



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 11 May 2009

Lundi 11 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 mai 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for personal thought and inner reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to introduce a constituent of mine, Una Murray, who is in the east gallery. She's here to visit with her granddaughter, page Kenzie Murray.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to welcome a volunteer from my office, Oriana Kobelak.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to welcome to the House a group from Inspiring You Politically. Even though they are not here yet, I'd like to get it on the record.

Inspiring You Politically is a community organization that was developed to foster and motivate community involvement by young adults in the areas of municipal and provincial politics and create greater representation by African Canadians in politics. I'd like to mention that all members are invited to a reception by this group: 11:30 to 1, in rooms 228 and 230.

Hon. Michael Chan: Today I would like to welcome a large group of individuals to Queen's Park. The organization Inspiring You Politically is here today to launch the Canadian Black Caucus. I welcome students from the following schools: Crawford Seventh Day Adventist, Centennial College, Westview High School, Seneca College, George Brown College, University of Toronto, York University, Ryerson University, Blessed Trinity High School, St. Joseph Morrow Park and Henry Kelsey Senior Public School.

I would like to welcome the leaders of Inspiring You Politically, including former Speaker Alvin Curling, Sandy Thomas, Bev Salmon, Dr. Sheldon Taylor, Garnett Manning, Chris Bullen, Bernice Carnegie, hockey great Herb Carnegie, Allison Lawrence, Rosemary Sadlier, Ken Jeffers, Gwyn Chapman, Jennifer Matherson, Warren Salmon, Dr. Alex MacGregor and Pastor Audley James. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to the gallery for the first time, my daughter Emily and her friend Matt Reaume from Pembroke.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Also on behalf of the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and page Kenzie Murray, besides her grandmother Una Murray, who

was already introduced, we'd like to welcome her mother Carol Heck and a friend of hers, Margie Parkin. Welcome today.

As well, I take this opportunity to welcome, in the east members' gallery, the mayors from the region of Niagara. Welcome to Queen's Park.

A special welcome to Peter Partington, a former member from the 29th Parliament, representing Brock. Peter, welcome back to Queen's Park today.

I remind the members, as well, of a reception of the Ontario Craft Brewers in rooms 228 to 230 from 5 to 7 this evening. I'd like to welcome all members, staff and all staff within the Legislature.

There being no further introductions, it is time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier, and it has to do with the failure of two of your ministers to take action when they heard disturbing allegations of abuse against a prominent Liberal member of Parliament. I want to quote you in the year 2000: "Cabinet ministers should live up to a high standard of responsibility and unquestionable ethical behaviour."

Premier, you've tried to slough this off by suggesting that your ministers simply had a tin ear and that their failure to act looks bad, but that's it. That's your public spin. Premier, why are you endorsing the moral and ethical failures of your ministers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the opportunity to speak to it—I believe for the first time in this House—and to take the opportunity to commend both ministers for hosting this evening. Minister Fonseca will, sometime in the not-too-distant future, be introducing new legislation—a bill in this House—to help us better address the special needs of our live-in caregivers. But I do want to commend both Minister Fonseca and Minister Wynne for taking it upon themselves to host a meeting on a Saturday night. This was not part of any formal committee consultation process. They took it upon themselves to do this, which I commend them for. They wanted to meet with live-in caregivers to hear some of their stories and to share with them some information about how they might assert their rights. I thought it was an important thing to do, and I commend them for taking those steps.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier is not only commending them; he was laughing about the ministers' failure to react to the plight of vulnerable women. That's the real story here.

Premier, your position on this, in contrast to your holier-than-thou attitude with respect to ministerial conduct when you were in opposition, has to raise eyebrows about real motivation. Your ministers weren't raised in a cabbage patch—at least not the Minister of Education; she knew that what she heard was a bombshell.

