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(Hansard)**

Wednesday 11 March 2009

Mercredi 11 mars 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOBACCO DAMAGES
AND HEALTH CARE COSTS
RECOVERY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RECOUVREMENT
DU MONTANT DES DOMMAGES
ET DU COÛT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ
IMPUTABLES AU TABAC

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to permit the Province to recover damages and health care costs incurred because of tobacco related diseases and to make a complementary amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 155, Loi autorisant la province à recouvrer le montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé engagés en raison des maladies liées au tabac et à apporter une modification complémentaire à la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the MPP from Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this particular piece of legislation, to speak to an issue that affects all Ontarians. The human cost of tobacco-related disease is staggering: 13,000 people every year die from tobacco-related disease; 36 people every single day die from tobacco-related disease. And even those statistics do not begin to speak to the enormous human tragedy of those affected by disease and the families and friends of those affected. The cost in terms of health care alone is \$1.6 billion every year that Ontarians pay to support the health care of those affected by disease.

Today we can't speak to the terrible human tragedy, but this piece of legislation does speak to the recovery of the health care costs that Ontarians are paying out for tobacco-related disease. This legislation provides the foundation so that Ontarians can recover those health care

costs from who we allege have done wrong, those who we allege have contributed to the cost that we are paying; from those who we allege committed acts that encouraged more people to smoke, encouraged the diminution of public health care warnings, encouraged the hiding of research relating to health care warnings and encouraged the consumption of cigarettes that were said to be less dangerous but in fact were not.

Today we provide the foundation that, in fact, was used in the United States more than a decade and a half ago. We'll all remember that in the United States, action was taken by governments at every level against tobacco companies to recover health-care-related costs. We'll all remember that it was the beginning of the Clinton administration when there was a settlement of almost \$245 billion paid for tobacco-related health care costs.

British Columbia and New Brunswick have instituted actions in Canada. Other provinces have passed the type of legislation that we are proposing today, the legislation which provides the foundation for this type of action. So we're not the first. The legislation that we're introducing, that we are debating, is legislation that has been considered by the Supreme Court of Canada and upheld. So we're not blazing new territory here. We are simply asking the Legislature: "Let us do what is right. Let us hold those who we allege have done wrong accountable. Let us hold them accountable for the wrongs they have done and for the costs they have incurred, and let us return those costs to the people of Ontario, who should not be paying them."

This piece of legislation, as I say, follows the pattern that has been followed elsewhere. It allows the government to sue directly for the harm done to individuals—the government to sue. Although the legislation does not speak to exactly what the cause of action would be against defendants in other provinces, the civil actions that have been launched against tobacco companies include: allegations that those tobacco companies marketed light cigarettes as safer when they were not; allegations that tobacco companies marketed directly to young people and directly to those who don't have the opportunity or the knowledge to make a decision; allegations that tobacco companies knew of research about the harmful effects of tobacco and kept it from the public; and allegations that tobacco companies systematically conspired to undermine the health care warnings about the dangers of tobacco use. We require this legislation to provide the foundation for any lawsuit that we might launch. This legislation does not speak about or of the companies which might be the subject of any litigation, but in other

provinces they include the largest tobacco companies in the country.

Ontario has been a leader in smoking cessation activities. Ontario has been a leader in the legislation it has brought forward to make sure that people are not subject to second-hand smoke, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. We have been a leader in making sure that people are not targeted with advertising to induce them to smoke more; we have been a leader in making sure that we have legislation to protect young people driving in cars; we have been a leader in initiatives to ensure that people have the tools they need to stop smoking and the information they need about the dangers. We will continue moving in that regard. We will continue to make sure that people know about the dangers, are supported and encouraged, and stop smoking. It is virtually the only product that, when used as directed, can kill—when used as directed.

This is about holding those whom we allege have done harm accountable for the cost they've incurred, and making sure that those who have helped incur the costs actually pay for the costs that they have helped to incur. It is legislation against the backdrop, against the ever-present knowledge, that today, we estimate 36 people will die from health tobacco-related disease, and that in the year, 13,000 will die from tobacco-related disease and countless more will have their lives forever affected by tobacco. Thank you.

0910

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Willowdale. I think he's over there; I can't see, for people standing up in front of you.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's a pleasure for me to speak to Bill 155, the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, today. This bill would give our government the ability to directly sue tobacco companies so that we can work to recover the health care costs spent on behalf of Ontario taxpayers.

Tobacco use results in many other costs besides those millions and millions of dollars that go to provide health care for the 13,000 Ontarians who die and the thousands more who are afflicted by tobacco-related diseases each year. More than 17% of all deaths in this country result from tobacco-related illnesses. That's almost one in five. Beyond the dollar figure and the statistics is the terrible, terrible toll of losses to families, friends and communities.

Just as the statistics tell only one part of the story about the devastation caused by tobacco-related diseases, Bill 155 is only one part of our government's response to the issue of tobacco use. The McGuinty government has become a national leader in tobacco control initiatives. Through our smoke-free Ontario strategy, which is a vital part of our government's commitment to a healthier Ontario, our government has worked hard to develop effective programs that help curb smoking.

The most recent initiative in this ongoing series is, as you know, the banning of smoking in cars when children under 16 are present. I'm sure not everyone here is aware, but studies say that a person at only 50 centi-

metres distance from a burning cigarette inhales 10 times more carboxylic compounds than do smokers themselves—that's the chemical compound in the tobacco smoke—and that smoke in a restricted car can be up to 27 times more concentrated than it would be outside the closed space of that car. We all recognize the importance of keeping our children away from second-hand smoke, and smoke-free Ontario is demonstrating some very, very encouraging results.

Our ban on the public display of tobacco products and on smoking in local coffee shops and restaurants where children congregate after school and where they often work on their essays and on their computers are having a positive impact. Reducing the number of public places where it is permissible to smoke and making information about quitting more readily available are both helping more Ontarians to stop smoking and convincing fewer to start in the first place. There's a lot more to do, and we will continue, as a province and a government, to lead the way in smoking prevention and smoking cessation.

Bill 155 is directed at tobacco companies because it is alleged their misconduct has led members of the public to start using their products and to continue using their products. The taxpayers of Ontario and our health care system have directly borne those costs as a result. As the Attorney General has said, at this time, in this economic climate, we can't go into a lot of detail about what our actions might be if the legislation is passed. But let me speak to events in other jurisdictions that give us some indication of what we might expect, which will help to explain more about our thinking in introducing this proposed legislation.

I'd like to say a bit about the American Master Settlement Agreement that was signed just over a decade ago. This is an initiative that got started because the Attorney General of Mississippi knew of a woman who was dying of heart disease caused by smoking. She had used up all her savings and was being supported by Medicaid. Someone suggested that since Medicaid was paid by the state government, maybe the governor should try to recoup these losses, these expenditures incurred by the state, from the tobacco companies.

Fast forward ahead a decade: By the mid-1980s, four US states had sued tobacco companies for smoke-related health care costs, with Mississippi leading the way. Within four years of the American Master Settlement, the settlement agreement was signed by 50 states and the tobacco industry. The industry agreed to pay more than \$200 billion over a 25-year period for health care costs that resulted from the use of its tobacco products.

Here in Canada, six provinces have now passed health care cost-recovery legislation. The legislation, when tested in the Supreme Court of Canada, was found to be constitutional. Two provinces, British Columbia and New Brunswick, have already initiated their health care cost-recovery litigation. The government of British Columbia is moving forward and has recently won the right to pursue the parent companies of Canadian tobacco companies in the United States. Right now, British Columbia is

seeking the permission of the court to allow it to proceed with its litigation and also allow other provinces to bring health care cost claims against JTI-Macdonald.

We need our proposed Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act to be in place in order for Ontario to be involved in these claims. The proposed legislation is about seeking accountability for tobacco-related health care costs. Costs to our health care system are now being borne by Ontario taxpayers because of the alleged misdoing of tobacco companies and their tobacco products. The \$1.6 billion we spend each year on health care here in Ontario for tobacco-related illnesses could fund eight large community hospitals the size of Toronto East General, for example, and that funding would last for a full year.

Our government wants to work towards recovering the costs incurred by taxpayers and our health care system by the use of these tobacco products. That's why we're asking all members, we urge all members of this House, to move forward quickly towards the passage of Bill 155.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't think you'll find anyone in the House with a dissenting position for the motive of saving lives and improving our quality of life nor the arguments. Ontario being the largest province, 13 million people, they're late to the table. As we understand, six other provinces have joined the issue of holding accountable the industry, I suppose, in the first sense and, more recently, the individual and their individual responsibilities.

I think what's missing here is clarity. I don't want to be cynical here, but I'm saying that to me this sounds symptomatic of sort of reaching further into your pockets because they have a deficit—it's reported it will be in the billions; maybe \$18 billion, maybe more—and this is a good place for them to get some more money.

0920

But they have a legitimate claim. If this is proven scientifically to be a health risk, they should make it an illegal product. Furthermore, if you look at the record, I think no one has spoken longer or louder than the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, Toby Barrett, who has in his riding a lot of tobacco growers who have, really without any prior notice, been disfranchised—their businesses sort of taken away from them—and as a non-smoker, I would agree. The real point here is that there has to be a transitional fund to bring them into other businesses, and I think we need to address that at the same time.

If there was some direction here on what they're going to do with these health costs that are being avoided, that's a whole other debate. The Minister of Health himself smokes; each individual is born with choices to make. This debate is not going to be swept under the carpet. It's a tax grab by the McGuinty government, in the most cynical sense. If it's the right reason, they should ban it completely.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll have an opportunity to speak to this bill tomorrow morning, I suspect, but I wanted to say a couple of things for the record. There is no doubt in my mind that smoking kills. I think we all know it. I don't think we need any more evidence of it. I will be supporting this legislation, but I want to simply add that it is a 10-year campaign and, boy, would I love to be a lawyer on this particular case, because a whole lot of lawyers are going to make a whole lot of money. So it will be good for lawyers as well, and maybe they need employment. In this kind of economic crisis, maybe they need work; I don't know. But it is a good bill—there's no doubt about it—and it will take 10 years.

But I want to ask a question of both the minister and the parliamentary assistant. There are things that nag me a little bit in terms of what we're doing with the illegally produced cigarettes that come across the border and the illegal production of cigarettes in our own province. There are a whole lot of young kids still smoking cigarettes, and they are illegal cigarettes; they're found littered in schoolyards across Ontario. I understand the initiatives that both of you are talking about, in terms of what you've done, but I am curious and interested to know what the government has done and/or is doing by way of talking about the illegal production and importation of cigarettes and the illegal production of cigarettes within our own province. I'm interested to know your answer to that particular question.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to add some comments to the leadoff by Minister Bentley and our parliamentary assistant from Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer. They provided a very thorough oversight of this particular piece of legislation which, if passed, would allow the government to sue tobacco companies for alleged wrongdoing and to recover past and ongoing health costs borne by Ontario taxpayers due to tobacco-related illnesses.

The minister pointed out the human cost of smoking: the 13,000 persons per year who die from smoking-related illnesses. He also brought that down to a figure of 36 persons per day. The numbers are staggering. My wife and I are so pleased that our adult children do not smoke—they never have—and we're very thankful for that. It is a habit that is quite difficult for folks to break. The real message is that if you do not start smoking, you don't have to worry about that.

I had a relative who passed away not too long ago. I was told something by a nurse in the hospital that I was not aware of. She said that many smokers actually get stomach cancer. That was something I wasn't aware of. We can see the effects of smoking on the lungs and other parts of one's body, but I was unaware that smoking could cause stomach cancer.

I want to say to the member for Durham, who made a comment about transitional monies, that our government provided transitional funding of some \$50 million to the tobacco industry and the growers in 2004. That was brought in by Minister Steve Peters, so it really was some

time ago that we provided \$50 million in transitional funding.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to comment on the replacement of Bill 155. I believe that this bill misses the mark. I think the concern in Ontario at the present time is the sale of illegal contraband cigarettes.

What is happening—when I walk down streets in my jurisdiction and in Toronto, I see so many young women smoking. When I say “young women,” I'm talking about teenagers. I recall, a very long time ago, when I was a teenager, it would seem that the males and females smoked in almost equal amounts. Today, I don't see that many young men smoking, but I do see legions of young girls on their way to school, smoking.

One of the problems is that, of course, the sale of illegal cigarettes has expanded to such an extent—some put it as high as 50% of tobacco sales in the province of Ontario, and that's unconscionable.

Sure, we're losing enormous amounts of tax dollars that could be used for our hospitals, 80% of which are now underfunded by this government. The matter of money is important, but more important than that is that young people are being subjected to illegal cigarettes in greater and greater numbers. There is absolutely no restriction. The people selling this illegal contraband will sell to two, three—they don't care how old they are. There is absolutely no restriction.

So this bill surely misses. It deals with money; it does not deal with our young children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Attorney General, you have two minutes to respond.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to thank the MPPs from Cambridge, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Trinity–Spadina and Durham for their comments.

We're acting on many fronts. We are working on the illegal contraband cigarette issue. We have taken a very strong stand on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and the voting record will show who supported and who did not.

But this is about recovering the health care costs, and why wouldn't you want to recover them? If tobacco companies have committed a wrong, why wouldn't you want to recover the costs that are derived from that wrong? Why wouldn't you want to recover those health care costs? Why would you want to leave them in the hands of those who have done wrong? What possible point could there be in leaving health care costs in the hands of those who helped to incur them, if they've done wrong? That is a question people will want to know the answer to: Why would you leave that money with those who have done wrong?

We will continue to work to reduce smoking in the province of Ontario, and I look forward to the support of members of the party opposite who spoke about that. We will continue to push forward with smoke-free initiatives, and I look forward to the support of those in the party opposite on that issue. We will continue to try to reduce smoking in the province of Ontario, and I look forward to

the support of those in the party opposite. I thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for his support.

We will make sure that those who have done wrong to the people of Ontario are accountable for their wrong—\$1.6 billion every year; that's a wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to speak today to Bill 155, the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

This bill would allow the government to sue tobacco companies to recover damages for the costs sustained by our health care system for illness and injury to Ontario citizens by virtue of the use of tobacco products.

It has been suggested, and I understand from some of the comments that have been previously been made, that some people are of the understanding that this can already be done; in fact, it can't. Individuals can attempt to sue tobacco companies for damages as a result of illness or injury. But until this time, the government has not been able to seek damages for the cost to our health care system, so it is important that this bill be passed. We do, of course, support it. We certainly do recognize the health care costs associated with our system, with the ills of smoking, and we want to do whatever can be done in order to both prevent smoking and to recover some of the costs related to it.

0930

In fact, I should point out that this was raised by the Progressive Conservative government back in 1999, when my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo introduced similar legislation, in those days called Bill 23, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, which amended the Health Insurance Act to allow the government to bring such an action independently of any subrogated right of action against a person to recover costs incurred to pay for insured services rendered as a result of the person's negligent or wrongful act or omission; it certainly would have applied to tobacco companies.

The Long-Term Care Act, 1994, was amended in a similar manner to allow the minister to bring an action independently of any subrogated right of action against a person to recover costs incurred to pay for services provided under that act as a result of that person's negligence, wrongful act or omission. Indeed, the trend towards the enactment of this type of legislation has continued for some years since it was first introduced by the PC government in 1999.

Similar legislation, of course, was enacted in British Columbia in 1998, which was the first jurisdiction in both Canada and the Commonwealth to introduce this type of legislation. They were the first to launch a lawsuit against the tobacco industry for the recovery of tobacco-attributable health care costs related to allegations that the industry did not disclose in a timely way what it knew about the effects of these products. The tobacco industry challenged the constitutionality of this legislation; how-

ever, as everyone knows, it was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in September 2005.

Since 1998 and the passage of the legislation in British Columbia, similar types of legislation have been passed in five other Canadian provinces, including New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

I should also note that the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is the first treaty that was negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization. It was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2003, and was entered into force in February 2005. This convention is an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health, and Canada signed the treaty in July 2003, which was ratified in November 2004. The convention states, pursuant to article 19, "That for the purposes of tobacco control, the parties shall consider taking legislative action or promoting their existing laws, where necessary, to deal with criminal and civil liability, including compensation where appropriate."

As other speakers have noted, the statistics with respect to the ill effects of tobacco use are startling in Ontario. It is the number one cause of preventable disease and death and accounts for over 13,000 Ontarian deaths per year. It is something that I do commend the government for attempting to do something about by bringing forward this legislation, but the only question that I would raise is, why now? Why, when these other provinces have done this some years ago? Why is the government bringing this legislation forward now? I would suggest that the reason can be found in the 2008 Auditor General's report, because the purpose of part of the audit there was to assess whether the ministry had adequate and cost-effective policies and procedures in place to ensure that the correct amount of tobacco, gasoline and diesel fuel tax is collected and paid to the province in accordance with the law. The conclusion, of course, that the auditor came to was that, "It remains our view that the ministry's current policies, procedures and information technology systems are still inadequate." I would suggest that that is precisely why this matter is being brought forward now; that it is a distraction; it's a diversion; it's an attempt to change the channel away from the fact that the government is failing to collect these tobacco taxes, which account for something like \$500 million of lost revenue to the province of Ontario each and every year; that they're allowing the operation of illegal smoke shacks and sale of illegal cigarettes in the province of Ontario, not just in the illegal smoke shacks but in our communities, from the trunks of cars to young people, as my colleague the member from Cambridge has indicated, onto schoolyards to young girls, to young boys, which is getting them hooked on cigarettes at an early age; and that nothing is being done in order to address that particular issue.

So that's where we have it. This government is simply trying to change the channel to make it look like they are being very proactive with respect to collecting costs

related to our health care system and is failing to collect something which, by all accounts, could be easily collectable if they set their minds to it. But instead, what they've decided to do is to go by way of lawsuits.

I would suggest that this is certainly not a timely or cost-effective way of recovering these lost revenues if that is what the government is really serious about doing, because to commence a lawsuit of this nature requires a lot of work. The Attorney General has indicated that if a lawsuit were going to be commenced—and we're not even really sure whether or not that would happen. We heard something about how in this economy, they're not really sure how they'll proceed with it; they want to have the legislation in place just in case they decided to go ahead with it. So we have the uncertainty about whether a lawsuit would even be commenced in the first place. But if it were to be commenced, the Attorney General has indicated that it would be commenced in-house with lawyers who are presently working for the Ministry of the Attorney General. That may well be the case, but I would suggest that that would certainly not be the way that the lawsuit would be continued or would be ultimately argued once it got to court. Who would be employed would be lawyers out in the private sector, working at very high hourly rates—and there wouldn't be just one of them; there would be many lawyers involved in a lawsuit such as this.

Secondly, it's a complicated type of action; it's not simple litigation. It would require many expert witnesses who need to be paid—and they're paid thousands and thousands of dollars in order to come to testify at trials of this nature—and this would go on for a long period of time. I would suggest there would be hundreds of witnesses, both for the prosecution or for the Attorney General in pursuing this action as well as for the defence. The big tobacco companies of course have deep pockets and would be able to sustain this kind of litigation over a long period of time.

So that's the final part of it: This type of lawsuit would take years and years in order to realize a judgment, whereas if the government were to crack down and try to collect some of these lost tax revenues—which are not insignificant; \$500 million would go a long way to helping our already burdened health care system—I would suggest that a lawsuit is certainly not the way to do it, because I would think, at minimum, you would be looking at at least five years before there would be any kind of judgment.

