province has put forward; anything.

I'll say this: What they're doing with that \$40 million, they're getting the best, probably the cheapest. If you go

beyond that, if you go to 500 megawatts, it's going to cost you another \$150 million, maybe \$200 million. But still we're talking half the cost of what it would take to build a 500-megawatt plant on the waterfront. The benefits would be that you'd reduce power demand in Toronto, thus cutting the electricity bills of businesses and individuals. You'd increase the amount of employment in this city. You would be increasing the market for renewable energy. In fact, that's the sensible way to go. But this government has not decided to go that way. It has decided to go the high-cost route. You see that in the larger plan. The plan that we have before us is predicated on nuclear power.

If we look at the example of other jurisdictions, in California over the last 30 years they've invested in energy efficiency to the point where they've constructed what they call conservation power plants—12,000 megawatts of power reduction. That's half of the power we use here in Ontario. We in Ontario could make investments along those lines. In fact, the Pembina Institute, within the last year or so, brought forward a study showing that we could reduce power demand in Ontario by about 40% from the projected levels that we'll need to produce over the next decade and a half. A 40% reduction in power demand: When you talk about that kind of reduction, you're talking about substantial reductions in people's everyday cost of electricity, far beyond anything that this rebate will ever give. You're talking about the ability to actually provide ourselves with renewable power, with green power, and avoid the operation of coal plants and avoid the construction of nuclear power plants.

That is the strategy we need. That is the approach that we need, one that focuses first on efficiency and conservation, because we're extraordinarily wasteful. In the early 1990s, a colleague of mine was working for a utility and consulting for large office buildings in downtown Toronto. Some of those office buildings use as much power as the city of Collingwood. They use huge volumes of power. Some of them have to be air-conditioned in the middle of winter because they have so much heat coming off equipment and off people in the buildings. They were running their air conditioners in January and February. This colleague of mine, who is a consultant, said, "You know, you'd do better just to suck the cold air in from the outside in January and February." Startled, the building operators realized, "Yeah, that makes all kinds of sense," started doing that and cut their electricity costs.

Those sorts of fairly obvious electricity reduction measures are out there for us to take advantage of.

I was at Toronto Hydro recently with the former Minister of Energy, Donna Cansfield. At Toronto Hydro, there was a demonstration, real time in front of us, of how Toronto Hydro was able to start up standby generators in office buildings and hospitals around Toronto to offset demand for peak power. We're not talking about science fiction. We're not talking about stuff that's far away in time and space. We're talking about practical

measures that can be taken today to cut the cost of electricity.

This bill before us is a practical measure to send out a cheque with "Ontario" stamped on it before the next election. Fair enough. Why don't we just call it that? It's the Ontario Feel Good About This Government Bill, 2006. But if we're going to talk about electricity, the cost of electricity and the affordability of electricity, we need to talk about the failure of this government to come forward with a strategy that's focused first on cost containment, environmental protection and making sure that here in Ontario we're developing the homegrown industry we need to be able to compete with others who will be producing renewable energy, who will be developing efficiency in the years to come.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Seeing none, further debate? Are there any other members who wish to participate in the debate?

Seeing none, and in the absence of the member who moved the motion, on June 20, Mr. Sorbara moved third reading of Bill 117. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands recessed until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1728.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

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