According to the media, she implored the nannies to tell their story. When they did, with their shocking revelations about a well-known Liberal, you would have us believe she simply posed for a photo, gave them a 1-800-GET-LOST number and went home to bed. Do you understand that that is simply not believable? What really happened here? Who did they contact in your office, and when was that contact first made?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I learned about this, and I can confirm that my office learned about this, when it appeared in the media. Again, let's understand what was happening here: Both Minister Wynne and Minister Fonseca had agreed that it would be a good thing to host a meeting in Minister Wynne's constituency office on a Saturday night. A number of live-in caregivers told their stories that night, which is the first opportunity they ever had to deal with persons of authority and to relate those stories.

Ministers Fonseca and Wynne received them, and welcomed those stories as they welcomed the individuals into Minister Wynne's office. They then told them that there was a particular number they might phone to pursue this particular issue. I think they heard some 30 stories that evening.

This was the second such event attended by Minister Fonseca. Again, I want to commend him for getting out into the community and better understanding the needs that are out there. That will better inform the legislation we will introduce in the House.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier and his friends like to portray themselves as the defenders of the downtrodden. Here's a case that puts the lie to that portrayal. When it comes to acting on serious allegations of abuse against women unable to defend themselves or protecting a Liberal, they chose protecting a Liberal. The Premier says that's okay; it's just a tin ear problem. I think your endorsement of your Liberal ministers' moral and ethical failures reveals the phoniness of your concern for the disadvantaged.

Premier, once again, let us know how you can defend the moral and ethical failures of your ministers. Why have your standards dropped so far, now that you're on that side of the aisle? Why have they changed so much?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, so we understand, the purpose of the meeting was to give live-in caregivers

the very first opportunity, I believe in many if not all the cases, to speak to persons in authority, to better acquaint them with their rights and to listen to their stories. Part of the information that was provided by Ministers Fonseca and Wynne covered the following. There was a letter that was handed out to everybody there that answered these questions: "What are my rights at work?" specifically with respect to limits on hours of work, overtime pay, minimum wage. It answered questions like, "Can my employer deduct room and board meals?" "What about this whole idea of public holidays, pregnancy leave, family medical leave, vacation with pay, termination notice?"—all those kinds of things. All those were made available to all those who attended. Again, I think it was the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier, and again dealing with the nannygate issue and the decision of your ministers to keep quiet about shocking abuse allegations directed at a prominent Liberal. There are serious unanswered questions about what transpired at the meeting between the ministers and the nannies, what commitments were made, what assurances were given. We haven't been given meaningful answers in this House. Will you allow your ministers to testify before the federal committee looking into this issue? And if not, why not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I do know that my ministers have received an invitation to appear before a federal parliamentary committee. I know that Minister Fonseca has already replied and has indicated that he looks forward to attending. I think that if there's anything at all that we might do together, the federal and provincial governments, to provide more support, better protection to our live-in caregivers here in Ontario, then we welcome that opportunity, and Minister Fonseca looks forward to appearing there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, we'll look forward to that as well.

Anyone following these proceedings up to this date in this assembly should be disturbed by the government's stonewalling, and that's what it's been: stonewalling. We have to ask, what are they hiding? What are they afraid of? Did these two ministers, after hearing shocking stories of abuse from two vulnerable women, women without a voice, simply walk away without care or concern when they heard a prominent Liberal was involved?

Premier, it's interesting that you're suggesting your Minister of Labour will appear before the federal committee. We'll look forward to that. Will you allow both of your ministers to appear before a provincial justice committee? Let's deal with the responsibilities of provincial members in the provincial assembly. Will you do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my colleague that the federal Parliament in its wisdom has seen fit to make inquiries about what we might better do together to

better address the needs of our live-in caregivers here in Ontario, and hopefully nationally as well. Minister Fonseca has agreed to participate in those proceedings, and I think that's the right thing to do.