All of this is assuming that there would be a judgment in favour of the government, and that is by no means a sure thing. We could be pursuing litigation that may or may not have the possibility of a successful outcome. Even if it did have a successful outcome at the end of the day, there's also the issue of recovery. Many people are able to get judgments in various levels of court for whatever amounts of money, but if the defendant doesn't have the funds to satisfy that judgment, if they're judgment-proof, then all is for naught. There's no point in having a judgment if you don't have the ability to collect on it. So

five years from now, whether those big tobacco companies—even if the government could be successful in launching a lawsuit and obtaining a judgment, we have no indication as to whether or not they'd be able to satisfy the judgment.

In conclusion, I would say that it's difficult not to support this legislation; we certainly do support it. But I would say that there are many, many other things that this government could be doing, if they're really serious about getting money back into our health care system and recovering some of the costs associated with tobacco-related illnesses, which would be much more timely and much more cost-effective than the means by which they have chosen to pursue it with this legislation.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I was listening to my colleague's comments, and I just want to make two points. One, I'm glad that she touched briefly on the issue of illegal cigarettes, because I believe that that has become the major problem in Ontario today, and I want to say a few words about that later.

I think that something almost akin to fraud is happening in Ontario today. People are being told that smoking is on the decrease and that cigarette consumption is on the decrease when in fact all you have to do is make a tour to any city, any town in Ontario and you'll see that smoking continues, but that increasingly, the smoking is the smoking of illegal cigarettes. So I actually think there's a bit of a fraud being committed on the people of Ontario. People are being told smoking is down. Yes, smoking of legally produced cigarettes may be down, but the smoking of illegally produced cigarettes is in fact increasing, and at an incredible rate.

If anyone looked at the two—the smoking of legally produced cigarettes and illegally produced cigarettes—and combined them, I don't think the combination supports the conclusion the government wants to put across that cigarette smoking in the overall is in decline. I think it is wrong to continue to allow that misconception to be promoted to the public in Ontario.

The second point that I think is important is that we need to recognize that lawsuits such as would happen under this bill will take many, many, many years. If anyone is trying to suggest that this bill will have an impact in the next three or five years, it's not going to happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to make a few comments on Bill 155, legislation that, if passed, will allow our government to sue tobacco companies for alleged wrongdoing to recover past and ongoing health care costs borne by Ontario taxpayers due to tobacco-related illnesses. I think it's important, once again, to state for the record that British Columbia and New Brunswick have already initiated lawsuits against tobacco companies to recover health care costs, and Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have also passed legislation allowing them to sue.

I'm sure everybody in the Legislative Assembly knows someone who has been touched in one way or another by a loss of life associated with tobacco use. I remember very clearly the loss of my maternal grandfather, just a tremendous, fantastic man whom we all watched suffer and lose his life to lung cancer at a very, very young age as a result of the use of tobacco—a tragic, unfortunate and unnecessary step in the progression of a man's life.

I'm very happy that what we're bringing forward today is once again going to bring a higher profile to the use of tobacco, for all the very wrong reasons. We continue as a next logical step, and that's how I see this legislation, in terms of trying to curb tobacco use.

I can remember not that long ago when you could still smoke a cigarette on an airplane. Can you imagine that? It's about 20 years now since you could run a TV ad. This is all part of what we're trying to do when it comes to a variety of things. Changing cultures is not an easy thing to do. One of the best organizations out there that I love to talk about is MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, who have done a tremendous job over the last 20 or 30 years in terms of changing attitudes around drinking and driving. This legislation today is one more step—what I see as a very logical step—in terms of trying to change the culture around using tobacco in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm always happy to listen to and learn from the member from Whitby–Oshawa. As a practising litigator, she is probably the most qualified person in this House to comment on the appropriateness and enforceability of the law and the response to it. I think that's something that should be paid close attention to.

I want to bring up a couple of sidebar issues here. In the general public, we're hearing the pressure on the federal government to decriminalize marijuana, or pot, use. Now some people treat this as a humorous thing, but I look at it as—just as an observer, of course. The inherent conflict of legitimizing pot is not as bad when we're trying to get rid of cigarettes, which are both smoking. It's a contradiction. But what it looks like is that they want to start to regulate it and tax it.

If you look back in history, it's recorded that George Washington, many years ago in the United States, as the first President, pondered the issue of whether he should plant tobacco or hemp. It was a toss-up between which one was going to become the popular bi-product. That's an historic fact. It's in some of the records of history.

The other thing is the importance of not diminishing or dismissing that alcohol—the previous member from Atikokan mentioned how important the work of MADD is, and it is. Alcohol is a very destructive product as well, which affords the government a lot of revenue. Alcohol causes more havoc than cigarettes. It destroys entire families when inappropriately used.

This is an important debate, but unfortunately, when I heard the Attorney General speak, what I heard him saying was, “We can't wait to get our hands on the money.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to compliment and thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa for starting her presentation off by indicating that the official opposition will be supporting the legislation, indicating that it makes sense to have this enabling legislation to provide the government with the opportunity that other provinces have chosen to take. We know there have been some successes around the world in these types of lawsuits that have made those companies responsible for the health care costs in their areas; they've sued them.

One of the things that I want us to stay focused on is the legislation. When we talk about what the legislation is asking—it's an enabling piece of legislation—what we're saying is, "Would you provide the government with the opportunity to launch a lawsuit against those companies for some of the things they've done in the past?"

I want to remind the members here in the House today that a lot of the companies we're talking about were first professing that there were absolutely no harmful effects whatsoever from smoking. There are people today who are still saying, "You know, there's no science that actually says that second-hand smoke is bad for you. So why don't we just leave that alone?"

I'm saying to you very clearly that that's why I'm glad the member has indicated that her party is going to be supporting the legislation. I'm glad the member has not stood up in her place and said, "You know what, there's really no science about this." I know her enough to know that she would never say that, because there are too many people in this province who are dying from smoke-related illnesses. And the fact is, that's an extreme burden on our system.

The member for Durham likes to get up and throw curves at everybody and throw mystifying statements that there's been no assistance for the farmers who have been running through difficult times. A \$50-million program to assist the exit from tobacco, I think—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Whitby–Oshawa, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the members for Kenora–Rainy River, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Durham and Brant for their comments.

Just to respond to the comments made by the member for Brant, I certainly do support this type of legislation. I am very much in favour of this type of legislation having been brought forward. In fact, I had a very close family member—my mother, actually—who passed away from lung cancer related to smoking. So I am very much in favour of this legislation.

But I do feel that I need to point out that there are other things I urge the government to do with respect to this scourge: to crack down on the sale of illegal cigarettes, because this is something that is not being addressed by this government. There are millions of dollars in lost tax revenues that are just going down the drain. If

we really want to recover costs to our health care system, we need to do that, not just because of the loss of tax revenue but because some of these illegal cigarettes contain more and more toxic chemicals. Over and above the tobacco, they contain poisonous chemicals—rat poison, rat feces—things that are going to be far more damaging, and will kill far more people who are smoking them, and our young people particularly, than anything in the cigarettes themselves. So I would urge the government to take a serious look at this, to start cracking down on this, for the health and safety of people who are continuing to smoke. We need to continue with smoking cessation products, we need to continue to urge people to stop smoking, but we certainly need to make sure that we deal with what's on the market out there and make sure that those products get off the market, for the consideration of our young people in particular, who are very susceptible to the allure of cigarette smoking. It's still considered by some young people to be cool. We need to continue with our efforts in that regard to make sure that young people realize they're starting down a very wrong path when they start smoking.

0950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a number of things I want to say with reference to Bill 155, the tobacco health care costs recovery bill. Let me say at this time that it's the intention of New Democrats to support this bill. This bill catches Ontario up with a number of other provinces in Canada. It is time that Ontario caught up with a number of other provinces in Canada.

I think we know some of the history of tobacco in Ontario. I was part of a government that introduced the first comprehensive cancer strategy in Ontario and first started to take on the tobacco industry. My colleague, who is our health critic, the member for Nickel Belt, recently launched a private member's bill to ban the sale of single-packaged and flavoured cigarillos, a cigarette of choice for many youth now. It's something that has most recently been quite strongly promoted by the tobacco industry.

I think all of us know the tragic history. It's tragic because five million people lose their lives each year from the use of tobacco. It's tragic because this number will increase to 10 million a year very shortly. Most of us in this room have lost a parent, a friend, a brother, a sister or someone we know from cancer or from tobacco use. We know the physical pain, the emotional suffering and, most of all, the tragic waste of human life.

We all owe it to ourselves, and I think Ontarians, to look seriously not only at this bill but at what is happening today in Ontario in terms of the use of tobacco.

Again, the history of this is tragic because scientists have known for 50 or 60 years that smoking kills, and tobacco companies have known it for 50 or 60 years. Yet, as a society, we have allowed tobacco companies to find various ways of continuing to promote and sell cigarettes as so-called desirable products. We've simply done too

little to stop the kinds of activities engaged in by tobacco companies, and that is part of the reason we have the number of deaths and diseases in their wake. So part of what I want to talk about is the continuing activities of tobacco companies and, hopefully, what this bill might do to address that.

As I said, the scientific literature is everywhere pointing out that for 50 or 60 years we've known the relationship not only between tobacco and cancer, but tobacco and a number of other respiratory diseases that kill or leave people very ill, yet we have continued to allow, in one way or another, the proliferation of tobacco and tobacco products.

With respect to this particular bill, I think it's important to know that British Columbia passed this legislation in two pieces in 1998 and 2000. It was the first province to put in place legislation that would allow governments to sue tobacco companies for health care costs and health care losses. The British Columbia legislation is really based on a decision that was reached in the United States, which essentially holds that you can use the health statistical evidence, and you can make tobacco companies accountable legally on that basis. This bill is modelled after the BC Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. As I say, these acts are important because they give government direct and distinct action against a tobacco manufacturer to recover the cost of health care benefits caused or contributed to by a tobacco-related wrong. It allows government to use population-based epidemiological data to prove that harm has been inflicted by tobacco instead of having to show this for each person separately, which would be effectively impossible.

Tobacco damages acts are important because they reduce the likelihood of behind-closed-doors settlements that the tobacco industry often seeks out. As an example of such a backroom deal, we can point to our own federal government, which reached a settlement in July with tobacco companies for their smuggling operations in the early 1990s. What we know about the early 1990s is that big tobacco companies were in fact running the smuggling operations. It wasn't a few folks who were out there freelancing; big tobacco, the multi-billion dollar tobacco companies, had an organized system of producing cigarettes in Ontario, shipping them to the United States, then smuggling them back into Canada and selling them without paying taxes or any of the other fees and costs associated with it. What we know is that in the deal that was arranged by the federal government in July of this past year, the tobacco companies are only required to pay \$1.2 billion over a number of years. An industry insider said that this amounts to only 25% of the money that one company, Imperial Tobacco, made by smuggling. So it's a backroom deal that essentially lets the tobacco companies off the hook. We don't want to see a similar backroom deal here in Ontario. We shouldn't be letting a tobacco industry that engaged, frankly, in organized crime, an organized system of smuggling cigarettes back into the country and selling them, off lightly.

Similar legislation in the United States has allowed significant claims to be made against tobacco companies. In the United States, under a 50-state settlement, tobacco companies must pay a total of \$250 billion in damages over 25 years. If I may, I think that's what we should be looking at in terms of the kinds of tobacco settlements that are real, because of the damage that has been done.

As I pointed out earlier, Ontario is by no means the first province off the mark with this bill. In fact, all the other provinces except Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Alberta have passed similar legislation. Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia are already there. Ontario is in effect catching up.

I wouldn't want to leave the impression that this bill should be just about money. It shouldn't be just about money. In the United States, the settlements that were achieved under this kind of legislation also resulted in significant non-monetary public health benefits, such as getting rid of Joe Camel, shutting down phoney tobacco company research bodies and putting further restrictions on tobacco advertising.

At the end of the day, I think all of us should recognize that tobacco companies are still reaping billions of dollars in profits from tobacco sales and that they have, for years, intentionally concealed the ill-health effects of tobacco products and actively sought to promote the uptake of smoking among Ontarians, particularly young Ontarians. That's the reality of what we're dealing with.

1000

I want to return to something I talked about briefly earlier. The government of the day is constantly patting itself on the back and telling Ontarians that smoking rates are declining and constantly telling people across Ontario that there's a very effective strategy and fewer people in Ontario are smoking. If you look at the evidence—and outside independent bodies have looked at the evidence—the evidence tells you that that's horse feathers. If you combine the smoking of legally produced cigarettes with the smoking of illegally produced cigarettes, in fact the smoking rate has actually started to increase once again in Ontario. That is something that I think we need to dwell on here as well.

This legislation will essentially allow governments to go after tobacco corporations that are known out there as tobacco corporations, but what we have as a problem is: What's the government prepared to do to take on the issue of illegally produced cigarettes, where there is no known corporation that attaches its brand name or its corporate logo to the cigarettes produced?

We're seeing today in Ontario an epidemic growth in the sales of illegally produced cigarettes. We're seeing those cigarettes being distributed far and wide in Ontario. It seems to me that if we're really going to take this on and we're really going to address the issue of the damage caused by cigarette smoking, by tobacco consumption—the health care costs—we have to deal not just with those cigarettes that are legally produced by corporations which have a logo and have an address; we have to deal with the illegally produced.

If I could use a comparison, it was well known during the time of Prohibition in the United States that there were some alcohol-producing companies that were distributing their alcohol in the United States during Prohibition. But there were also people who did not have an alcohol corporation so identified who were also distributing alcohol in the United States during Prohibition. It would have been quite phoney if Eliot Ness had only gone after the companies that had a legal address in England or a legal address in Canada in terms of the distribution of alcohol and had ignored Al Capone. Americans would have said, "What a phoney war. What a phoney campaign."

If we look at Ontario today and we look at this bill, the government doesn't seem to have a strategy to take on the producers, the distributors, the sellers of illegal cigarettes. This legislation, as far as we can tell, will only apply effectively to the tobacco companies that self-identify as tobacco companies. The Ontario government seems to be content, if I were to put this in the Prohibition context, to ignore the Al Capones of the world who are producing and distributing illegally. I think there's a huge hole here. So before the McGuinty Liberals pat themselves on the back too much, I hope they will think about that.

I just want to cite again some of why we should be concerned about this glaring hole in the McGuinty Liberals' tobacco strategy, because it's clear that there are limits to what this bill will achieve. As my colleague from the Conservative Party pointed out, lawsuits under this bill against companies which are legally producing cigarettes will not take two years or three years or five years; it will probably take 10 years or more for these kinds of lawsuits. So this bill will not achieve, at any time soon, a lowering of tobacco use, and we need to be aware of that. Lawsuits and cost recovery alone will do little to stop young people from taking up smoking or people from dying from smoking, particularly when we now know that the greatest increase in terms of cigarette consumption in this province is of illegally produced, illegally distributed and illegally sold cigarettes. This legislation isn't going to do anything about this, and the result will be that tobacco products, both legal and illegal, will continue to kill 13,000 Ontarians a year. Smoking will continue to account for 30% of all cancers and 85% of lung cancers. Tobacco use, both legal and illegal, will continue to cost Ontario taxpayers \$6.1 billion in premature death, disability and other factors, and above all, smoking will continue to cause untold human suffering and the loss of our dearest loved ones.

I said earlier that, in fact, smoking rates have not declined in Ontario. At first blush, they look like they have flatlined since 2003. But when you consider the consumption of illegal cigarettes and the epidemic of sales of illegal cigarettes, when you include those in the numbers—and we must, as I say, include those in the numbers—then what you realize is that the rate of smoking amongst Ontarians aged 15 and over has actually increased from 16% of people in 2005 to—groups like the

Canadian Cancer Society are very clear: They're saying government needs to take further action to reverse this increase in tobacco use.

What do we need to do? Well, I think there are a number of steps that could be taken. The government needs to quickly implement Bill 124 to control the sale of cigarillos, which, as I'm sure people are aware, are being promoted, especially amongst young people, trying to get young people hooked on smoking. The government should at least double funding of the smoke-free Ontario strategy to an adequate level. I would argue the government should increase tobacco taxes, which are \$15 a carton less in Ontario than they are in Manitoba, and take swift action to curb the availability of low-priced, illegal tobacco, illegal cigarettes to youth and others.

Now, how do you do that? Well, we should look at what some other provinces have done. For example, Manitoba, New Brunswick and British Columbia have worked out settlements with First Nations and given First Nations the right to collect provincial sales tax on cigarettes through innovative tax treaties. Let's be clear: Some of the problem in terms of illegal cigarettes in Ontario is the production of illegal cigarettes on First Nations. First Nations which either have no other economic base or a very limited economic base find that there's an opportunity here. Ontario should be doing what Manitoba, New Brunswick and British Columbia have done, which is to sit down and negotiate agreements with First Nations whereby First Nations get to collect the provincial sales tax and keep that provincial sales tax for needed initiatives on the First Nation.

British Columbia and Alberta have also developed effective electronic monitoring of sales, which requires store owners to pay tax up front to suppliers. That's something we could be doing in Ontario. There are other measures that are currently under way in some of the other provinces that Ontario ought to be looking at.

So, again, this legislation is good in that it copies what has already been done in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and what has already been done in the United States. But we must recognize that, insofar as it will allow us to take some action against big tobacco corporations, we will not likely see anything effective from that for at least 10 years. That's how long it will take in terms of court actions.

But this legislation, so far as we can see, will do nothing in respect of the epidemic increase in sales of illegal cigarettes, where there is no identifiable corporation which stands behind the brand, no identifiable corporation which distributes and sells. In that sense, there's a very large hole here.

Cheap cigarettes, illegal cigarettes, are often advertised and easily available in most Ontario communities. There's a sense now that about 30% of cigarettes currently being sold in Ontario are produced illegally, so there's 30% of the problem that this government is ignoring right off the bat.

As I indicated, New Democrats, at this juncture at least, are prepared to support this legislation, but we

would like the government to stop telling Ontarians that smoking is on the decrease. In fact, I think government members know that when 30% of the cigarettes sold in Ontario are illegally produced, there is lots of evidence to show that smoking rates are actually on the increase in Ontario. Something has to be done to take action with respect to that aspect of tobacco sales, and something has to be done to address that, as other provinces are already starting to do.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8(a), this House is recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pretty excited today. My mom is up from Nova Scotia with a great family friend of ours. My mother is Virginia MacLeod, from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and her friend is Brenda Smith. Brenda is here because she also has a daughter who lives in Ottawa. They thought they'd kill two birds with one stone and come here to the Ontario Legislature, hold Mr. McGuinty to account, and then visit all of their friends and family.

Hon. John Milloy: On behalf of page Jacob Macpherson, I'd like to welcome his entire family here to the Legislature. We are joined by his parents, Andy Macpherson and Susan Fowler; his brother Devlin and sister Quinn; and his grandparents, Ken and Arlene Macpherson and Bill and Betty Fowler. We welcome them all to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I don't intend to kill any birds, but I would like to introduce Dessy and Edith Hammill, who are visiting us from PEI. It must be parents' day, because they are the parents of my excellent LA.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to recognize visitors seated in the Speaker's gallery joining us from the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. It's unfortunate that their newly elected MPP, Rick Johnson, could not be here today to welcome them himself, but he is not sworn in yet.