Minister Fonseca has made himself available to the media and here in question period on a number of occasions to allow my honourable colleagues and members of the press to put questions to him and to explain his particular side of the story. I think we've had a full accountability and a full airing in that regard. I think what Ontarians want us to do, but especially what live-in caregivers want us to do, is to find ways to provide them with better ongoing protections. That's what we'll continue to work toward as a government.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As I said before, the Premier likes to portray himself as the defender of the downtrodden. We're talking about the plight of individuals, immigrant women, poor women, vulnerable women. What we're suggesting here is that your ministers were that incompetent, that insensitive to the plight of these women, that they ignored their plight—that's what you're saying. If that's the case, according to the standards you said you stand for with respect to ministerial conduct, they should be gone; they should be fired; they should be turfed. But no, you're defending the indefensible, stonewalling the Legislature. It has to beg the question, who in your office was involved in keeping this matter under wraps? Was anyone in your office contacted about this matter following the nannies' allegations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I said no before, and I'll say no again. The first time we learned about it was when it appeared in the paper. I think Ontarians need to know what we're talking about here. Notwithstanding the enhancements brought forward by my honourable colleague, we're talking about a couple of ministers who decided that on a Saturday night, quite separate and apart from any formal committee process, they might come together and invite Ontario live-in caregivers to come forward and tell their stories. They did that. They also apprised them of their rights.

My honourable colleague is now telling me that my ministers should have then taken it upon themselves to be selective in deciding which were worthy of prosecution and which were not, that we should circumvent due process. We think that's wrong. We think the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances is to apprise those women of their rights and to encourage them to follow up should they feel it is appropriate to do so. Again, I commend my ministers for the actions they took.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. I think the Premier would agree that his Minister of Labour has an ethical and moral responsibility to protect all of Ontario workers. This is especially the case as workers face the worst economic uncertainty since the

Great Depression. Yet when the Minister of Labour heard horrendous stories of abuse from caregivers while at a meeting hosted by the Minister of Education on April 25, he did nothing.

Does the Premier condone the Minister of Labour's complete lack of judgment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague, but I don't share her perspective. The Minister of Labour did what he should have done. In fact, he went beyond that in terms of setting up this meeting in the first instance to meet with live-in caregivers.

We just believe in the importance of due process. We think that it's not incumbent upon ministers to decide which complaints, which stories and which allegations are worthy of further investigation and perhaps even prosecution. There is a separate, independent arm of the government made up of bureaucrats who are charged with those special responsibilities. Just as it would be inappropriate for us to direct the police, it would be inappropriate for us to direct investigators and prosecutors in this particular matter. That's why the appropriate thing to do is to provide women with knowledge of their rights.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister didn't hand off the information to bureaucrats; that's the problem. The events of April 25 raise serious doubts about the competence of the Minister of Labour and about the political will of this government to enforce its own Employment Standards Act. Quite frankly, the minister's unwillingness to take action to protect these vulnerable caregivers mirrors the inaction of his ministry as a whole to protect Ontario's workers.

Ontario workers need a Minister of Labour who cares. Ontario workers need a Minister of Labour who will uphold his ministry's legislation. When will we finally get one?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have one. That's why he devoted a Saturday night away from his family to meet with live-in caregivers: so he could give them an opportunity to tell their stories, so he could get a better understanding of the nature of their challenges, so he could better inform the bill that we intend to table in this House and so he could also seize the opportunity to apprise these women of their rights. That may not be enough for the members of the opposition, but I think it is exactly what a minister of the crown is supposed to do.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would submit that the minister's responsibility is to protect the rights, not just apprise the workers of their rights. A minister responsible for protecting the rights of all Ontario workers who hears stories of abuse from caregivers and thinks it is perfectly acceptable to do nothing other than give them a not-in-service, toll-free number is not up to the job. The minister didn't follow up with the deputy, which would have been the responsible and the right thing to do.

How can this Premier continue to defend the minister's gross failure to uphold his own Employment Standards Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just think that the standards and the values that we have to bring to bear

here are those of the people of Ontario. Do they have an interest in ensuring that their government does what is necessary to recognize and better protect the needs of our live-in caregivers? I think the answer to that is yes. Do they expect that our ministers of the crown will respect due process? I think the answer to that is also yes. Did the ministers of the crown, in this particular instance, act responsibly, meeting on a Saturday night, listening to those stories, using those stories to better inform our legislation and apprising these women of their rights? Again, I think that they acted honourably and in keeping with the values and expectations of the people of Ontario.

1050

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: Last Wednesday, Vera Trevisanella was at Queen's Park to tell her story of discrimination in the workplace. The story she told was of an Ontario where it is acceptable for employers to fire new and expectant mothers.

Why does this Premier continue to stand by a labour minister whose ministry consistently fails to protect Vera and dozens of women like her?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just take this opportunity, first of all, to thank the honourable member for raising a very important issue, and to make a statement on behalf of all members present. I am confident in saying this: It is against the law for an employer in Ontario to discriminate against women because they happen to be pregnant. It is against the law to dismiss expectant mothers. I want to be very clear on that score. If that is in fact taking place anywhere in the province of Ontario, we will do what we need to do to ensure that the full force of the law is brought to bear on those employers. We would also encourage all women who are experiencing that kind of discrimination to make their complaints known through the appropriate channels, to make sure that the officials can follow up on those complaints.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This weekend I was contacted by another mom, Beverley Stiles, and here's what she wrote: "I was to return to work full-time at the end of January when my employer had told me earlier to find a new job, that he didn't have room for me any longer. But in the end of January, he took me back, but only 16 hours a week and every third weekend. I filed a claim with the labour board almost two months ago and I am still waiting for them to investigate further. In the meantime, I am stuck trying to pay the bills and to put food on the table. I am almost to the point that I am having to turn to the food banks to get food to feed my 15-month-old son."

Given what we've seen from the Minister of Labour, how can this Premier expect women like Beverley, Vera and others to have any confidence at all that in fact their rights are being protected in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We are all hurt when we hear a story like that. I know, as a husband, as a father of two

three-year-olds, that when my wife took time off work on mat. leave to take care of our children, she had the safety and security of knowing full well that her employer would take her back once that mat. leave was done.

As the Premier has said, it is illegal to discriminate against any woman who is pregnant, who is on parental leave. We will use the law to make sure that these employers are held to account. I encourage anybody who is in this situation to contact the ministry. Our—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that the women of this province deserve a labour minister who feels more than hurt. We need a labour minister who does his job and protects their rights.

Here is the reality facing vulnerable workers in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario: New and expectant moms are fired; caregivers alleging workplace harassment and abuse are ignored; and the minister in charge shows lack of judgment, fails to protect women, and refuses to do his job. Why is this Premier continuing to stand by an incompetent minister who presides over a dysfunctional ministry?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Any employer that illegally fires a pregnant woman or mistreats that individual will be penalized to the full extent of the law. That's what we have in Ontario: provisions, protections to help these workers, to ensure that their parental and pregnancy leave is treated to the full extent of the law, to allow them to take care of their children with peace of mind, knowing full well that their job is there once they come back.

As Minister of Labour, I will continue to advocate and make sure that these women are protected and that their jobs are in place once they're done with their parental leave.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. The Toronto Star reports that the Minister of Agriculture supports selling fruit wine in farmers' markets. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture strongly supports this, and the industry itself supports it. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture spoke in this Legislature—on behalf of the minister, I presume—and fully supported selling fruit wine in farmers' markets. The Legislature unanimously supported second reading of Bill 132, which was introduced by our leader, Bob Runciman, and allows the sale of fruit wines in farmers' markets.

Premier, are you the only person holding this up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The Ontario government has traditionally sought to achieve a balance between offering consumers greater choice in purchasing and consuming alcoholic beverages while at the same time ensuring social responsibility and public safety. At this time, the government has no specific plans to allow the sale of fruit wines at farmers' markets. We believe, and continue to advocate, subject to whatever happens in the Legis-

lature, of course, that fruit wine producers have the same rights and opportunities as others. It's really a fairness issue. If we were to go down that route, the producers of grape wine would—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Premier, the minister referenced the fact “subject to whatever happens in this Legislature.” I did mention in my question that the Legislature unanimously supported selling fruit wines in farmers' markets. The main problem that our fruit wine industry is having is their inability to get their product to the consumer. Bill 132 would solve that. It would help farmers' markets and the fruit wine industry.