Joining us is the family of today's page captain, Maddie van Warmerdam. I'm pleased to welcome Ann van Warmerdam, Mike van Warmerdam, Jackie van Warmerdam and Elva Adair Murphy. Also joining them are Maddie's grandfather, Jack Murphy, and his wife, June, from my riding of St. Catharines. They are in the Speaker's gallery today.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'd like to introduce two students from York University who are working as interns in the office of Jack Layton, leader of Canada's New Democrats: Alison Hart and Melissa Bruno, who are with us today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Adrianna Tetley, executive director of the Association of Ontario Health Centres; Lee McKenna duCharme and

François L'Ecuyer, also from this organization; Hazel Stewart, from the public health association; and Stephanie Gordon, who is from the Toronto association for dental care.

I also want to introduce Chrissy Johnson, who is a person who needs treatment; and people from community health centres and the association of dental care of Toronto.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would also like to welcome David Klooz, the associate commissioner of the Niagara Region Public Health, and Stephanie Gordon, manager of the Niagara Region Public Health dental program, visiting with us today from the Niagara region.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce Yvonne Boers—she's here, I believe—and Ron Boers, the mother and father of page Danielle Boers, from the great riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to welcome some guests of mine today from the West Elgin Community Health Centre: Angela Geddes, Cynthia Roodzant, and Chrissy Johnson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Premier, I asked your minister responsible for the OLG why a government agency is giving away 22 foreign-made Mercedes-Benzes when GM is on the brink of bankruptcy and thousands of Ontarians are facing the loss of their jobs in the auto industry. His response? He scolded the head of the OLG in a meeting. That's it.

Premier, this is a scandal-plagued agency which is once again clearly lacking in direction and oversight from your minister. Is your minister's response to this latest fiasco good enough for you?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thought it was the appropriate response to the circumstances. I think it is an opportunity for all of us, both in government and through our extensive government agencies, to be conscious both of the times and of our responsibility to take advantage of Ontario products and Ontario services where that's reasonable for us to do. I think that's the lesson we might draw from this. Unfortunately, the folks at OLG learned this too late, but I'm absolutely convinced that it's not the kind of thing they are going to do again. But, as I say, it's an opportunity for all of us to be conscious of the times and of responsibilities and to seek out Ontario products and Ontario services.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Premier, we've been in this disaster for four years now leading up to it. That answer is not good enough for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have lost their jobs; 300,000 people in Ontario have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector.

It's not good enough for Ontario taxpayers who are being asked by you to support a \$4-billion bailout of GM and Chrysler.

In 2007, there were 138 people at the OLG earning \$100,000, collectively making over \$18 million a year in salaries. Despite all the high-priced help, no one, including the minister responsible for the OLG, thought it was a bad idea to give away 22 foreign-built luxury Mercedes-Benzes when the Ontario auto industry is in crisis and has been for the last three years. Premier, how can you continue to allow this incompetence and shocking lack of oversight by your minister to continue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure there are many people, if any, in Ontario who would agree with the decision taken by OLG executives on this matter of purchasing cars. I think the minister was clear in that regard yesterday and I know we have the full support of the honourable member opposite.

I also think, in fairness, things have improved at the OLG. I'm not saying they are perfect, but there was a report prepared by the Ombudsman and we have addressed the recommendations found within that report. There have been a number of positive steps taken to provide more assurance and more confidence to Ontarians who buy products from the OLG, but obviously there is still more work to be done. I think it's important to acknowledge that we have made some progress when it comes to the OLG.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That response is an insult to the people of Ontario, to the auto workers who have lost their jobs, to the businesses who have ceased to do business and to the taxpayers of this province.

Seventy-one thousand Ontarians lost their jobs in January alone and thousands more are expected to follow. Ontarians can have no confidence in this Premier's ability to manage the economy when he and his minister are spending \$750,000 on foreign-made cars when that money should be spent here in Ontario. Premier, will you hold your minister responsible for this fiasco, or will you simply let it go like you always do? Will you finally show some leadership on this issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand why my honourable colleague is trying to say that we made this decision somehow. We did not; execs at OLG did that. Of the 10 executives at OLG, eight are new.

My colleague says he's concerned about the auto sector particularly. He knows we've been working for a long time with the auto sector. In fact, during the course of the past five years, we still remain the number one auto producer in North America. The auto sector is in crisis and we're working with the sector, the CAW, the parts suppliers, the federal government and Washington as well to see what we can do to strengthen this sector. I think what lesson that we can and must draw is: Where we can, let's today, as Ontarians, be conscious of our options. Where it's reasonable for us to do so, let's buy from Ontario.

1040

MEMBER'S ADVERTISING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. It has come to our attention that plastered across bus shelters in Toronto are ads featuring a full-sized photo of the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure promoting the new energy bill. Premier, I ask you today: Are taxpayers paying for these ads?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: The member, perhaps in her riding, spends that portion of her constituency budget on distributing householders. I do not distribute householders, but instead choose from time to time to use transit shelter ads. These are paid for by my budget from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which is exactly within all of the rules and regulations and entirely consistent with the way other members spend their resources.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I actually don't do householders, but I think that the Premier knows full well that whether it comes out of the government budget or whether it comes out of an MPP budget, the taxpayers are still paying.

If you take a look at this full-sized ad inside the bus shelters, it features the emblem of the government of Ontario. It is promoting the green energy bill. It leaves the impression that this is a government ad paid for by the government. We know that bus shelters are very expensive to advertise in, costing thousands and thousands of dollars. Premier, is it appropriate during these tough economic times that you would allow a minister to do this type of self-promotion?

Hon. George Smitherman: I believe that the honourable member just asked that all members of the Legislature roll back the budgets that are available to them in their constituency offices.

I'm operating within the rules of the Legislature from the standpoint of those established by the Board of Internal Economy. It's clearly identified in the context of my role as a member of the Ontario Legislature, and it's designed to promote opportunities for individuals to learn more about a fairly substantive matter that is a piece of legislation before this Legislature.

It's not presented in a fashion which is partisan; it is presented in an informative fashion. I hope that it will help to drive people to websites so that they can gain greater insights into the Green Energy Act, and I hope that the honourable member will also choose to spend those resources available to her, consistent with the rules, wisely and with a view toward informing her constituents, as I have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again I would say to the Premier: You were the one who introduced a law where you indicated that there should not be advertising that is

of a partisan nature. You introduced this shortly after you became the Premier. You said that we shouldn't be breaching the spirit of this partisanship political advertising, and yet it appears that that has been done.

I say to you again: This ad appears to violate your own government advertising laws that you introduced. What are you going to do about this shameless self-promotion of this minister who seems to have neglected his duties at the OLG?

Hon. George Smitherman: All I say to the honourable member is that in an urban area, we choose to campaign with information to provide information in a fashion which is different than the honourable member's. In a place where people walk to work and use transit, we determined from time to time that placing information in the context of a bus shelter is a very effective way to get information in the hands of people.

There are no words associated with this advertisement that are partisan words. Information is offered in a tone which is designed to offer people the encouragement to gain more information about an important legislative initiative. People walk to work in urban areas and they take transit in urban areas, and we use this mechanism to put information in their hands and encourage them to learn more about important legislative initiatives.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is to the Premier. Imagine coming in to work on a Monday, getting in a full day's work and then going home, and out of the blue you get a call. It's your company telling you not to come in to work tomorrow because your job's not there anymore. That's what happened to 50 workers at Windsor's Aradco and Aramco, award-winning auto parts suppliers. They don't know how the bills are going to get paid next month because more than 50 more auto parts jobs are gone.

It's a story that's playing out in far too many communities across Ontario. Yet, as this government prepares to offer more financial assistance to the auto sector, we have no indication that this assistance is going to come with strings attached; namely, job guarantees.

Will the Premier commit today to the families that rely on those auto sector jobs that financial assistance to the auto sector will definitely be tied to ironclad job guarantees?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to receive the question. I know the member is very concerned about the future of the auto sector, as I think every single member in this Legislature is.

My colleague knows that we've been working for some time now, together with the federal government, with representatives of the auto sector in Ontario, the workers. We've also reached out to parts suppliers, who have a better understanding of the nature of their challenges. In the end, what we're all focused on is keeping as many jobs as we possibly can.

There are discussions that are ongoing, but I think those are focused largely on retaining certain levels of

production here in Ontario. Ultimately, it will be up to the manufacturers and their workers to negotiate the number of jobs, but what we've very much focused on is maintaining our share of production here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: 10,000 men and women who work at GM are voting today on concessions they've already negotiated with the company. Those concessions include wage freezes, fewer holidays and benefit reductions. These workers are making incredible sacrifices. They're doing everything they can to protect their livelihoods and the hard-earned pensions of the pensioners. They and their families want assurances that their sacrifices are not for naught, that the \$2 billion in auto assistance that is going to come from this government will have long-term job guarantees so that the company doesn't have to come back to them for more.

Why won't this Premier stand in his place today, relieve their worry and provide the assurance that the job guarantees will be there?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I wish I could provide the assurance that the leader of the NDP is seeking on behalf of those families. What assurance I can provide is that we will work as hard as we can, together with all of our partners, to maintain our share of production here in Ontario. We'll do everything we can to move through this as quickly as possible, to have money flow as quickly as possible to help out not just our manufacturers, but our parts suppliers and everybody involved in the complex sector that is auto in Ontario today at the beginning of the 21st century.

Again, what we're focused on, though, is maintaining our share of production. I think that's the most significant achievement that we can reach for. It's not so much a specific number of jobs but, rather, our share of production. Job numbers are to be negotiated, then, between management and labour.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Steve Chinn, a laid-off truck plant worker, said this: "We are frustrated, but as long as we can keep GM running and help the retirees, we have to do this."

Workers like Steve understand what's at stake. Now it's time for the government to stand with them by obtaining long-term job guarantees in exchange for long-term assistance—not like the last time, when \$235 million went to GM and thousands of workers went out the door.

Will the Premier rise today and tell auto families very clearly that any assistance will be tied to long-term job guarantees?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we will work as hard as we can to negotiate the best possible deal for Ontario families. We talk about the auto sector, we talk about the Big Three. I've always said it's not about the Big Three; it's about the big four—400,000 Ontarians and their families that have their futures and their optimism tied up

in the vitality of the sector. We'll do everything we can to nail down as strong an agreement as we possibly can, but I do want to say again that our focus will be on retaining our share of production. Ultimately, the decision as to how many Ontarians will be employed in this sector will be the outcome of negotiations between management and labour.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: With Ontario now losing 70,000 jobs a month, more and more Ontario families are finding it very difficult to afford skyrocketing energy bills. The province needs an approach that combines best practices in energy efficiency and conservation with a real commitment to protecting the most vulnerable in the province. It's time for something that I've labelled "affordable environmentalism." For years now, social activists and energy experts have been advocating for a separate hydro rate for Ontarians who are living in poverty. When will this government finally start protecting these Ontarians and their families from soaring energy costs?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: At the heart of the Green Energy Act is the desire on the one hand to create more renewable energy and also to create a culture of conservation, so we do agree with some elements of the honourable member's question, certainly, and hope that we can encourage her party's support for that bill. We also agree that there is a necessity to have greater protection in our province from energy prices for low-income Ontarians. Today's column in the Toronto Star by Tyler Hamilton is based off some work that the Ontario Energy Board has been doing. They have a report that came out yesterday; I would encourage people to take a look at it.

I think we need to go quite a bit further. We're going to enlist the assistance of the Canadian Council on Social Development to assist us, working with other energy-related stakeholders focused on issues of poverty and energy poverty, to try to develop programs in the province which are an enhancement to those that exist now, and we'll be very much looking forward to working with the third party in developing such proposals.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The 80 advocacy and energy groups that make up the Low-Income Energy Network have proposed a permanent electricity and natural gas rate for those living in poverty. New Democrats strongly believe that such a rate needs to be complemented with an aggressive home retrofit program that is within the financial reach of all Ontarians. That's what affordable environmentalism is all about. Why is the government rejecting the idea of affordable environmentalism?

Hon. George Smitherman: With respect, the honourable member came to the House with her questions written, didn't look at the answer and didn't revise her ques-

tion. We are indeed very, very keen to work with all of you on this issue. In the Green Energy Act, there are provisions related to low-income Ontarians. I said just yesterday that the Ontario Energy Board has released a report, which is some reflection of the fact that they are working on it. The LIEN group is one of those, certainly, that we will be working with going forward, and as I mentioned, we're asking the Canadian Council on Social Development to be of some assistance.

It's one thing to say that these things are a good idea; it's quite another sometimes to know exactly where those who are suffering from energy poverty live, and accordingly, we've got to have great sophistication in being able to tailor these programs and make sure that they get exactly where the need is.

On the issue of retrofits targeted at our lowest-income individuals, I can tell the honourable member as well that programs in this area should be anticipated and we're very happy to work with you on the development of such programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Launching small pilot programs that aren't even going to start till November just doesn't cut it. Ontario is in the midst right now of a serious economic downturn. Families are scrambling to pay the rent, put food on the table and provide for their kids. We desperately need an affordable energy program that takes in best practices from the environmental movement and combines them with a firm commitment to social justice.

That's why we need a special permanent energy rate for those who are having trouble paying their energy bills right now and it's why we need a home retrofit program that is going to be affordable and accessible to all Ontarians. These are initiatives that should be implemented immediately. In fact, they should already have been implemented by this government in the past. What is the government waiting for?

Hon. George Smitherman: The challenge, as I tried to suggest to the honourable member, is that it's not like, as we stand here, there's a list of who those individuals are. It's very, very easy to say that there should be programs, but it's a separate matter to make sure that the programs are actually effective at targeting the right individuals. Many people living in poverty are doing so in circumstances, however, where their energy bill is embedded in their rent. We have more than a million residences in the province of Ontario that are on bulk metering not related to the individual unit. So it is a somewhat more challenging matter to ensure that we are targeting these resources at exactly the right people. Therefore, we want to make sure that we have good-quality program design, but we're very keen to move forward in the very direction spoken to today by the honourable member and very keen to have any input that she might offer to make sure we develop programs that get to where the need is and are effective. You have constituents, as do I, who are in these kinds of circumstances. I'll be very happy to work with the honourable member.

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. One of the measures that the Minister of Finance is considering for his upcoming budget is harmonization of the federal GST and the provincial PST. In a report released today by Canada's largest independent real estate consulting and advisory firm, Altus Group, they estimate that the cost to homebuyers will be up to \$17,000 of new increased taxes in Ottawa, \$25,000 of new increased taxes on homes in Mississauga and up to \$46,000 of new taxes for new homes in Toronto. Surely the Premier and the Minister of Finance will agree that Ontario's home buyers and our economy cannot withstand that kind of tax increase. Will the Premier undertake today, will he give us assurances, that any changes to tax policy in this province will exclude this harmful effect on home buyers and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're all awaiting eagerly the presentation of the budget inside this chamber shortly. We've had a number of representations made from a number of different business communities, and there are a number who advocate harmonization. But in particular I want to make reference to my colleague's federal cousins, who, in their recent federal budget, said the following: "A single sales tax is the single most important step that provinces with retail sales taxes could take to stimulate new business investment, create jobs and improve Canada's overall tax competitiveness."

I would be pleased to hear from the honourable member opposite as to his party's position. Are they in favour of or against harmonization? I think it would be helpful to us and to Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to respond to the Premier. We are advocating for consumers and we are advocating for an industry. What we're saying is, if in fact the government chooses to proceed with harmonization, there should be the appropriate exclusions for home buyers, for the building industry of homes in this province, to ensure that \$2.4 billion of new taxes are not imposed on Ontario consumers. That is our advice to the Premier and to the Minister of Finance. Now we look forward as to whether the Premier will take our advice.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not really sure what that advice is. I thought they were a little bit more precise in their dissenting opinion for the 2009 pre-budget consultations filed on behalf of the official opposition. They said, "The official opposition calls on this government to heed the call of the federal government and take immediate action to fix Ontario's uncompetitive tax structure." We've got a federal government that's advocating harmonization. They're telling us that they endorse the federal government's position, so I take it that they're in favour of harmonization. I'll pass that along to the Minister of Finance so he takes that advice into account in the preparation of his budget.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. As thousands of Ontarians lose their jobs in the auto sector, we are constantly reminded of how important that industry is to many individuals and their families throughout our province. With so many jobs at stake, it is the government's job to support the auto industry. In 2009, the ministers' vehicle list outlines the make and model of the vehicles available for use by your ministers. The list includes cars built in Japan and cars built in the United States. Why does this government allow so many of the cars on the ministers' vehicle list to be built other than in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Our acquisition policy, I think the member would know, is pretty clear. Except for alternate fuel and hybrid models, the government of Ontario vehicles governed by this policy shall be restricted and limited to new vehicles that are assembled in North America. Our government buys made-in-Ontario vehicles whenever that is possible. Nearly 80% of the vehicles purchased in the 2008 model year were made in Ontario; that's approximately 1,900 vehicles. This was up from 66% in the 2007 model year. Over 500 new made-in-Ontario vehicles were purchased in May and June of 2008. New 2008 vehicles include 100 new Dodge Caravan vans from the Windsor Chrysler plant; they'll be used to help seniors get to medical appointments. The only exceptions are the hybrid or green vehicles, with only a total of 461 in our fleet.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: We want to know what the government is doing about the vehicle policy list, considering that 15 out of 23 are made outside of Ontario. The issue deals directly with the auto industry, which is so central to our economy. It is up to the government to set an example, particularly at a time when so many Ontarians have lost their jobs in the auto industry.

You are a strong advocate for Buy Ontario. It is time for the government to take the lead and show its support for the Ontario auto industry. When will this government ensure that all cars on the 2009 ministers' vehicle list are built right here in Ontario and in Canada?

1100

Hon. James J. Bradley: I must first of all point out to the member, when he gets into this field, that about 85% of the vehicles produced in Ontario are in fact exported outside of Ontario to the United States, which of course is very positive.

In terms of the procurement policies of the government, as I've mentioned, outside of the hybrid vehicles, we really find that overwhelmingly the majority of vehicles that are purchased are Ontario-made.

Now, I think the member will find that as more of the hybrids are built in the province of Ontario, for instance, he will find even more—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, if he wants to hear the answer, he will find even more of them will be built here

in Ontario. But overwhelmingly that is the case, that even though we have a pretty coordinated North American—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. At a time when many Ontarians are facing challenges due to economic uncertainty, it's even more important for us to continue the fight against poverty to ensure that everyone in Ontario is at their best.

Two weeks ago, the minister introduced legislation in this House as part of the government's poverty reduction strategy. I was interested to hear the debate on the bill and proud to support it. However, there have been some concerns expressed about a lack of initiatives contained in the legislation and that it does not go as far as Quebec's legislation on poverty reduction does.

Could the minister please address these concerns for the benefit of this House and my constituents of Ottawa-Orléans?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member for the question and I'm happy to have the opportunity to respond to these concerns.

When we are comparing Ontario's approach to reducing poverty to Quebec's, it's important to note that in Ontario, we released our strategy first. In Quebec, they released their legislation first. Our strategy came first; it is a strategy worth \$1.4 billion a year at full implementation. We also included a specific income target, the first in North America, that will raise the standard of living of all kids living in poverty and see 90,000 lifted out of poverty over five years. Quebec doesn't have that specific income target.

Our legislation, if passed, is about a long-term, ongoing commitment to poverty reduction and goes further than Quebec's in a number of ways. It mandates that future governments maintain a strategy; it mandates that future governments renew the strategy with a new target every five years; it mandates—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I know my constituents will be pleased to hear that Ontario has a plan of action with concrete initiatives and bold ideas. I'm glad to hear that we took a unique made-in-Ontario approach that is supported by our community partners.

The government's poverty reduction strategy is the first in Ontario's history. Not only did other governments not have a plan; some took deliberate steps that reduced opportunities for people to get ahead.

My constituents want to know how this legislation will help to ensure that poverty receives the attention it deserves. Could the minister please explain this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We think this is the most aggressive legislation of its kind in North America, and possibly the world, because it ensures that future govern-

ments continue to put poverty reduction on the political agenda.

This legislation, if passed, enshrines a long-term commitment. We're taking the important first steps, but we know it's going to take far more than five years to get to where we all want to be. We released our strategy, *Breaking the Cycle*, but we also heard that people living in poverty need to have a continued voice, to participate in the conversation. Our legislation requires that people living in poverty have that ongoing involvement in issues that affect them.

This is important legislation. I do hope that all members from all parties will support this historic—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Rapid growth is one of the greatest challenges in health care today, certainly in Durham region, in my riding of Durham. It stands to reason that an increase in population puts more pressure on hospitals and in fact on all health resources, including ER and doctor shortages. I was shocked to read in an article in *Clarington This Week* that the CEO of the Central East Local Health Integrated Network said she won't be fighting for more funding for growth areas. The CEO, Deborah Hammons, said, "We're not asking for [more] money from the Ministry [of Health] to deal with growth." Meanwhile, Minister, the services in my hospitals are threatened: at Bowmanville, the ER; in Port Perry, obstetrics; and indeed in Uxbridge as well.

Minister, is the provincial policy that LHINs will ignore the needs of growth funding, or has our local health integration network misunderstood the responsibilities of citizens in Durham—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. David Caplan: I can tell you very clearly that it's the policy of this government to recognize the growth pressures for the very first time. I would say to the member that when he had the privilege to serve on this side of the House, growth pressures were not recognized within the province of Ontario when they related to health care funding. It took this Premier and this government, in our last budget, to unveil \$120 million provided to high-growth communities, of which Durham is of course one.

I do recognize the growth pressures there and across many other communities in the province of Ontario. In the budget year 2008-09, \$30 million flowed to the local health integration networks for distribution to meet those growth pressures. That is the first step, and there will be future steps in future budgets to fully allocate the \$120 million that was outlined by Minister Duncan in last year's budget.

I look forward to the supplementary, and I want the member to know that it is our very clear policy to recognize those growth pressures.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, the article I quote from This Week mentions recent grants to the very hospitals we're discussing. A representative from the Growing Communities Healthcare Alliance is saying that Lakeridge Health, of which I speak, should have received \$3 million of the growth funding allocated in central-east. Tariq Asmi, of the Growing Communities Healthcare Alliance, says that Lakeridge's share of that should have been \$3 million; instead, it was about \$900,000. The CEO of Central East LHIN says her agency won't ask for more money from the ministry. In fact, staff in your ministry office say that there is no more money.

My question then to you, Minister, is, if the Central East LHIN won't stand up for high-growth communities such as mine, will your government step in to ensure that growth funding within the LHIN is distributed in a fair manner? That is all I'm asking for: our fair share of the growth funding.

Hon. David Caplan: When the member had an opportunity to advocate on behalf of hospital corporations within his riding when he was on this side of the House, in fact, he supported a 5.5% cut to hospital budgets. I would say for the member that those cuts were applied fairly across the province; all health care organizations experienced that lack of support and undermining pressures that they were under.

In 2003, that changed significantly. In our most recent budget last year, in fact, growth funding for the very first time was recognized by this government. Now, I acknowledge that there is more to do. We have a long history in this province of not recognizing these pressures. It takes leadership which has the courage to first of all recognize the problem, and to begin to put in place the elements of a plan to do so. We will work with our local health integration networks—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Today, the Association of Ontario Health Centres explained why the McGuinty government must keep its promise on oral health. The 2008 budget reads, "The government will be developing a plan to provide dental services to low-income persons." I know that the eligibility for CINOT has been extended from age 14 to 18, but we have yet to see the promised early years screening program or the oral health prevention and treatment program for low-income Ontarians.

When does the Premier intend to provide dental services to low-income persons and flow the promised \$35 million a year?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health Promotion.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for the question. First of all, I'd like to take the opportunity today to welcome the Association of Ontario Health Centres to Queen's Park, and all the health professionals who are in the House today.

Investment in dental care for Ontarians is critical. Our government is committed to improving the oral health of Ontarians and we are moving forward with our commitment. Ontario's children are our priority. That is why our government continues to work to improve the oral health of Ontario's children. That is why we expanded the children in need of treatment program to include children 17 and under.

This is just the first phase. Along with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: As I mentioned in my first question, we know that CINOT has been expanded, but today MPPs receive postcards from citizens across the province. You can read the facts: Forty-two per cent of people in Ontario have no dental insurance. People who have lost their jobs, families on EI and families on social assistance cannot afford the high cost of dental treatment. People who are in constant pain do not have an affordable place to go.

After the budget announcement, over 30 community health centres and aboriginal health access centres have been in discussion with public health units across the province to plan for this funding. Minister, will the community health centres and the aboriginal access centres have a leading role in the program when the funding finally flows?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Along with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, we are moving forward with a plan that, when fully implemented, will provide \$45 million annually to ensure that low-income Ontarians have access to quality dental care.

As I said before, our youth are our priority. Our government continues to fund public health units to provide critical programs and services to the community. With the expansion of this program—this is just the first step—we expect to double the number of children who will access this service. In 2008, the CINOT program paid for urgent care for over 26,900 children with serious oral health problems who may have otherwise gone untreated. We stand committed to promoting and protecting the oral health of all Ontarians.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, we're clearly seeing challenging economic times around the world. These challenges are hitting home and touching the lives of northern families and families right across the province of Ontario.

Until recently, the mining industry has seen unprecedented growth, which has been driven by high commodity prices. However, it too is not immune to the current economic climate. Just last week, Vale Inco laid off employees in Sudbury, and in February, Xstrata also laid off employees in Sudbury. Indeed, these are challenging times for the mining industry and for families impacted by job losses.

Minister, I understand that last week the Prospectors and Developers Association international conference was held in Toronto. Could you please tell the House what the mood was like at the conference as we are seeing falling commodity prices around the world?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much to the member. Indeed, we are going through challenging times, but last week people from around the mining world came to Toronto and joined together at the Prospectors and Developers Association conference. Despite the economic downturn, I think there's no question that the mood of the conference was very optimistic. In fact, they drew the third-highest attendance in their history: over 18,000 delegates. At our Ontario pavilion alone, our staff spoke to well over 400 delegates and exhibitors looking for mineral investment opportunities in the province of Ontario.

Garry Clark, the executive director of the Ontario Prospectors Association, I think summed it up best. In very positive comments, he said, "We're a pretty optimistic group." Even though commodity "prices aren't good and the economy is not good ... there seems to be a lot of people looking for projects." Ontario clearly remains a leading jurisdiction in Canada and a major player in the mining world. We're very happy about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Minister. It is certainly refreshing to hear that, at the conference, there was positive feedback and that there remains a sense of optimism in Ontario's mining sector.

I understand that at last year's conference there was the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the PDAC and the Assembly of First Nations, which was a historic undertaking that will help industry and First Nations work together on mineral development. Mining and mineral sector activity, especially in northern First Nations and aboriginal communities, is often the only economic development opportunity.

Minister, as mining is playing a major role in the economic development of many First Nations and aboriginal communities and also in light of the fact that we're in the process of modernizing the Mining Act, I'd like to know how the First Nations and aboriginal communities were involved in this year's prospectors' and developers' conference.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed, at this year's conference, First Nation and aboriginal communities were extremely well represented. I was pleased to be able to host a breakfast meeting at PDAC with representatives from a number of First Nation communities. I also had an opportunity to stop by the Matawa First Nation booth on the trade show floor, which was located very close to our Ontario pavilion.

I want to remind the House too that we have a very positive working relationship with many First Nations, including Matawa, which just signed a memorandum of understanding that will see us develop a consultation protocol for mineral exploration and development on their traditional lands. It will ultimately provide greater

certainty and direction for mineral exploration and development there.

This is one example of the type of relationship that our government is working hard to foster between ourselves, aboriginal communities and industry, and a conference like PDAC certainly helps further those relationships.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. I've gone through the General Motors restructuring plan, as I'm sure you have, that we received in late February. When you look at page 256 and quite a few others, just to mention a few, it specifically states in "restructuring plan highlights": "maintains General Motors Canada Ltd.'s share of Canada-US production, which is expected to range between 17% and 20%."

The Premier, in his response early on, went on to specifically state that, "We will continue to maintain our production share here in Ontario."

Minister, there are a lot of other significant components found within General Motors and the auto sector, whether it's the engineering department, the mechanics there or the other salaried individuals who aren't even mentioned in this proposal. What discussions have you had to ensure that the thousands of salaried workers in Ontario will continue to stay here?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I appreciate the member's question. I know that the member has been a long-time advocate for his community, in particular the matters that he has raised here.

The Premier made reference to production because he was asked about production. Certainly, you've seen General Motors, in their restructuring plan, not only make reference to commitments around production, but they have already made investments around R&D and its engineering centre and the focus and development of green vehicle technology.

I say to the member that we are very focused on keeping the level of production and economic activity out of General Motors in a way that is in the best interests—we're not just fighting on the production front but we're fighting on behalf of all those workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, just in case you're unaware, the head office lease for General Motors Canada expires next year. The belief is that the individuals who are working at the head office will be relocated to General Motors United States and that there will be a large movement of thousands of employees. Not only that, but for those who are unaware, there have been 160 of the new hydrogen vehicles produced in Oshawa at the engineering department, at a cost of around \$1 million. They are currently operating around the world being tested. The concern there is that these individuals are going to lose their jobs, and the engineering component as well may be relocated outside of Ontario. This will have a substantial impact on those jobs, whether it's the

mechanics working in the engineering department, the engineers or all the other ones.

Minister, can you ensure that the salaried workers, the mechanics, the engineers and every other component will continue on a proportional basis to remain in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member raises a very interesting point with respect to not only head office and its location but a number of matters involving engineers and other workers who are not necessarily involved in production. It is positive. I know the member would agree that GM did say in its restructuring plan that it will be launching five new vehicles in Oshawa and Ingersoll.

I appreciate what the member is saying with respect to what GM in Oshawa is going to look like at the end of all this. I can say to the member that I think we all know that it's going to be smaller, that the footprint will be smaller. We continue to fight for proportionality with respect to production. As I said before, we continue to fight for all those workers. But I say to the member that I want to work with him very closely to address this and all those issues so that we can ensure that all of those workers in fact are getting the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Education: The Falconer report, the government's own roots of youth violence report, experts in the field of education, and educators and community workers on the ground all have called for the maintenance and increase of qualified support staff in schools to ensure student success. With the possible firing of teachers, librarians and educational assistants announced at the Toronto District School Board today, it is clear that you are going in a different direction. Education is your responsibility, and Kathleen Wynne the trustee would be screaming bloody murder at these cuts. What will Kathleen Wynne the minister do to stop the possible cuts of 186 educational assistants and teacher-librarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just on the overall issue of support workers in schools, we've increased the number of support staff by approximately 8,600—that's across the province; 8,600 more support workers—despite the fact that there are 90,000 fewer students in our schools. So while enrolment has gone down, not only have we increased the number of teachers, we've increased the number of support workers because we know how important those people are to supporting teachers in the classroom and supporting kids.

I'm very aware of the particular issue that the member raises about education assistants in the Toronto District School Board. When we were came into office, class sizes in those kindergarten classrooms, which is where most of those EAs are, were 25, 30, 35 kids. Those class sizes are now under 20, and so the whole policy rationale for those EAs has disappeared.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I say to the minister that reducing classroom support is not a smart economic strategy. Education finance is your responsibility. Teacher-librarians help students to read and education assistants help children to learn. Before you decided on this cost-cutting strategy, did you consider the cost to our children and their future?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have not settled on a cost-cutting strategy. In fact, since we've been in office we've been increasing funding every year to a school system that is in declining enrolment. There are fewer kids in the system and yet we know that we need to keep putting those resources in: almost 5,000 more education assistants; 780 more custodians; 920 more secretaries; 1,200 more support services staff, which includes lunch-room and yard supervision, library workers and so on; other paraprofessionals, 829—those are teaching assistants and other classroom assistants. On top of that we have included more funding for safe schools, so that includes more psychologists, more social workers and more child and youth workers. Overall, there are more adults in our schools now than there were in 2003, even though there are fewer students.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You have spoken a number of times in this House about what our government is doing to support affordable housing in Ontario with programs such as the \$100-million investment for social housing repair, the joint affordable housing program with our federal and municipal partners, as well as rental support programs such as the rent bank, which has helped nearly 1,400 people in my community of Ottawa.

Amongst vulnerable groups who need our help for housing, there are those who suffer from a mental illness or are, tragically, victims of domestic violence. Could the minister please tell the House what his ministry is doing to assist these specific vulnerable members of our society to receive the housing they need?

Hon. Jim Watson: Our government, through the affordable housing program, is assisting those individuals who are suffering from mental illness or are victims of domestic violence throughout the province of Ontario, and specifically, the honourable member knows the work we've done in the city of Ottawa. Across Ontario, there are 577 units dedicated to people with mental illness and 443 dedicated to victims of domestic violence. In Ottawa, there are 18 such units that will be built, and in addition to those units, the provincial government is providing rent bank funding to prevent individuals from being evicted from their homes. The city of Ottawa has received \$7 million under our DOOR program, which, again, helps individuals from all walks of life. Finally, we have provided to the city of Ottawa \$2.7 million for rent supplements to help subsidize rent for individuals in our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure these programs will make a difference in our community of Ottawa and in my riding of Ottawa Centre. But as you know, Ottawa, like many cities and towns across Ontario, is feeling the strain of the economic downturn. Social assistance costs have risen and Ottawa is finally starting to recover from the recent transit strike.

Members of my community want to know how the provincial government is helping them and helping Ottawa to weather this current economic storm, and what concrete steps the province is taking to not only deal with this issue in the short term but make investments that will make a significant difference in the long term.

Hon. Jim Watson: As a result of the signing of an historic agreement last October between the municipal sector and the province of Ontario, after years of dealing with the burden of downloading we are taking that burden away from property taxpayers in communities like the city of Ottawa and we're uploading various costs, such as public health, ambulance costs, the Ontario drug plan, the Ontario disability support program, Ontario Works—also known as welfare—as well as court security and prisoner transportation. Those costs are being removed from the Ottawa property taxpayers' bill and brought back to where they should be: at the province of Ontario.

Just recently, the Minister of Transportation announced that OC Transpo will be receiving over \$36 million in gas tax to help operate the public transit system. In addition, under the Investing in Ontario Act, the city of Ottawa has received over \$77 million for infrastructure in my hometown of Ottawa.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Last week, I raised the small-business concerns of a grocer, Ken Ross, in my constituency. On top of the minimum wage increase, Ken has already seen a 35% increase in his hydro bill despite taking all the necessary energy efficiency precautions. Now he has to plan for at least another 30% increase on his \$30,000-a-month electricity bill because of Bill 150 and the tax and power grab.

Minister, Ken Ross and other business owners need to know if you will defend their interests and make sure there are no other hidden costs in the upcoming provincial budget that will prevent small businesses from creating more jobs when we need them most.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm pleased, one more time, to try and be of assistance to the honourable member in relation to this individual business person that she brings forward. I can confirm that there is nothing in plans that would have the effect that the honourable member is proposing related to increases in electricity costs for this gentleman or for any other.

In fact, as the Green Energy Act moves forward, it will empower local distribution companies, like the excellent one that we have in Ottawa, to work very proactively with businesses like the one that's mentioned to further enhance the energy efficiency opportunities that lie there. The Green Energy Act will not be leading to rates of increase such as those proposed by the honourable member, but it will be leading to more jobs in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question wasn't about the Green Energy Act, or the tax and power grab, as we like to call it on this side. Clearly, the fact that he deferred this question only reflects the control the current Minister of Energy and Infrastructure has put in place on that side.

Small business is the economic engine of Ontario's growth, where the vast majority of new jobs are created. Instead of fostering growth, this government creates obstacles to job creation at every turn. Again I'm going to ask the minister responsible for small business: Has he spoken to the Minister of Finance to ensure that next week's budget will not include any additional costs to doing business in this province, and will he meet with them right away and prove it to this Legislature?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm very pleased to answer this question. The member on that side doesn't need to tell me that the small businesses are the engines of this province. We have about 360,000 small businesses who are actually doing quite well in this province, even in spite of the challenges they are facing in this global context. They generate about \$250 billion worth of activity, and 50% of all employment is generated by this.

That is why our government has a very balanced approach to all the legislation that we bring in here. We have the programs that assist small businesses in the challenges they are facing in this global context. We have 57 enterprise centres which are willing to help them at any point in time and we have 12 advisory groups which are willing to help them, but over and above, we have programs that actually greatly assist our small-business communities. I would be more than pleased—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. One and a half years ago, the McGuinty Liberals promised emergency dental care for low-income children up to the age of 18. Ken Schabler was laid off from his job at Kenora Forest Products a year ago and no longer has health care benefits for himself or his three teenaged children.

Will the minister explain why the McGuinty government denied emergency dental coverage to the 17-year-old daughter of Mr. Schabler, who applied for emergency

coverage to have her wisdom teeth removed, something that is very necessary?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'll refer that question to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. David Caplan: I appreciate the member raising the matter here in the Legislature. Obviously, I couldn't know the individual circumstance. If the member would be good enough to forward them to me, I would certainly ask officials to take a look and see what the circumstances are and if there are opportunities to be able to help the constituent that he raises here in the House today. Any member, of course, can raise these matters in this House or with me directly, or with my staff, as they do through the MPP liaison function that I know all ministers' offices have.

We do have a program which is in place to help in times of emergency. It is difficult to be able to comment on an individual case without the context and without any of the information other than what the member has presented in about a 60-second response, but I would undertake to the member to, as quickly as that information is forwarded, get a response to him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'd be pleased to provide the facts now. When Mr. Schabler's daughter applied, she was a grade 12 student, 17 years of age. After some delay from the Ministry of Health, they responded and said, "Since you have now turned 18, you are denied coverage." This looks very cynical.

My question is this: Will the minister intervene and ensure that this grade 12 teenaged student, who applied for emergency dental coverage when she was 17 years old to do a procedure which is very necessary, receives the coverage, or does the cynical impression in fact represent reality?

Hon. David Caplan: I think it's disappointing that the member opposite would take a cynical approach. I think I indicated in response to the first question which he asked a willingness to take a look at the case if he would bring it forward. Unfortunately, the member has chosen so far not to do so, but I hope that he will, in fact, forward the information either to me or to my office so that we can follow up with his constituent and see what service we could provide. I cannot presuppose what action will ensue, not having had an opportunity to be able to take a look at the specifics of the case. I certainly am willing to take a very open-minded approach and do whatever we can. I do mention to the member that he does know that this kind of protocol has existed, having been a very experienced member in this House. Of course, my office is open to working with him and all members in helping to resolve matters related to constituents.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. I understand that in the Kingston Whig-Standard yesterday, Dr. David Lillicrap, a Queen's researcher, said that President Obama's

announcement that he is lifting the ban on funding for stem cell research "may seriously hurt this country's ability to attract good scientists in the future." Dr. Lillicrap said that "the heart and soul" of stem cell research is operating grants to scientists. He said Canadian scientists won't be able to compete with the US unless the research community receives support.