Premier, this bill passed second reading five months ago. In that time, your government has done nothing, and now the fruit wineries are going bankrupt. How many wineries need to go bankrupt before you bring forward Bill 132? Will you commit to bringing it forward for third reading today and get on with it, and save our fruit wine industry?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I just want to say that I don't know why the party opposite, when they were in government, didn't act on this. Maybe they had some similar concerns to ours. Fruit farmers are already permitted to operate wine retail stores on their production sites, which provides an opportunity to supplement their agricultural businesses with value-added manufacturing. There are also a number of other options for the retailing of fruit wines. For example, fruit wines may be sold through the LCBO Go-to-Market program, direct-delivery sales to liquor licensees and through on-site manufacturing retail stores, as is currently permitted in the legislation for all producers of wine right across Ontario.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. The Employment Standards Act is designed to defend the rights of workers who are not protected by a union, yet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, the Employment Standards Act has become toothless. Across Ontario, employment standards inspectors are currently working on files that were filed in December 2007. Just to put that in perspective, if a worker asks the Ministry of Labour to investigate unpaid wages, unfair dismissals or gross violations of contracts, workers are forced to wait up to 18 months to have their file reviewed.

Why is the Premier not enforcing his own Employment Standards Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We've heard from many members in this Legislature, and many have great points to bring forward about how we can improve our labour and employment standards in the province of Ontario, and we continue to listen and to receive that information and get to work on it.

In this 2009 budget, we have just put \$4.5 million more into employing more employment standards offi-

cers in the province of Ontario. Those officers are doing a commendable job. They're retrieving many of those funds owed to those workers through claims that are being put forward through our employment standards office. That employment standards office, after many, many years, has been modernized and updated—

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

1100

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Under his watch, Mr. McGuinty's labour minister has, in fact, deferred gross violations of employment standards to a 1-800 number. The call centre makes an initial call back, and then 18 months go by until investigators examine the case. This is the standard under Dalton McGuinty's labour ministry: Defer all allegations of employment standards violations to a 1-800 number. This is shameful and unacceptable.

Why won't the government take responsibility for properly investigating the Employment Standards Act of Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I will not take lessons or lectures from that member when it comes to protecting vulnerable workers in this province. But what I will do is share with that member the progress that we've made when it comes to employment—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Next time I won't stop the clock, member from Durham, and you might want to be in your seat too.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Let's do a quick compare and contrast. Between 1989 and 2003, there were a grand total of 97 Employment Standards Act prosecutions initiated; that is, in 14 years, between that party and that party. Since 2004, there have been almost 1,700 prosecutions completed. I think that speaks for our record of how we're protecting vulnerable workers—

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

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Attorney General. Last Thursday, this House passed Bill 133, the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, the first significant reforms in Ontario's Family Law Act in over two decades.

As a former family lawyer, I know first-hand that these amendments will now make the law fairer for families going through the anguish of marriage breakdowns. It will allow families to spend less time and money on court proceedings and more time getting on with life, and will help ensure the best interests of the children are protected in custody decisions.

I particularly want to highlight the important changes that this bill brings to better protect victims of domestic violence. Can the Attorney General please provide details as to how restraining orders are going to be stronger as a result of Bill 133?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's a very important issue for all Ontarians. All Ontarians deserve to be able

to live their lives free of fear, free of violence. Women and children are specifically targeted in the domestic context. For years, that has been acknowledged throughout the province of Ontario.

Bill 133, which this House passed just last week, will make sure that those living in fear, those who might be the subject of violence, are able to get restraining orders faster. They will expand the situations in which they are available to those who've been living in a relationship for three years. They'll also be enforceable under the Criminal Code, which is where serious issues of violence should be enforced.