In today's Globe and Mail, another article states that many Canadian researchers are concerned about "funding for the basic, curiosity-driven research that history has shown leads to important discoveries." Operating grants are a fundamental part of a great deal of scientific research. What is our government doing to ensure that we don't lose our researchers to the United States?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. I want to assure all members of the House that our commitment to research, both basic and applied, is as firm as it ever was. There's a commitment of some \$650 million of the taxpayers' money that is spent and is allocated towards our researchers and the type of cutting-edge work that we're doing.

I would give the example of Dr. Anthony Pawson at Lunenfeld Research, who just received the Kyoto prize—the first Canadian scientist to receive that prize. We're particularly proud that that half-million dollars, which came from the Inamori Foundation, has been matched by our government so that Dr. Pawson can attract and retain some of the top young scientists in the world to come to Mount Sinai and be part of his team, which continues each and every day to make biomedical research history. We're so proud of him and all of his 10,000 colleagues here in the province of Ontario. We will continue to support them because truly they are the future.

We acknowledge President Obama, but we will continue to be ahead of the curve when it comes to our American friends and compete for the best talent in the world—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo on a point of order.

MEMBER'S ADVERTISING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order. Today in question period, I asked the Premier about the appropriateness of the bus shelter ads in Toronto featuring a full-sized ad and photo of the Minister of Energy which promotes his energy bill. I also asked if this advertising breaches the spirit of the partisan political advertising law that he introduced.

The ad refers to a bill that has not yet passed second reading. In fact, we are debating the bill today. It has not yet gone to committee. The minister himself has acknowledged that he is open to amendments to the bill, and after committee we still have third reading.

This is not just any bill; it is a bill that is attached to his own ministerial responsibilities, and the government has referred to it as a very important bill to them.

There is a ruling on this in federal Parliament. In response to a complaint about the ads by the former Min-

ister of Immigration featuring a bill to amend the Immigration Act that had not yet passed, the federal Speaker ruled that such ads should not be repeated.

This ad gives the impression that it is funded by the government and by taxpayers, and unfortunately, in today's society, perception is reality. As well, the Minister of Energy has used the word "campaign" in one of his responses.

Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully request you review the ad and the minister's response and render a ruling on whether the ad is appropriate for a member of this assembly.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Further to that point—and I don't think the Speaker should put much weight on the minister referring to it as "campaigning"; I'm sure that was an inadvertent use of that word—let me put this to you: If any of us in the opposition, in our householders, were to critique or attack a government policy initiative, especially a piece of government legislation, I'm confident that that would be perceived as partisan content. We are all very careful to avoid that. Our householders are screened by people across the road, and there are penalties, financial ones, for anybody who dares include partisan content.

I suggest that the Speaker might consider Ms. Witmer's point of order in that very context. The minister says it's the equivalent of householders; so be it. But it seems to me that if you're promoting a government policy, as compared to critiquing a government policy—the minister thinks that should be okay. I say both of them constitute partisan activity in what is the equivalent of a householder.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader.

Hon. George Smitherman: Perhaps I might, on the same point of order, just say that I look forward to any ruling that you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. George Smitherman: Everybody listened very carefully to these important points. All I want to offer is that the word "proposed" is the second word associated with the presentation. It's designed to offer people the instinct to garner more information. But I would be very willing, obviously, to listen to any recommendations the Speaker might have to offer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Just to emphasize that the advertisements do fall within the rules as they say "would" and not "will," and they don't presume passage.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable members for their points. I would say to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo that it really was not a point of order; it was more of a point of privilege. But I will reserve judgment on that and take the opportunity to review the points, along with the comments that were made by the other members.

DEFERRED VOTES

APOLOGY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PRÉSENTATION D'EXCUSES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies / Projet de loi 108, Loi concernant la présentation d'excuses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kular, Kuldeep
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
Martiniuk, Gerry
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol
Munro, Julia
Naqvi, Yasir
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Takhhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

DiNovo, Cheri
Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul

Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 64; the nays are 5.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ERNIE CROSSLAND

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to a great Canadian, a loyal Ontarian and a dedicated citizen of his hometown of Newmarket and of York region. In fact, Ernie Crossland is known as "Mr. Community." Ernie Crossland has served our province and his local com-

munity with distinction, yet always with humility. His reputation as a person who gets things done for the benefit of the community has earned him the respect of political, business and community leaders, who continue to look to him for counsel, advice and inspiration.

Ernie Crossland's enthusiastic leadership and hands-on involvement with community groups and service clubs has enriched countless lives and has inspired environmental, cultural and humanitarian projects that will benefit Ontarians for generations to come. Mr. Crossland's volunteer contributions over more than 50 years are reflective of his belief that active participation in community life is not only a privilege, it is also a responsibility.

Today, I join with Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District, his family, his many friends, associates and community members in congratulating Ernie Crossland as the recipient of the Community Service Award for a Lifetime of Excellence in Service. No one is more deserving of this honour than my friend Ernie Crossland, and on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly, I extend our best wishes and sincere appreciation to this exemplary citizen of Ontario.

SCHOOL POOLS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Gerard Kennedy, the former Minister of Education for this Liberal government, ran on a platform promising the province would be paying for Toronto school pools. That's what Mayor Miller told the Toronto Sun. We all know that Toronto school pools are the responsibility of the provincial government, and yet seven pools in Toronto are once again earmarked for closure: Bickford Centre, Bloor Collegiate, Central Commerce, Danforth Collegiate, Oakwood Collegiate, Parkdale Collegiate and the Ursula Franklin Academy.

Children in Toronto depend on these pools, as do most of the adult swimmers in the city. The McGuinty government made a promise to tackle childhood obesity by encouraging healthier diets and more physical activity. Your words, Premier, do not match your deeds. Closing school pools is short-sighted, and it's irresponsible at a time when childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions.

School pools create community hubs. They bring people together; they bring parents and children together. They bring communities to the local school. They are a hub for physical activity.

Let's Make Waves is a coalition of parents, students and community school members demanding that you take action to keep these school pools open. I say to the people watching today, join me and join them: Let's make waves.

LONDON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate and honour the London Eco-

nomics Development Corp. LEDC has been encouraging entrepreneurship and providing support to industry growth in London. They offer a wealth of information and support, from providing grant opportunities to finding the right location to establish a business. LEDC has done great work for the city of London by simplifying the first steps of entrepreneurship.

At an economic roundtable I recently attended, LEDC proposed a creative idea to stimulate business growth in the city of London under the name "Export Market Access." It was recently implemented to assist businesses in London to expand their growth in a new foreign market beyond the United States. The idea is unique, and the benefits are enormous.

If a company qualifies, they are eligible for a grant that would cover 50% of the cost needed to develop export sales. Even though we are in difficult economic times, LEDC continues to build self-esteem in small and medium-sized businesses. Their role in London is essential, and I would like to show appreciation for their tireless efforts. Also, I want to congratulate the CEO of the LEDC of London, Mr. Peter White, for his continuous efforts to make sure that London and region attract a lot of business in order to be able to provide jobs for the good people of the city of London and the region.

From this place, I would like to continue my message to support and encourage the LEDC to continue doing a great job on behalf of all the people of the city of London and the London region. They're great people and they're doing the best to support our economy.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: When it comes to the state of Ontario's economy, the provincial government must focus on three big priorities: economic development, job training, and infrastructure investment to strengthen our long-term economic competitiveness. Here are just a few additional suggestions as to what this government should and must do in its upcoming budget.

They must outline a credible plan to eliminate their deficit and balance the provincial books.

They must thoroughly evaluate the idea of harmonizing the GST and PST and hold public hearings before making a final decision.

They must make the Ministry of Economic Development the lead ministry of government until the economy begins to grow again.

They must promote Ontario actively and aggressively, with the help of the best and the brightest of Ontario's public servants.

They must follow the advice they sought from Roger Martin and reduce taxes on new business investment in Ontario, now amongst the highest in the world.

They must develop a strategy to turn Toronto into the leading financial services city in the world.

They must make substantial new infrastructure investments. For example, we need a new hospital in Fergus and we need to have GO trains running through

Acton, Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo within three years' time.

They must consider a sales tax holiday for new vehicle purchases. Frank Miller did this when he was Treasurer, and it could be done again today in the auto industry's hour of need.

If they're willing to listen, we stand ready to provide solutions. With determined action, I know that Ontario's best days are yet to come.

EPILEPSY PEEL REGION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past Friday I had the opportunity to attend Epilepsy Peel's first annual general meeting to mark the great work they have done and the growth they have achieved. The meeting was held at the Hershey Centre in my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. This organization helps residents with epilepsy to live happy and productive lives. Their volunteers have contributed greatly to improving the quality of life of those living with epilepsy in my community.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to those volunteers. Thank you for your hard work, thank you for your time, thank you for your passion and thank you for your dedication. In particular, I would like to thank Tahverlee Dunlop for her leadership and for reaching out to people in my community who would otherwise be isolated. I also want to congratulate Sandra O'Brien for winning the Shining Youth Award. Her volunteerism is a great example to youth in Peel.

I look forward to attending other Epilepsy Peel events and seeing even more progress in the years to come.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: Residents of my riding are tired of being treated as second-class citizens when it comes to their health care.

At the last council meeting, the mayor and councillors of my hometown of Georgina passed a resolution calling for the province to fix how health care is funded. The resolution calls on this government to speed up the implementation of the \$100-million hospital growth funding commitment, ensuring that growth funding is targeted to high-growth hospitals; to quickly implement population-needs-based funding for provincial hospital and health care services; and to develop a health care plan for Ontario's high-growth communities to complement the government's Places to Grow plan for development.

The Growing Communities Healthcare Alliance has calculated that residents of Georgina receive \$226 less per resident compared to other Ontarians for hospital care, translating into a \$282-million shortfall in annual operating funding.

This shortfall is not just a number. It means more of my constituents are on waiting lists, it means more of them are waiting in pain for surgery, and it almost certainly means that more of them are dying too soon, all

because the McGuinty Liberal government will not provide the funding my constituents need.

1510

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would like to bring an important initiative to this House on behalf of a resident of my riding, Mr. Bill Attwell.

In emergency situations, time is always of the essence, and it is often critical that emergency workers rapidly contact a victim's next of kin. Today I would like to share a simple way that allows emergency personnel swift access to essential emergency contact information.

The cellphones of accident victims offer emergency workers a list of potential contact numbers. However, it is often difficult for them to identify which of the dozens of preprogrammed names and numbers in a given cellphone is appropriate to dial. A British paramedic developed a solution in 2005 whereby all cellphone users could use a common, easily identifiable code to flag their desired emergency contact person from their often extensive cellphone contacts.

The code is simple. In your cellphone contacts, create a new entry with the acronym ICE, or "in case of emergency," followed by the emergency contact's name and number. When emergency workers scroll through the cellphone of an individual with an ICE-labelled contact, they can thereby immediately identify the appropriate person's phone number.

In highlighting this program today, I encourage anyone who has not already done so to program an ICE name and number into their cellphone.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Mr. Bill Mauro: Three new nurse-practitioner-led clinics, including one in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, are strengthening Ontario family health care.

In Thunder Bay, a group of local NPs put together the proposal, including Lynne Thibeault, clinic coordinator and an NP at the NorWest Community Health Centre. Many NPs who are registered nurses have expressed interest, and a class of 12 NP students are graduating this summer at Lakehead University. NP-led clinics are a team-based approach to quality front-line health care while working with health care professionals such as family doctors.

As part of our primary care strategy, our government is also reversing years of inaction. There are 1,800 more doctors today than in 2003. That means 650,000 more Ontarians now have access to primary care. By 2012 we will have more than doubled the number of doctors graduating, from 500 to over 1,000. Overall, we are increasing the number of medical school spaces by 23%, over 150 more doctors start training yearly, and we are committed to adding 100 spaces. Our government has more than doubled the number of spots for international

medical graduates; 235 were trained last year, with 1,000 entering practice since 2003.

We passed Bill 97, which places a further duty on health regulatory colleges to ensure access.

We've also created 150 family health teams and we're committed to increasing that number. Thunder Bay–Atikokan has three: the Atikokan and district family health team, the Dilico family health team, and the Fort William family health team. These teams have created an integrated health care system that provides comprehensive—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

M. Phil McNeely: Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner les accomplissements de trois écoles de langue française de ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans.

Depuis 2003, les résultats des tests provinciaux des élèves de 3^e et de 6^e année en lecture, écriture et mathématiques sont utilisés pour classer les 2 800 écoles élémentaires en Ontario. Ce classement est élaboré à partir de plusieurs facteurs comme les résultats des tests en lecture, écriture et mathématiques de l'Office de la qualité et de la responsabilité en éducation.

Parmi les cinq meilleures écoles d'Ottawa, trois sont des écoles de langue française de ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans. L'école Des Sentiers se classe première dans la région d'Ottawa, avec une moyenne de 10; l'école l'Étoile-de-l'Est est en troisième place, avec une moyenne de 9,8; et l'école Le Prélude est en cinquième place avec une moyenne de 9,6. C'est l'école Des Sentiers de Fallingbrook qui arrive en première place avec une note parfaite de 10 sur 10.

Je suis très fier de prendre la parole afin de féliciter l'école élémentaire publique Des Sentiers et son directeur, Robert Loranger; l'école élémentaire catholique l'Étoile-de-l'Est et sa directrice, Marie-Josée Leclerc; et l'école élémentaire publique Le Prélude et son directeur, Pierre Campeau, qui obtiennent certains des meilleurs résultats de la vallée d'Ottawa.

Les investissements et la stratégie dans l'éducation de notre gouvernement produisent des fruits et les élèves des quatre coins de la province améliorent leurs résultats aux—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Merci.
The member for Durham.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This coming Tuesday is March 17, Irish Heritage Day in Ontario, Canada and around the world. I'd just like to remind members that Sunday, March 15—Jack Ferns is the parade chair—I'd like people to celebrate the St. Patrick's Day Parade with Grand Marshals Robert and Jonathan Kearns. I'd ask members to celebrate Irish Heritage, as we do all heritage in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Durham. That was not a point of order, but I do agree with him that it is important that we celebrate Irish Heritage Day and St. Patrick's Day. I have a good friend, Don Cosens, who will be becoming the president of the Irish Benevolent Society in London and is very excited about that.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

COMITÉ DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la politique sociale et je propose son adoption.

I send it to you by way of page Rachel G.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Mr. Qadri from the Standing Committee on Social Policy presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption.

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

PETITIONS

SALES TAX

Mr. Frank Klees: I have some 1,100 signatures on a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It relates to the implementation of a sales tax holiday for vehicle sales. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the auto industry in Ontario and throughout North America is experiencing a major restructuring; and

“Whereas the current economic crisis is affecting the auto manufacturers and the front-line dealerships throughout Ontario; and

“Whereas many potential automobile purchasers are having difficulty accessing credit even at current prices; and

“Whereas a three-month tax holiday of the GST and the PST on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks would stimulate auto sales;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the provincial and federal governments to implement a three-month tax holiday, and that the Ontario Minister of Finance include the PST holiday in the next provincial budget.”

I affix my signature to this because I do believe it's an appropriate initiative for the government.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to introduce the following petition. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33 ... ; and

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

I'm proud to sign my signature in support.

1520

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: This morning I asked a question of the Minister of Health, and I wasn't very satisfied with the answer. Now I have thousands of petitions coming in and they read as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

“Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

“Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000 people; and

“Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take” all “necessary actions to fund our hospitals” equitably “and fairly”—nothing more. “And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington.”

I am pleased to sign and support this, and present it to page Xiao.

LUPUS

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to stand again and have the opportunity to introduce this petition. I want to thank the Lupus Foundation of Ontario, located in Ridgeway in my riding, for allowing me to do so. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

“Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

“We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario.”

I'm proud to sign my signature in support of this petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by good citizens of Cambridge.

“Whereas there is no law in Ontario prohibiting pornography and other sexually explicit material from being viewed on computers in public schools and libraries; and

“Whereas there are public schools and public libraries that do not use Internet filtering software on computers that blocks such inappropriate material; and

“Whereas parents in the province of Ontario have the right to ensure their children are protected from pornography and other inappropriate material available on the Internet in their public schools and libraries;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: That all public schools and libraries in Ontario be required to install Internet filtering software on computers to avoid screening of sites with inappropriate, explicit sexual content.”

As I agree and support this petition, I affix my name thereto.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s appropriate that I offer this petition twice, because it’s that important. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

“Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville’s hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

“Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000” people; and

“Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take the necessary actions to fund our hospital equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington.”

I am pleased to present this to Alexander on his second-last day here in the Legislature of Ontario.

SALES TAX

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the auto industry in Ontario and throughout North America is experiencing a major restructuring; and

“Whereas the current economic crisis is affecting the auto manufacturers and the front-line dealerships throughout Ontario; and

“Whereas many potential automobile purchasers are having difficulty accessing credit even at current prices; and

“Whereas a three-month tax holiday of the GST and the PST on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks would stimulate auto sales;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the provincial and federal governments to implement a three-month tax holiday and that the Ontario Minister of Finance include the PST holiday in the next provincial budget.”

CHILD CARE

Mr. John O’Toole: A change of pace is always good. My petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for the temporary care assistance allowance; and

“Whereas the removal of this temporary care assistance could mean that the children would be forced into foster care; and

“Whereas the temporary care assistance amounts to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same child if they were forced into foster care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision of the Minister of Social Services to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren.”

I am pleased to sign and support and endorse this on behalf of the many grandparents threatened by this unfair treatment and present it to Ashton, one of the pages on the second-last day of a terrific world experience here at Queen’s Park.

INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

“(1) ROCHE-NCE, a consulting firm hired to study potential sites for an interprovincial crossing between Ottawa and Gatineau, is recommending that an interprovincial bridge across the Ottawa River be built at Kettle Island, connecting to the scenic Aviation Parkway in Ottawa, turning it into a four-lane commuter and truck route passing through downtown residential communities; and

“(2) Along the proposed route are homes, seniors’ apartments, schools, parks, the Montfort Long Term Care Facility and the Montfort Hospital, all of which would be severely impacted by noise, vibration and disease-causing air pollution; and

“(3) A truck and commuter route through neighbourhoods is a safety issue because of the increased risk to pedestrians and cyclists and the transport of hazardous materials; and

“(4) There are other, more suitable corridors further east, outside of the downtown core, which would have minimal impact on Ottawa residents;

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

“To reject the recommendation of a bridge at Kettle Island and to select a more suitable corridor to proceed to phase two of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study.”

I agree with this petition and sign it and send it to you through page Reed.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—2,400 names here exactly:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should recognize the importance of rural health care in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network commissioned a report by the Hay Group that recommends downgrading the emergency room at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart ... Hospital in Petrolia to an urgent-care ward; and

“Whereas, if accepted, this recommendation would increase the demand on emergency room services in Sarnia; and

“Whereas, as of today, many patients are already redirected from Sarnia to the Petrolia emergency room... ; and

“Whereas the Petrolia medical community has stated that the loss of the Petrolia emergency room will result in the loss of many of our local doctors; and

“Whereas Petrolia’s retirement and nursing home communities are dependent on early access to the CEE hospital;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network to completely reject the report of the Hay Group and leave the emergency room designation at Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia.”

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it and send it down with Arjun.

1530

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

“Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

“Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their child’s school several times throughout the day in order to test their child’s blood sugar levels; and

“Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

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

“(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

“(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child’s parent/guardian.”

As I support this petition, I affix my name thereto and provide it to Grace.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN ECONOMY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE ET L'ÉCONOMIE VERTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 9, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It’s my pleasure to be able to make a few comments today on the Green Energy Act. I think it’s important for people to understand some of the background here. First of all, it is a bill that was introduced into the Legislature at the end of February. This continues, then, the second reading debate on this bill, which, by the way, is about 65 pages long. It contemplates changes in 15 other pieces of existing legislation, so it needs to be understood that it is a very complex bill. Certainly the potential effects of this bill, should it be passed, will be a very long time in terms of having an impact on the province.

I think it’s important to realize that today, when we’re talking about energy, it’s more than lights and air conditioning; it is the major stimulus necessary for jobs in this province. Ontario has had a proud history of reliable and relatively inexpensive electric power. It was an important feature in attracting major industrial and commercial activities to our province.

Sadly, today, the energy landscape has changed dramatically. For years, the energy supply has been a mixed supply, including nuclear, coal and hydro as the main sources, with a growing amount from renewables. In 2001, we announced through our then Minister of the Environment, Elizabeth Witmer, the closing of the Lakeview coal generation plant. We agreed that old-style coal-

fired furnaces should be replaced. When the Liberals campaigned in 2003, they promised to close all coal-fired generation by 2007. Nothing closed. Then they promised by 2009. Nothing closed. Next was 2014. Nothing has happened since the closing of Lakeview. The need for replacing coal-fired furnaces and aging nuclear plants, as well as the opportunities for greater renewable generation, has created pressing needs for Ontario's demand for power.

There is a website, www.opg.com/power, which lets you know the demand, the generation mix and the cost on an hourly basis, 24/7. It certainly provides a public awareness of the importance of this mix and how much demand actually changes the cost on an hourly basis.

In looking at this bill, I think that in the time I have, there are a few areas I would like to comment on. Obviously, 10 minutes is not long enough to talk about the full implications of this bill.

To begin with, one concern is the question of generation. There are many people who are predicting that there will be shortfalls. There will be shortfalls for a number of reasons, but one of them is the question of replacement. As I mentioned, the coal-fired furnaces don't even have a date of closing at this point. There is no plan for that. But what we do know is that 80% of the generation must be replaced by the 2020s. That, in that process of going out to the 2020s, will mean that we are going to have supply shortfalls by 2013 and 2014.

We're also going to be looking at the extremely expensive costs of making some of these changes. Wind and solar, for instance, are expensive, in part because neither is full-time and also because each requires extensive distribution and transmission upgrades in order to connect to the grid. This is something that, again, the bill alludes to. But I think it's important for people to understand that the cost of having these come on is extremely expensive, and certainly looking at other jurisdictions demonstrates how expensive it is, but also because of the fact that it is as time passes that these are going to come online.

The other area is that this bill gives enormous power to the minister and the ministry. One of those is in section 15 of the bill, where there are contemplated powerful agents or inspectors: the energy police who, with a warrant, may enter a place without notice. A fine up to \$25,000 is permissible for interfering with the inspector, or even failing to assist is an offence.

Section 2 of the bill requires every person trying to sell a home to hire an inspector or auditor to conduct an energy efficiency audit of the property and provide that to prospective purchasers and the government. It will also eliminate the role of municipalities in planning and in approvals for renewable energy projects by providing province-wide standards. This certainly has raised an issue in my riding with regard to the area that Transport Canada has as four kilometres from an airport. The municipalities historically have respected this. Naturally, it throws into some speculation whether or not that kind of standard would be included in this new legislation.

The cost will increase as more expensive generation is added to the mix, and certainly creating a grid system smart enough to work with new technologies and energy sources will be very costly. The government has said that 50,000 jobs will be created, but there's no analysis to support that suggestion. I don't have time to provide any kind of extensive look at commentary, but I would just say that in recent newspaper references to this, Lawrence Solomon in the March 7 National Post referred to this as "Ontario's Gangreen Act," and Terence Corcoran referred to it as the "Big Green Lie." He referred to the fact that this would be the "green power tax-and-grab." I think that when we look at the complexity of this bill, the assumptions it's built on, we have to look at what other people are saying and what the experience elsewhere has been.

1540

When you look in other jurisdictions, particularly in Europe, it seems to be economically devastating. I'm just going to take a moment to quote from Peter Foster in the March 11 National Post. He refers to a presentation that was made by "a Spanish economist who indicated how Spain's 'leadership' in subsidizing wind and solar power—which" by the way "had been praised by President Obama—had produced enormous costs, no benefits and was now falling apart. 'Green jobs' were calculated not only to cost ... half a million euros a pop, they came at the expense of two 'normal' jobs. And they were now disappearing as the renewables bubble collapsed."

In the face of this kind of evidence that we can find around the world, evidence of the fact that this bill takes us out many years, the fact that there is no plan at this point to deal with the shortfalls in energy, this government has to look very, very carefully, through the public hearings process, at ways we can look at this bill as something we should go forward with.

It's very seductive to talk about renewable energies, but we do have to look at the other side of the ledger, look at the kinds of experiences other jurisdictions have had and find out why people are calling it the Ontario Gangreen act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the comments by the member opposite from York-Simcoe.

As someone who lobbied aggressively to protect the health and well-being of my community, and who sought the closure of Lakeview generating facility, I can tell you that it is imperative that we acknowledge the importance of having established alternative sources of electricity generation. Despite the fact that a promise was made by the previous government to close the Lakeview generating facility, no plan was put in place as to how that electricity would be replaced.

In fact, the reliance on the utilization of coal to generate electricity by the previous government was really historic. From 1995 to 2003, coal use went up by 127%. We all know that coal is cheap and it's dirty, because it

externalizes the cost of the generation of that electricity to all of us—to the air we breathe, to our land, to our farmers—and that is why we, as a government, sought to work with those experts and really establish the true cost of generating electricity by the use of coal.

That's why we reduced our reliance on coal by 36% from 2003 to 2008, and why we, since October 2003, have put more than 5,000 megawatts of new supply—15% of the current capacity. Nearly 4,000 megawatts of additional new and refurbished supply is expected to come into service by June 2010. By 2011, we'll have brought almost 10,000 megawatts of new capacity online since 2003. Those are serious commitments to move us away from dirty, cheap coal electricity, and they're important steps forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks of my colleague the member for York-Simcoe, who has approached Bill 150 on a very practical level. She has pointed out her concerns.

There seems to be a concept, in terms of the environment, that somehow we can obtain something for nothing. Quite frankly, we cannot. Anyone who says there is something for nothing in this world is unfortunately mistaken. The problem is simply that we must do something about our environment. We know that our children will suffer down the road as a result of the actions we have taken and the actions we are taking now.

It is important that in this time of economic turmoil, with people losing their jobs not only in this country but across this world, we ensure that we can approach the environment on a level which will cause as little disruption as possible, at least in the short term, so that we can continue on providing the very important services to those most vulnerable in our society. I think my colleague has pointed out the moderate approach that we should be taking, and I commend her for her remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: The government talks about renewable energy. I'll give you an example of renewable energy that they're not taking advantage of. You notice that the steel mills in Hamilton are in big trouble and are closing down. If you drive across the Skyway Bridge you can see a landscape of large stacks with a lot of fire coming out of them, a lot of gas. That's called cogeneration.

A few years ago, the Liberal government in Ottawa promised millions and millions of dollars to go ahead with a cogen project at the then Stelco. After the election—and the member from Hamilton lost that election—that \$30 million disappeared. Lots of megawatts could come out of Hamilton, out of those steel mills. Those are already there; they're already producing steel. They could harness that energy and it could be able to put into the grid, but there's no talk of that. They talk about renewable energy, but I didn't hear any talk of those things.

There are so many obvious ways to generate energy out there that are not being utilized, and I'd be more than

happy to give them more examples in Hamilton where you could harness that energy and put it to good use. I didn't see any of that in their big, green energy act—none of that. There are all kinds of materials and all kinds of energy-efficient plants in Hamilton that could be utilized to harness this. I don't even want to begin to think how many megawatts that one plant alone—the one battery of coke ovens in Stelco could have kept 5,000 homes with electricity—5,000—just in Hamilton. They didn't harness it; they didn't talk about it. They went another way.

It's not like those ideas weren't out there. This is not a new thing; it's just that it hasn't been utilized. The Liberal government in Ottawa at the time missed a great opportunity five years ago to do anything, and they still haven't done it. I've got people out on the street without jobs who could have been working there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen carefully to my colleague from York-Simcoe. This bill, I think, is perceived differently in some jurisdictions than it may be in others. In my particular case, I've had a number of small business people—I think of my good friend Simon, who lives on Maria Street in Peterborough; he's a neighbour of mine. He has a new business called Solar Generation Plus. Over the last number of years he has added two, three and four trucks and he has hired new people because he's in the solar electricity generation business. He called my office immediately after the bill was introduced to get a copy of Bill 150.

I have another small company in Norwood, which is in the rural part of Peterborough riding. The owner of that particular business also gave me a call to get a copy of Bill 150 because he'd been involved in some solar generation projects, particularly in northern Ontario.

From my perspective, Bill 150 provides an exciting framework for the future. We've got to realize that on any given day, the economy of Ontario needs some 14,700 megawatts of baseload capacity, so we have to have generation in place to make sure we have that baseload capacity. We can't put Ontario on stilts to generate more run-of-the-river electricity.

We are currently drilling the third tunnel at Beck in Niagara Falls to take advantage of the run of the river in that particular area. We're looking at opportunities for biogas and biomass. I can tell you of municipalities in Ontario that are looking at ways to capture methane gas, which is a product of decomposing garbage, and use that to put small generation facilities on these old landfill sites and to put into the grid. I happen to see this bill as a lot of exciting opportunities for the population of Ontario.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for York Simcoe, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Cambridge, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and Peterborough.

Going to the comments that the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore made, a history lesson in what happened is really not as important to us today as this bill and where we are going in the future. There are a number of things that I think we have to be concerned about.

One is that although different members, as did the member from Peterborough, talked about other methods of generation that are coming on stream, and certainly I see that as appropriate, my concern is that it's not enough. There hasn't been, obviously, as I pointed out, a steady increase to match the decommissioning of coal-fired furnaces, which is why we've only seen one actually happen.

The other thing is that, when we talk about cogeneration, there seems to be very little in this bill with regard to that. That has been something that industry has always maintained a certain amount of interest in and wanted to find out what kind of detail this would provide for us.

But the fact that the government is not yet at a point where any plans can go forward on its refurbishing of nuclear means that with each of these things—the decommissioning, the commitments to nuclear—we're all looking at a shortfall in the not-too-distant future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: This Green Energy Act is just another act, and, trust me, the Liberals have all kinds of acts. They have more acts than a three-ring circus, and for most of their acts, that's where they belong.

But we have to remember that there is a cost for all these acts. There is a cost and a consequence to our economy, our justice system and our democracy, and it is so clear that this one attacks our democracy and our economy so vigorously. The Liberal government, with this act, is sacrificing our democracy for administrative bureaucracy.

I'd like to take a few moments to read a couple of paragraphs from an article titled "Removing Local Democracy Never the Solution." It was written by Grant Robertson, the head of the National Farmers Union of Ontario, and it goes like this:

"It seems these days all manner of sins can be hidden by just throwing the label 'green' on it.

"For those like the National Farmers Union that have fought for sound and sustainable environmental policies long before it was trendy, seeing the word 'green' co-opted is indeed troubling.

"It is clear that this is precisely what the McGuinty government is up to with this so-called 'Green' Energy Act."

It goes on to say, "Much of this 'green' energy production is taking up good farmland. It rarely occurs in places such as along the lakeshore in downtown Toronto or in Rosedale. To address local concerns, the McGuinty government is simply going to legislate that municipalities have no power to create local rules for local communities.... For those who cheer these rules they need to take a step back and consider the very dangerous precedent this will set...."

"This is the thin edge of the wedge and those who support this as a short-term solution will rue the day when something they don't like comes to their neck of the woods."

I think we have to take a step back. We asked the Liberal government to go to committee after first reading. This is indeed sacrificing our democracy for the expediencies of administrative bureaucracy.

I want to further say that when the minister brought this bill forward, when he was told that there are no objectives in this legislation—and that is clear, there are no objectives identified—the minister said, "Targets are limits." Of course you can't be held to account if you don't have any objectives, but there are no limits in this bill. There are no limits on the cost of the feed-in tariffs. There's no limit on the size of the bureaucracy it's going to create. There's no limit on the new inspectors we're going to create, and there's no limit on the red tape that this bill creates. That is a Liberal idea of a green act—no limits on cost or expenses and no targets or objectives that they can be held to account on.

I want to also quote a few things that some of my constituents have sent to me about the Green Energy Act. This is from Kathleen Patchell from Carleton Place: "By doing so, the minister has systematically denied us, the citizens of Ontario, the proper forum to address ... objections." "Under the Green Energy Act, standard access to information requests will be considered 'protected' and kept secret. This is a blatant denial of taxpayer rights to know the costs and benefits of the McGuinty Liberal government ... programs."

"Bill 150 is an undemocratic, irresponsible piece of legislation proposed by the dictatorial McGuinty Liberal government." It "is a glaring example of the McGuinty Liberal government's systematic indifference to the rights and interests of rural Ontarians...."

I can go on and on. That's how the people of Ontario view this Green Energy Act. It is not what we expect. This is an act of camouflage, as Grant Robertson from the NFU said in his e-mail, co-opting that green label.

I also found it interesting that, a few weeks ago, the Premier was going on quite at length in the media about the cost of red tape and regulations. Here's a couple of them. On January 30, the Premier said, "Why do we put so many roadblocks in the way of businesses when it comes to growth?" "We're putting ourselves through too many hoops...." "We've got to make sure we're not acting as a brake on economic growth." That's what he said to the Ottawa Citizen. In the Sun he said, "We've got a thickening of red tape in Ontario and I would argue across the country. We need to address that."

Just a few weeks ago, the Premier of this province was recognizing the cost of red tape. A few weeks later, Bill 150 comes into the House and what does it propose? More bureaucracy, more inspectors, more red tape. Has this government become schizophrenic? It doesn't know what it's saying or doing from one day to the next. Can we not have a clear and concise and understandable message? What is it? Are we going to create more red

tape or are we going to get the economy running? Are we going to get out of the way or are we going to put up more barriers? Let's give the people of Ontario a clear, simple, understandable and logical message from this House. We're not getting it from this government. This province has 500,000 pieces of regulation and rules, according to the Premier a couple weeks ago, and we're going to get some more.

We hear the good talk about saving farmland and then we get a policy that says, "No more local decisions; no more local control. Farmland is not important. Green energy is the important thing today." The people of Ontario are going to be paying dearly for this piece of legislation for a long, long time, long after we are gone.

1600

We cannot retire the debt from Ontario Hydro if we do not put a limit on the cost of this project. Right now, it's capped on solar at 42 cents a kilowatt hour. Ontario Hydro has to pay that, and they have to sell it at 5.6 cents a kilowatt hour. Anybody can understand, they're going in the hole, and now we're going to take off that cap of 42 cents—no limit on the expense that this government will go for.

It appears to me, and I think to everyone, that what is common about all these green and clean acts that this Liberal government brings out is that there is a big shade of red involved with all of them: red tape, deficits and cost. They have to get their act together. Get out of the three-ring circus. Let's do what's right. Let's not just appease and move to whatever interest group is moving you on this particular day. Let's move in the right direction. Let's do the right thing. Let's get our economy running, not add to the unemployment and be competitive. Let's become productive. Let's get out of the way and let people create a more competitive and productive environment. I've said it before: What's so clear to me and what I see so often from this Liberal government is that it is built on a foundation of false philosophies and vain wisdom.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to make some comments here at this time. The member mentioned that this initiative of wind towers was taking up valuable land. We have a wind turbine farm in Port Alma. There are 44 towers there. Both the Premier and Minister Smitherman have made visits to Port Alma to see this. The footprint for these towers is very small indeed.

I can say, however, that they are very deep into the ground. There are many truckloads of cement at the base going downward to hold the tower up in the air. I know that the local economy was thrilled with the expansion of these 44 wind towers. They got to provide the cement, rebar and other materials for the building, and there were lots of jobs created. Some 70 jobs were created in that initiative.

Further to that, we're having another 162 towers proposed to go up. The municipality will be receiving property taxes from this. Landowners, who might be

farmers or might be other citizens, will be receiving their share of the power going onto the grid. Others will be receiving leases and lease monies for the lands, should there be other towers put in into the future. So it's a win all the way around. We have lease monies and property tax monies, and the footprint, as I say, is not that large.

I was told the other day at a summit promoting green energy that we have over 3,000 transmission towers in Chatham–Kent. So we've gone a long way to providing power for the people, for our businesses, for industry with 3,000 transmission towers, as opposed to only 44 green towers. We have to build this infrastructure.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was responding to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and after you've said the name of the riding, you know that he speaks for the people in rural Ontario. I can assure you that I'm hearing the same. There will be a few farmers, at the end of the day, and agricultural rural residents who will be satisfied with this because of the revenue that they will gain from having a wind turbine or other project mounted on their property, but there will be others who won't be satisfied, probably the majority.

I can recall a project that was brought up in my riding in Uxbridge. The project was quite controversial because the province would not set standards on setbacks or other interventions. Now, what happened is there was quite a large, respectable leader in agriculture who was in the livestock business who took the trouble to have a scientist perform a kind of modelling of the effect of what was called flickering—not Flick Off, which was the Minister of Energy and conservation; it was flickering. This is the effect of sunlight going through the blades as they turn through the wind. This flickering effect disturbs cattle and livestock. It is a proven scientific fact. When I read the release by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, I was so upset that they had once again been compromised by government policy.

To stand independently and say this thing should be further and more clearly debated, to try and push this through under the guise of being green and the Green Energy Act—when you drill down in the content, it's anything but. What it means is you're going to use less energy, and you're going to pay more for it.

Those victims, small communities and others, are going to have these blemishes on the landscape with no opportunity for input, not even by municipal officials. This is an overriding, arrogant piece of intrusion into Ontario policy that needs full debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I think we should remind ourselves, just responding to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, that that government got out of the way back in the 1990s, and we got Walkerton. We have to think about that.

In the context of the towers, I'm reminded of sort of what the towers look like, because I've been in a few

fields where they have been. I was out in Saskatchewan and Alberta about three years ago, and I saw those oil wells taking up a small part of the farmland but pumping dollars out for the owner, pumping dollars out for the community and pumping dollars out for the oil company. I think that when we look at the imprint of these towers, that's just one of the things the province will be looking at, a standard approach. This government and this bill will be promoting a standard approach across the province on the siting of these turbines. I think that is a good approach. I don't think we can have helter-skelter regulations; I think this makes sense, and it will be going out for a lot of discussion and input from the many people involved.

Last night I was talking to Rob McMonagle, senior energy consultant, energy efficiency office, city of Toronto, and there are so many projects in the city of Toronto that require that stronger grid, that \$5-billion investment and those 50,000 jobs over three years. It's a big job creator, it's a good project, and it's going to mean a lot for the whole province of Ontario. The First Nations have reasons to want a stronger grid.

That investment wasn't made in the 1990s; it has to be made now. We have to prepare for the future, prepare for the electric car. If you're reading about some of the issues, the electric car is coming, so we have to prepare the grid for that. That's the way we should go, so I think we have to have a more positive aspect of where we're going in this province and go ahead with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the time here to be able to make a couple of comments on the speech given to us by my colleague the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

The most important thing, I think, that he spoke about was the issue of democracy, because of the fact that when you look at parts of this bill, it certainly empowers the minister and the ministry in ways that are a significant departure from what has always traditionally been the purview of the municipality. Now, I know the argument is that people can hold up processes and progress through local action, and it can be time-consuming and it can be divisive and so on and so forth. I guess one of my responses to that is simply that democracy isn't meant to be an easy process. It's certainly something that people have always recognized has a certain cumbersome quality to it, but it means that there is that opportunity to have a say.

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But beyond that, I think that the intrusion of government in terms of the energy police—these are even greater issues for people to deal with, to understand that this is part of the package of this bill, and the fact that people will be fined for not assisting.

So I think the main thrust of his argument is the fact that we need to look at this bill from the perspective of what it does for the community, the threat to the individual and ways by which those issues should be addressed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members from York-Simcoe, Durham, Ottawa-Orléans and Chatham-Kent.

Now I understand why the Liberal government is so into windmills. It's because of the constant spin that I hear from the other side—spin and spin and spin. On this side of the House, we like to speak truthfully. I'm going to burst the little green bubble that's been floating over on the other side from the member from Chatham-Kent. I spoke about solar panels, not windmills. Your footprint is in the wrong ditch. Solar panels—I've been receiving many calls from the farming community down in GPR over the class 1 farmland that is being taken out of production for solar panels down in the Hawkesbury area.

There is tremendous opposition to this Green Energy Act. We have a duty, and you have a duty, to listen to people: See what those consequences are, and just don't live in that little green bubble where the windmill keeps spinning and spinning and spinning. Let's be truthful, let's be honest and let's do what's right for the people of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

I was giving some others the opportunity, but we'll go to the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 150, the so-called green energy bill. We're down to 10-minute rotations, so I don't have a lot of time to get into all the details, but I would like to hit on some aspects of the bill.

The Progressive Conservative members are definitely in favour of green energy, and we're doing what we can to support green energy development in this province. But we're concerned about the economy and people's jobs as well, and I think that those are important considerations.

In the time I have available, I'd like to start by talking about the mandatory energy audits that are required by this bill. Just based on personal experience, I'll point out why I think it's a bad idea to have mandatory energy audits.

I personally had an energy audit done last year. The way it ended up coming about was I decided to replace an air conditioner that had been broken a couple of years with an air-to-air heat pump for our home, which would be a lot more efficient, able to heat in the spring and fall as well as air condition.

Having decided to do that, I went to the company that was going to put the air-to-air heat pump in, and they said, "Well, if you get an energy audit done, then you'll get \$600 or \$800," I think it was, "back from the government programs, the federal/provincial government programs."

Based on that, I then had an energy audit done. I think it cost about \$400 to get the energy audit done. After it

was done, one of the things they said I should do is put in an air-to-air heat pump, which seems to be kind of a silly way of going about it: You have to spend \$400 to get \$800 back to do something you planned on doing anyway. I would suggest for all governments that it might be better, if you decide that an air-to-air heat pump or a ground-source heat pump is an efficient way to heat a house—why not just give the rebate, keep it simple and not make the consumer go through hoops? Just give them the rebate on the purchase of that air-to-air heat pump or ground-source heat pump.

That's how I ended up getting an energy audit; it was voluntary. There was other information that came from the audit that was interesting and useful; I agree with that. They pointed out that we should replace a door we knew was leaky—it had a lot of air coming through it. They suggested that the air handler on the house, which we knew was quite old, could be replaced as well—things we did know about.

In the audit, they also said we could replace all the windows in the house as well. I think there are 28 windows. They're big, reasonable quality wood frame windows that it would not make any sense to replace in terms of the cost saving in energy going forward. However, if we were in the situation of going to sell our house and were required by this bill to have a mandatory energy audit, this could actually be used as a bargaining tool against the seller, who would be me in that case, where the purchaser, having had the mandatory energy audit done, could say, "Well, the energy audit says you should replace your windows," even though they're fairly reasonable quality. All of us in this place know the cost of replacing of 28 windows. I suspect it would be \$25,000 or \$30,000 for those big windows. So the purchaser could say, at that point, "You're going to have to take \$25,000 off the price." That's something that could end up happening inadvertently from these mandatory energy audits.

I would say that at committee the government should consider making them not mandatory, particularly on new homes—maybe homes within 10 years of being built—because I would think most new homes are going to be built to current standards and to the new standards that are going to be required in this bill. The mandatory energy audit in this bill is something I certainly think should be changed at committee.

Another very important aspect of this bill is what it's going to do for energy costs—probably one of the most important considerations, because there are a lot of unknowns out there. The minister said it's going to create a 1% increase in costs, and I would really question that. Is that believable? We know that the government has made commitments in the past. In the energy line, they made a commitment in the 2003 election that they were going to shut down the coal-fired generating stations by 2007. That was a silly promise. It was virtually impossible to accomplish. The current promise is to shut down coal-fired generation by 2014. I say this 1% increase falls in line with some of those past promises: It's just not believable.

I certainly am concerned about what the costs of fully implementing this bill will be to the consumer and to industry in this province, because we're making it easier, through the feed-in tariff rates for photovoltaic solar to hook up to the grid, for example. I think the current photovoltaic rate is about 42 cents a kilowatt hour. Consumers pay 5, 5.5 or 6 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity. That means that as these projects come on, obviously they're going to bump up the average price of electricity. I think wind power—and this bill brings in a right to connect—is in the 12 to 15 cents a kilowatt power range, obviously far above the current price we're paying. Through the right-to-connect provisions in this bill, all the consumers out there are going to end up paying for improvements to the wires that would need to happen to hook up some of these projects. All consumers will pay to hook up any particular project that is hooked on.

It is going to have a price effect on the cost of electricity. That is a real concern. We know that in places in Europe, they pay double the cost that we do for electricity, usually around 20 cents per kilowatt hour. That is very concerning for the individual consumer, but as well for industry in this province. What is it going to do to the competitiveness of industry in this province?

I think there are some positives—I don't want to be completely negative—and unfortunately I'm almost out of my 10 minutes. I have a list of about six other things I wanted to cover. There are some opportunities here. I know that we have businesses like forestry companies in Parry Sound–Muskoka that have put in RFPs, prior to this bill being passed, to do combined heat-power projects where they use slash from forestry to run boilers to make steam to generate seven or eight kilowatts of electricity and also make wood pellets that are possible feed as a replacement for coal. Those are positive possibilities. I obviously would like to see those jobs in Parry Sound–Muskoka, and it probably makes sense if the end product is going to be wood pellets that may be burned in coal-fired generating stations in southern Ontario. I would assume with those wood pellets, transportation is going to be a big part of it.

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Just recently I met with a company called Copperhill Solar, which is based in Norwood, Ontario. John Verway is the president. That's a thermal solar company that has been in business six years. They came to see me, I think, because he'd set up one of his systems at the Quiet Bay Log Motel in Magnetawan. I think solar thermal probably makes some sense as compared to photovoltaic, which I'm not sure makes sense in the province of Ontario, just based on our climate. But so far, the system—I was speaking to Walter and Regula Reich at the Quiet Bay Log Motel, and it seems to be working quite well there. I think there's a lot of potential for companies like Copperhill.

But really, in conclusion, because I'm already down to only one minute left, yes, we're in favour of green energy. We have to be very careful about what happens

to the cost of electricity in the province of Ontario as this bill is implemented. Number one, we have to have reliable energy in this province. We have to have sustainable energy and, just as or more important, we have to have competitively priced electricity in this province. Also, we have to deal with reality. The fact is that pretty much half of the electricity, the baseload electricity, which is so important, is generated by nuclear generating stations, and of course we still have hydroelectric generating stations and coal-fired generating stations that produce a lot of that baseload power. So cost certainly is a big consideration. I can't hit the other five points I have, because I'm pretty much out of time. I'll hit them in my response to those who wish to comment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm very pleased to stand in my place here today to respond to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. I think a lot of his presentation was based on the energy audits, which are done by certified energy advisers across this province and across this land. These people are certified by the Ministry of Energy, federal government. It's something that has been going on for many years. We've only got up to 38,000, I think now, but there's 2.7 million just in the section that's covered by these energy advisers, which is up to three storeys, section 9 of the building code.

I'd like to just read some comments by one of the members of your caucus, member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

"I support the whole idea of conservation culture, the whole idea that the best plan for energy and energy efficiency is conservation. The kilowatt that you don't consume is the kilowatt you don't have to generate. So"—referring to me—he said, "he's on the right track." He also said, "We've decided as a caucus to support Mr. McNeely's bill ... this was one of the planks in our platform in the election in 2007. Okay? It was in our platform. Therefore, it must be a good decision. It's efficient use of our resources, in the general sense."

Mr. Love, the conservation commissioner of Ontario, had it in his 2007 report.

"Then they brought it back, because they're copying a lot of stuff we're doing. In fact, it's our policy. That's the point I'm making. The best form of compliment is flattery, imitation, copying. I have no problem with the plagiarism here.... In respect to Mr. McNeely, you've worked hard on this. We'll be supporting it; you can count on us to be there for you."

So I just want to say—

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Who said that?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I believe that was the member for Durham. So I appreciate your support; I appreciate your caucus support. This is the best way to go to conservation culture—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always interesting. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is the appropriate

member whose remarks I'd like to reply to. He picked up a theme that's so critical and central to this debate: We need to have safe, reliable, affordable power.

The genesis of power in Ontario started with Sir Adam Beck about 100 years ago. His theme was "power at cost." What he meant was "power at any cost." We built Ontario, the greatest province in the country of Canada, the greatest country in the world, on affordable, reliable and safe energy.

What is wrong with this bill is the disconnect between good policy and good politics. We agreed with the idea of conservation. In fact, you could say we initiated thinking on conservation. I was part of an all-party select committee on the conservation and supply task force, where experts came before us. I can tell you: What they recommended is not what's in this bill. I can tell you, being a member who represents the riding of Durham, which is cherished with leaders in energy—the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, the first nuclear engineering program in all of Canada and all of North America.

The information that I'm sharing in goodwill with you, the members of government, is in the interest of getting it right. What I'm so disappointed in is, every time they get up, they read the speech that George Smitherman wrote for them. They really know not what they do or what trouble they're causing.

This bill, in its directives on green energy—we're in favour of that. Safe, reliable: It qualifies. What's missing is the truth. The truth is this: In all of the reports that we're reading, wind energy is 42 cents a kilowatt hour.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Wrong.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it is. Your standard offer contract—there's another case of a member, from Algoma–Manitoulin, who doesn't know his own government policy. The standard offer is 42 cents—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I always pay close attention to the remarks of the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. Let me say, a couple of Sundays ago I had the delight of playing on his line in a hockey game. I was playing left wing and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka was playing right wing. It worked out very well. It was quite a delight to have the opportunity to play some hockey with the member, and the member from Durham was playing that day too.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes, we were. We had lots of energy.

When you look at this bill, Bill 150—and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka did reference a small company in my riding: Mr. Verway from Norwood. It's interesting when you take the opportunity to talk to some of these entrepreneurs, these small businesses that really see unlimited opportunities in Bill 150, particularly when it comes to solar generation and in the particular area that Mr. Verway is involved with. When you talk to the municipal leaders—and I did, at OGRA/ROMA—they are looking for opportunities, particularly for those landfill

sites. Because we have composting garbage, methane gas is a problem. Methane gas contributes to GHGs. They're looking for opportunities to put small generation sites on those old landfill sites to utilize that methane gas, turn it into electricity and put it into local grids. I know that there are many utilities across the province of Ontario that are still owned in the public interest by their respective municipalities and see this bill as a real golden opportunity to develop a whole variety of sources for the generation of electricity.

I had a chance to be in the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock not too long ago to work with our new member, Rick Johnson, in order to develop biogas opportunities—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: They were so timely that this morning we passed Bill 108, the Apology Act, because now this government will have a venue for being able to apologize for all these goofs that have been made and will be made over the next couple of years—this being one of the most regrettable, unless the government will listen and make some amendments that the opposition is suggesting, the stakeholders are suggesting and the public is suggesting. There's a lot of angst about this bill right now.

Who can argue with green? Who can argue with that? But just because you label something green doesn't mean it's so. As I've said, that's more symbolism than substance. You have to really be able to prove that the bill is about green.

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The mandatory energy audit that will cost \$300 is of great concern to my residents. I've received scores and scores of e-mails trying to understand how this will work and whether it will work. The mandatory energy audits will create jobs, but they will be inspection jobs—“toaster police” as we call them. We really feel that those aren't the kinds of jobs that this government ought to be creating in this economic downturn.

Instead of talking about the economy, we're talking about wind power; wind power that will create 1.5% of this province's energy. That's all—1.5%. So why are we talking about this at this time, when we should be talking about the economy? I would hope that this government will make changes before this bill passes .

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to respond to the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Durham, Peterborough and Burlington. I won't make any comments about the prowess of the member from Peterborough at the hockey game last week, but I would like to for a moment just talk about the changes this bill brings about with the Ontario Energy Board Act.

That's something I'm very concerned about. The Ontario Energy Board is the regulator, and their powers are

being broadened. I'm concerned; I think it's a mistake. Specifically, section 26 of the Ontario Energy Board Act has changed so that the OEB assumes a new regulatory role, to assess incremental conservation costs and allocate them to a class of customers. That means that the cost of some of the programs for conservation that the government comes up with are going to be basically taxed on all the ratepayers out there. But also, as I say, the powers of the OEB are being taken away from the role of regulator and getting into other things that I'm not sure they should be getting into as the regulator.

Also in this bill—I didn't get a chance to talk about it, but there are sweeping new powers that go to Minister Smitherman, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, all kinds of new directive powers, powers to override municipal bylaws, which I'm sure people who are opposed to some developments are concerned about. Those are other aspects of this bill that certainly are a consideration.

Number one, though, I think is, what is it going to do to the cost for consumers and industry in this province? We need reliable energy, we need sustainable energy, and we need it at a competitive cost so our province can succeed.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In my remarks to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I had misspoken. I said that the cost of wind was 42 cents per kilowatt hour. In fact, I should have said the cost of solar is 42 cents and the cost of wind is about 12 cents per kilowatt hour. Thank you for correcting that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd just like to comment on a few issues today. I'd recommend to everyone in the House, if they didn't see it already, that they read an article that was in the National Post today called “The Crumbling Case for Green.” I'm going to be the contrarian for a change. The only green I used was in my notes here that I'm going to use.

Anyway, this gentleman here wrote this: “Voters should ask politicians one simple question”—get past all the rhetoric—“Why do you want to raise my energy prices?” Since the one issue on which there truly is consensus is that Kyoto would have had little or no impact on global temperatures, it is a question for governments around the world, not least that of the government of Ontario, which has just introduced its draconian Green Energy Act.” This expert “noted using the UN's own figures, that global warming was by no means the threat conventionally portrayed. Indeed, the UN even acknowledged its benefits, although to establish that fact you had to read the documents ‘like a lawyer.’”

Some of the questions we have—and I've heard from my constituents—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, we've got to talk with Doug Chalmers and see what he has. I know he'll have an opinion on it. I'm sure the honourable member from Eglinton is going to find out for me on that.

The minister said that the cost for the first three years will be \$5 billion, and he said that would only represent a 1% increase to ratepayers with the bills “all in.” Our calculations say that \$5 billion paid by 4.5 million metered electricity consumers is actually about \$1,200 per consumer. That is a full year’s worth of electricity for most residential consumers, or 100% of their annual bill. Spread out over three years, that’s at least a 30% increase. Calculated another way, electricity is a \$15-billion- to \$30-billion-a-year industry, so \$5 billion is between 15% to 30% of that. Over three years, that means actually a 5% to 10% increase, not 1%.

The minister also said that costs were increasing everywhere and that Ontarians should expect their electricity prices to go up. This is true. The costs are going up because of increased costs of material and labour, which will rise even more in Ontario due to the increase in the minimum wage. This legislation will also increase power prices exponentially beyond the worldwide inflationary increases that the minister was talking about, because it will mandate that the billing be focused on expensive wind and solar instead of low-cost natural gas cogeneration or clean coal, which can be achieved by installing scrubbers. We’ve got a good case in Sarnia–Lambton at the Lambton generating station—three of the cleanest units in North America.

It will also cause consumption to shift away from cheap, existing, already-built nuclear and hydroelectric power—which don’t require distribution and transmission upgrades because they’re already connected to the grid—to expensive new wind and solar power, which require expensive distribution and transmission upgrades in order to connect. This is because wind and solar are non-dispatchable, whereas nuclear and hydro are dispatchable or partly dispatchable. I know that if the member for Durham were here, o’toole he could explain “dispatchable” and “non-dispatchable” better than me, but we’ll leave that to him later. This means that when demand is low and someone has to shut down their generating facility, these cheap nuclear and hydro stations will be ordered to shut down while the expensive wind and solar facilities will continue to operate. This represents no environmental benefit since nuclear and hydro have the same zero-carbon footprint as wind and solar.

The feed-in tariff will lead to more generation connected at the distribution level as opposed to the transmission level. This means that more upgrading work will have to occur at the distribution level that would not otherwise have been required—all at the ratepayers’ cost—because wind and solar resources and available land are usually located far away from demand centres. This power will still have to travel long distances across transmission systems. We will still need to pay for upgrades to the transmission system, so now we are going to be paying for two upgrades to two systems instead of one.

Because the feed-in tariff system allows anyone to connect anywhere, there is no impetus for system planning at all, meaning that system costs will be far higher

than they would have been under the RFP system, in which the OPA and the IESO could decide where on the system it makes sense for generation to be built. All these acronyms make me think of “Old MacDonald had a farm, e-i-e-i-o.” But that’s beside the point.

A feed-in tariff means that everyone who wants to build and sell power can do so without any need to compete or justify the price. The point of having a competitive market for electricity is to compel generators to find efficiencies, to reduce their costs, keep their profit margins in line and ensure that Ontarians are only paying to build at the most competitive price. Prices are supposed to go down through competition, not up. For examples, see the phone, long-distance and Internet markets. But this act eliminates all competition and ensures that prices can only go one way: up, not down.

As far as funding government programs, this government has figured out a good way to play a fancy shell game with funds so it doesn’t look like the taxpayer at the end of the day is footing the bill. The new section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act compels the OEB to force suppliers such as Enbridge, Union Gas and the IESO to reimburse the government for the costs of these programs. Enbridge, Union and others in turn are allowed to recover these costs from all gas and electricity customers on their monthly bills. So at the end of the day, regular Ontarians end up paying the increased costs of these new programs but the government gets to call them “self-funding” and avoid the embarrassment of having to raise taxes. In a sense, this is a new tax. No matter how they want to cut it, it’s a new tax.

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In short, the McGuinty government didn’t want to have to raise taxes directly to pay for these projects, so instead they are saving face by forcing these poor gas and electric companies to raise their rates. At the end of the day, Ontarians know that whether it’s on their tax bill, gas bill or hydro bill, they are the ones paying for these pet projects.

For funding of local projects, the act allows local distribution utilities, most of which are owned by local municipalities, to invest in green energy projects up to 10 megawatts. The costs of these projects will not be paid by the local residents. Instead, local residents’ bills will be frozen and the costs will be paid by all consumers across Ontario. Therefore, there will be no accountability for project costs.

It used to be that if a municipal utility—often governed by local city councillors or PUC members—failed to spend wisely, the local municipal taxpayers would pay the price. But now, local councillors and local utilities can make all the poor spending decisions they want and will never be held directly accountable to local residents, because the costs of these overruns and decisions will be paid for by you and me and the rest of the consumers in the province, who don’t have the opportunity to vote for these councillors and PUC members.

The bureaucracy that’s created by this new act is called the Renewable Energy Facilitation Office. It

wasn't enough to have Hydro One, the OEB, IESO, OEFC, ESA, OPA and the CCO; now they have created the REFO. All these acronyms, to me, are just one way of clouding the issue and making it more complicated for the individual to look at the issues like this and to oppose them.

Under "jobs," the minister cannot estimate how many megawatts of green energy projects will be developed. In fact, this new program, as opposed to the RFPs and standard offers of the past, gives no centralized control or planning ability. Yet he is able to estimate that this unknown level of activity will, in his words, create 50,000 jobs.

The minister says that more than 40% of these 50,000 jobs will be associated with the construction of new transmission and upgrades of distribution lines. These are short-term, temporary jobs. Important as they are, at the end of the day they're not as important as the manufacturing jobs we have lost and will continue to lose as the price of energy increases in this province.

I could go on at great length, and I will—

Interjection: More.

Mr. Robert Bailey: More? Okay, they want more. All right.

I hesitate to get back into this—I know it's not popular to not be green—but I read this article, and again, I encourage everybody in the Legislature to read this article by Peter Foster. He says that "the editor of the influential ... network" said "that the green movement was collapsing in Europe and becoming increasingly unpopular as its enormous costs and minimal results were becoming apparent. The attempt to 'rebrand' Europe as the 'Environmental Union' had fallen apart and was now causing increasing discord both between and within countries."

President Obama has ponied up for solar and wind power, but these jobs had produced enormous costs with no benefits and are now falling apart. Green jobs were calculated not only to cost around half a million euros a pop; they came at the expense of two normal jobs. And they were now disappearing as the renewables bubble burst.

Who knows? I don't know whether that's going to happen in Ontario, but it's good reading, anyway; it's kind of something different. I'm tired of this other stuff we've been hearing for so long.

Anyway, those are my remarks. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I frankly don't know where to start. I guess I could start by talking a little bit about the expertise of individuals like Sir Nicholas Stern, who had an opportunity to quantify the costs associated with doing nothing to respond to climate change.

I could talk about the significant body of research and literature done to quantify the costs associated with the air pollution associated with generating electricity from coal, which is a cheap form of generating electricity but a dirty form. But what I want to talk about more than

anything is that we do understand the importance of maintaining a reliable electricity system, of having a sustainable electricity system, and having one which has a mixed supply. We all need to think back to not too long ago to the days of the blackout across much of this province and how that brought to reality for us the fragility of our electricity system.

We expect that Ontario's supply mix, with a solid endowment of hydroelectric, which we have, low-variable-cost nuclear power, as well as a mixture of regulated and market rates, will continue to help us ensure that we have fair prices for energy users.

We know that we need to stop externalizing the cost of electricity and find ways to innovate, to develop new systems and to repair and refresh an old transmission grid. That is very much at the heart of the Green Energy Act, and it is the investment of \$5 billion to, among other things, rebuild and renew the transmission grid, where 41% of the 50,000 jobs that will be created as a result of this act will come from. Those are jobs that Ontarians need. Those are jobs that are needed in my community, in Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

I hope, when we have a vote on this bill, that we will see support by the members opposite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always listen when the member from Sarnia–Lambton is speaking, and I want to pick up on one of the themes. It's important to complement his remarks that are focused on our concerns with the bill. To add a bit of levity to it, I think he mentioned, "It's not easy being green," because this is the Green Energy Act. That reminded me of the famous Kermit the Frog. In fact, I think Kermit the Frog should be their theme, because this thing is hopping around on them and it's out of control.

Quite honestly, we know, and the people of Ontario—you the voters—know, that this is another government plan: "I'm government, and I'm here to help you." Lock the door, because quite frankly, here's what's happening. They're saying everything smarmy about green and the little wind turbines and solar panels and things on people's roofs and stuff like that. What you should look at is in the mailbox. Open the envelope and you'll see that the bill is going to double. That's what this bill is about. It's talking about green, like Kermit the Frog, but at the end of the day what they're going to bring on the grid is energy that is—I've got to get this right because I've had to correct the record for myself: In my riding there was a standard offer solar power contract issued to a small company called Watts Up Solar. They signed a contract for 42 cents a kilowatt hour that they're selling onto the grid today as we speak, and they're buying it back for 5.6 cents. In other words, when you buy energy off the grid today, it's 5.6 cents. Where's the difference being made up? Well, look in one of your other pockets, because at the end of the day, the taxpayer is paying. Premier McGuinty, with all due respect, doesn't have any money to lower the cost of energy, to make our roads

safer, to build hospitals. He's going to get it from you by raising the price. Don't be fooled by the name of the bill; Kermit the Frog is right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen intently to the remarks by my good friend the member from Sarnia–Lambton, and I think the member from Sarnia–Lambton actually grew up in a small community called Corunna, Ontario. I can certainly tell that there will be many small businesses in that fine community of Corunna, just outside Sarnia, that will be taking advantage of business opportunities that are clearly presented in Bill 150.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I hear the member from Durham trying to heckle me there a bit. I just reviewed a speech that he made about a month or so ago in this House, and he certainly was very supportive of the private member's bill that was brought forward by the member from Ottawa–Orléans. He even said that the Leader of the Opposition, John Tory, was in support of that bill, which is kind of interesting. I know this was an issue in the by-election. Rick Johnson was going from door to door in Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls and Minden, and up in Haliburton county—

Mr. Mike Colle: Pontypool. Don't forget Pontypool.

Mr. Jeff Leal: —and Pontypool, his home area. He was talking to the people about this Green Energy Act and talking to them about opportunities for that farm community.

The Callaghan farm, outside Lindsay, has just put in a biogas operation from the manure from their milking operation, a very successful showcase opportunity: new business for the farm community to create a revenue stream for that area. Our Green Energy Act was one of the decisive factors in rallying the people in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock to look for a new vision in the province of Ontario, and one of the ways they're going to achieve it is through Bill 150.

The member from Sarnia–Lambton is talking about a number of good things in that bill, and we really appreciate that as he starts his leadership campaign.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Didn't the member for Durham already speak?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, I think you already commented.

Questions and comments?

The member for Sarnia–Lambton, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: There's so much to say against this bill and so little time to do it in that you should let us have a little more time, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure in your magnanimous heart you could do that and you'd ordin-

arily do that, but anyway, I know you're governed by the orders of the House.

I'd like to thank the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Durham, and of course my good friend from Peterborough. I'm going to go up to Bobcaygeon sometime this summer and visit up there. He said he'd host me; I think that's what he said. I'm not sure of that; I'll get that in writing, maybe.

Anyway, down our way we've got the Lambton generating station. I was contacted just recently by the Sarnia Construction Association and also the local building trade, and that's their concern. With clean-coal technology, they could produce coal for four cents a kilowatt hour. With the wind as an energy source, it's 10 to 15 cents, and solar is 42 cents a kilowatt hour.

My only concern is that there are a lot of details in this bill. There are some draconian regulations in there where they're going to give warrantless entry and a number of other things. That's why we want to get this bill to committee, where we can make improvements to it.

As the member for Durham says, it ain't easy being green. It's hard to stand up here and argue the contrarian remarks, but I think there will be more articles like there were in the National Post today as people start to see that maybe this bill isn't all it's cracked up to be. I've heard from municipal leaders already and people in the rural community who are concerned about what the impacts will be on their community.

I look forward to that debate that comes forward. We'll see what Doug Chalmers from my riding has to say. I know that the member from Eglinton wants to know what he's got to say. He always asks me, and I'll have to let him know that again we're using his name here.

Anyway, thank you. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: It would seem that I'm the last speaker today, and as Henry VIII said to his wives, I won't keep you long.

A hero of mine, Yogi Berra, once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you won't know when you get there." I really get the feeling about this bill that we don't know where we're going. I don't think this is a plan; it's a number of alternative energies that could be encouraged, most of which are intermittent. What happens if the whole thing falls? There is no plan. We don't know where we're going; the McGuinty government doesn't know. Bill 150 is not a plan. It merely encourages some forms of energy, and, quite frankly, in many cases they're very expensive forms of energy. It will impact your hydro bills severely.

A couple of unintended consequences—well, they're not unintended; I guess they were thought of. All of a sudden, gas-generated hydro plants are springing up all across Ontario, not to produce electricity on a permanent basis but merely to supplement the energy at such times when more is required than is being produced by the

various forms of generation that we have going. One of those will, of course, be solar—when it is cloudy, it will not be producing; it's an intermittent form of energy—and wind, similarly. I just had some people in, as a matter of fact. We have one station already planned for our municipality of Cambridge and North Dumfries, a city of approximately 130,000 people. As explained to me, the gas generation plants—which, by the way, are relatively clean but still leave the problem of carbon emissions unanswered. These turbines are in the manner of a jet engine. They're supposed to be relatively quiet, and we've had no concerns raised by residents where the first one has been located, but it could be that we now have a second one, because there are tenders out. They must be sprouting up right across this province. People probably just don't know it's happening, but in fact it is happening.

When we talk about wind and solar—every time I was in Europe, I was especially impressed as we sailed along the coast of Denmark and saw windmill after windmill. That was over 10 years ago. They are a clean form of energy; however, they are intermittent and must be supplemented by these jet engines which we're now going to have across the province. They will be emitting carbon, so that problem has not been solved.

The impact of this bill: I'll just deal with the impact of the audit of energy on housing. When I was visiting Florida last year, I was in a subdivision in a municipality known as Cape Coral. It was really sad, because this was a relatively new subdivision built within the last seven or eight years, and row after row of houses were vacant. As a matter of fact, many of them had furniture and garbage piled up on their front lawns because they had been abandoned.

We have not to date suffered this kind of violence—and that's the only word to describe it—because these empty homes, each one, had a tragic story of a family who made their home in that particular piece of real estate and were being evicted by foreclosure or power of sale or whatever legal means. They had lost their homes. As I mentioned, this was a subdivision of maybe a thousand homes, and half of them, from drive-bys, were vacant. There were a lot of tragic stories there. Canada usually follows the United States sometime later—I always figured eight months to a year—but hopefully, we will not meet that kind of tragedy that I observed at that time.

One of the reasons that foreclosures are so prevalent in the US is that most mortgages are without recourse. I didn't realize that until relatively recently. In Canada, if you buy a home and you sign the mortgage, you're responsible for that amount of money whatever happens to that home. So when they come around and do a power of sale on the home and sell it to someone else after you have vacated, if there's a deficiency, if they didn't sell it for enough, you could be sued for that deficiency. That's what happens in Canada, except for one province, I believe.

In the United States, their mortgages are without recourse, so somebody buying a home in that subdivision,

for instance, with nothing down—and in many cases they had balloon mortgages and all sorts of funny financing. When the value of the home drops, the individual merely walks away from the property. He cannot be sued for the deficiency. They're not responsible for the mortgage. You see, a mortgage is made up of a promissory note and a lien on the land, so in Canada you're sued on the promissory note—"I promise to pay \$100,000 on the mortgage." In the States, they just walk away from it, and that's what they did in this subdivision.

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We are in a different classification. However, we do have some bad things happening within our economy. We are the largest customer with the United States; they buy most of our manufactured goods, especially. We do have a severe downturn in our manufactured goods. We are losing good-paying jobs. The auto workers are losing jobs. In my municipality of Cambridge, we are very fortunate to have a very powerful automobile maker in Toyota and Lexus, located—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm sure the member from Cambridge is going to get back to Bill 150. He's tying this in.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I certainly am.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. Thank you.

Interjections.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: The point, as the Speaker pointed out—he took up some of my time; I'd like that back. I have less than two minutes to go.

The point I was making is that in these times of trial and tribulation to our economy and to our citizens, who are now concerned with the loss of jobs, to impose a mandatory energy audit is extremely poor timing. It may be a good idea, and under different circumstances and at a different time, I wouldn't be standing here discussing it, but this is a particularly bad time. I would not like to see happen in the real estate field here the type of tragedy that I saw in some parts of the United States. I would not like to see people losing their homes, real estate slowing down to such an extent that property values start to drop drastically, as in so many places in the world: in Spain, in the UK, in the United States of America. We're surrounded by dropping real estate values, and we've been fortunate, to date, to avoid massive drops. However, we must ensure, under the circumstances, that we do not in any way impede real estate transactions, and I believe that is one of the unfortunate unintended consequences of this particular bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for ensuring that I was speaking on point.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to comment on the comments by the member from Cambridge. Certainly the current economic situation demands aggressive government response in terms of economic stimulus and job creation, and the green economy and the Green Energy Act are going to do just that: some \$5 billion, at mini-

mum, in terms of investments, the creation of at least 50,000 jobs, the development of new areas of technology, new supply chains, new manufacturing sectors. Those are all critical to put us on a good pathway forward.

I believe we are perhaps coming to the end of second reading debate, and I simply want to take a moment to thank all those who participated in the debate over the last many hours. It is an important process that takes place, and it allows us to listen to comments from the other side and then to have those comments reviewed at a committee of the Legislature, with the ultimate goal of making sure the legislation is better and improved as a result of the process.

For those of you who are concerned and have not had enough time to participate, I'll let you know that the bill continues to be posted on the EBR. It will go to committee, we expect, if it passes second reading. As regulations are to be developed, there would be more opportunity for participation, whether through the EBR in some instances or as government ministries seek public input with respect to that, particularly the work to be done by the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources over the coming months as they re-examine the approvals process, including requirements for public consultations before a project is approved.

So there will be much more opportunity to comment on this important piece of legislation, but I do thank those who have participated in the debate over the last number of days.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just have a general kind of level-one explanation here. When you look at energy—a very complex system. We have the generation side in my riding of Durham. Most of the nuclear baseload is in my riding of Durham. There's the supply mix thing. There's the generation, then there's the transmission, then there's the distribution and then there's the consumer.

In fact, it's my understanding that this bill in a general sense is trying to get more power onto the grid and a better grid to distribute the power. I understand that. It has all been studied. But where they're going wrong here is the way they're going about it. Just be straight with the people of Ontario. If I look at the introduction of the bill, there is \$5 billion more for this implementation plan, which is a number. Who's paying for it? The government is \$18 billion in deficit. The \$5 billion is going to be paid for by the consumers. There are 4.5 million consumers. That's \$1,200 each that you are going to pay in your bill—let's be straight with the people of Ontario—and it won't fix the system.

The system that you're designing is a variable generation source; it's like gas from a cow barn and—there is no plan here except, like Kermit the Frog said, "It ain't easy being green," and it ain't easy being green. Even Jan Carr, who is an academic, who was your appointee to the Ontario Power Authority—here's what Jan Carr said: "at most," in the supply mix report he issued, "up to 5% of the grid." Ten per cent would be 2,600 megawatts; they're forecasting 6,000 megawatts. Actually, with all

due respect to the minister and due respect to some of the speakers here today, it ain't easy being green. And they've got this thing so screwed up, pardon my language—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: I seek unanimous consent to speak for another half an hour—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think I heard a no before I even got to my feet.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I just want to thank everyone who participated in the debate; it has been a very interesting one.

I'd just like to make a couple of clarifications. The phasing in of the energy audits: Obviously, with the downturn in the economy and downturn in the building industry, we'll be speaking with interested stakeholders such as real estate agents and home builders to phase this in. There's no question that the original private member's bill in October had it phased in over many years, so that will be done.

Also, section 9 of the building code refers to small units, so we expect that small apartments, high-rise multi-unit buildings, condominiums, rental properties, co-op housing, heritage buildings and properties owned by First Nations could all be exempt, so that's going to be part of it, that whole discussion. Of course, a condo owner doesn't have the control that you do with your own unit.

The jobs that are going to be created by this are going to be jobs for plumbers, labourers, carpenters. We're going to have higher standards for our appliances, which will really help. We'll be able to go in and do the water upgrades that are necessary. There's assistance for the people who need that assistance. This is all going to be very good for conservation, very good for people saving money in their own homes; 25% of our energy is in our own homes. We can go in and get a 25% reduction of that, and there would be paybacks in short periods for people. The cost of renewing our electricity infrastructure: That's the grid dollars. We're moving towards a 21st-century grid and a 21st-century supply mix that are expected to increase electricity prices to ratepayers approximately 1% annually over the next 15 years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I wanted to comment on a number of the remarks, especially by the member from Cambridge. He took us on a wide, circuitous route and brought us back to the Green Energy Act. I was thinking, when he was talking about green, about the green in people's wallets when they can't afford those homes. That's what we need to think of. At the end of the day, like that guy said in that column, ask: "Why are you putting up my energy costs?" Ask your government MPPs: "Why are you putting up my energy costs?" That's the bottom line; that's what we need to be concerned about.

There's another article here, by Terence Corcoran. You don't usually get time to read these articles around here. The only time even I get a chance to see something in here is when I come to question period. The rest of the time I'm busy all the time. Anyway, he says that this act is just "the latest in green police state thinking. It's modelled on the war on tobacco and the war on drugs: the war on carbon.

"The tobacco model is an acknowledged inspiration for Ontario Energy Minister George Smitherman. 'Like the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that came before it,' he said in a speech, 'the GEA will build on municipal leadership, uploading responsibilities to Queen's Park.' That's green talk for a major power grab. From Queen's Park, green police will be dispatched across the province, armed with 'uploaded' powers, to search out energy inefficiency and carbon abuse, and to invade homes in search of unregulated appliances and illegal beer fridges."

That's where we're going. That's what we need to watch for. At the end of the day, we need to ask the members, "Why are we putting up our energy prices?" That's what the main question is going to be. "The main target, though, appears to be businesses—buyers, sellers, lessors, manufacturers—who may be trafficking in these illegal appliances or engaging in practices" that are nefarious and "contrary to mandatory conservation and energy efficiency laws."

Just before I close, if the members would allow that we have the member for Durham do another 30 minutes, I'm sure he could do it without any notes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Cambridge, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'd like to thank each of those who have commented on the—

Mr. John O'Toole: Share your time with me.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'd like to share my time with the member for Durham. In any event I'd like to thank the member for Durham for his—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You may like to but you can't.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Exactly; I knew that.

I'd like to thank the member for Durham for his comments, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the member for Ottawa-Orléans and the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

I was reading the introduction of this bill made by the Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy on February 23: "Since 2003, the government of Ontario has been moving forward with the most ambitious climate change initiative in North America: the elimination of coal."

I couldn't help but remember my days when I was learning to drive, and it was a car with a clutch. We were promised the closing of certain plants, and then they were put off. For every step we took, we got one forward and three back. That's the way I was when I was learning to drive with a clutch car. You'd move forward and hesitate and then stop. This government seems to be, in their energy plan—because they don't have a plan, they just seem to—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Double-clutch.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: —double-clutch. They seem to buck. They seem to be fighting it all the way. They talk about this ambitious initiative, but they've, of course, failed at that ambition. They've failed on every promise they've made in regard to the closing of the plants, because they're still going strong, unfortunately without scrubbers, as they should have had.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Smitherman has moved second reading of Bill 150. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): So ordered.

Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until Thursday, March 12, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1714.

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
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Gerry Martiniuk, Paul Miller
Bill Murdoch, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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