I am pleased that this House—at least the Liberal members—unanimously supported Bill 133.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: The importance of criminalizing breaches of restraining orders and allowing for tougher enforcement by police is critical to better protect women and their children. I know from my work on the McGuinty government's domestic violence action plan that advocates have been seeking reform on the issue of restraining orders for many years, but no government has, until now, successfully tackled this important reform. This reform must now come into action.

Attorney General, how are these changes going to come into effect to make a real difference in women's lives?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to express a thanks to the Premier for the domestic violence action plan and to my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who did so much of the work on that plan, which is a broad range of initiatives which have ensured that women and children's lives are safer and that where issues are raised, they get to court faster and more effectively.

This bill speaks to an issue that's been raised in this House for more than a decade. This bill speaks to an issue that's been on the minds of Ontarians. This bill speaks to an issue that's been raised by advocacy groups from Ottawa to Windsor to Thunder Bay, north and south. This bill speaks to an issue that all in this House have said needed to be addressed, but when the time came for it to be addressed, one party stood up for women and children—that was this party—and the other parties, well, they're absent without leave. We stand up for those we protect.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. According to the Hamilton Spectator on May 9, "Doctors in Hamilton and across the province say" your decision to impose a hiring freeze without warning on April 17 on doctors joining primary health care practices is "wreaking havoc with recruitment at the most crucial time of the year as medical school graduates decide where to practise." This also puts at risk the ability of these practices to take on more of the almost one million patients who are waiting for care.

Will you, Minister, lift the hiring freeze today?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for an important question. Regrettably, some of the things that she mentioned in her preamble are simply factually incorrect.

We're reviewing the primary health care model to ensure that we support health care providers in the most effective and responsible manner. We are reviewing this and are determined to have it resolved as quickly as possible. That's why we're moving forward with 50 more family health teams over the next two years, targeting rural and underserved communities. For the member's edification, she's going to be hearing more about this because that's on top of the 150 family health teams that we've created—teams of doctors, nurses and other health professionals working together to provide better care.

Family health teams are already providing care to over two and a half million Ontarians since their introduction, including more than 200,000 Ontarians who previously did not have—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's obvious that this minister isn't listening to the doctors and those throughout the province of Ontario at the medical schools who are very concerned about this hiring freeze that was announced on April 17—just an indication of poor planning on the part of this minister.

I would say to you, medical graduates have told me that they're making decisions now as to where they're going to practise at a time when we need every one of them. What you have done is forced them to start looking elsewhere. They can go to Manitoba; they can go to Alberta and British Columbia. They all need doctors too. So at a time when you talk about bringing down emergency room wait times, you're making decisions that are increasing wait times and you are delaying access to care for patients.

I ask you, will you ensure that you get rid of the anxiety and lift the freeze today?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, I disagree with the premise of the member's question. I think she's simply wrong. We're reversing years of inaction by previous governments to boost access to doctors and family health care in the province of Ontario. Today, there are almost 1,800 more doctors in Ontario than when we began in 2003.

It was this government that began the work of fast-tracking international medical graduates so they could get into practice—it was this government, under the opposition of the member opposite and her colleagues to expand medical school spaces in the province of Ontario. I don't think anyone in this House will accept any lecture from this member given the sorry record that she and her colleagues had when it came to providing access to needed medical services in the province of Ontario.

There is an administrative review which is going on. It will be dealt with as quickly as possible. Of course, we'll continue to get more family health teams, more nurse practitioner-led clinics—

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the Minister of Labour has not only fallen down on the job in protecting the employment standards of Ontario workers, he has failed to fix the workplace safety and insurance system that is failing injured workers in our province. This perverse system, through its experience rating program, rewards companies for hiding workplace injuries—as many as 25,000 injuries in 2007 alone.

When will the Premier finally put in place a Minister of Labour with the competence required to fix the broken WSIB system and offer Ontario workers the protection they are due?

1110

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member's question around experience rating is quite right: This is a very, very important program. Experience rating is a program in place by the WSIB that is being reviewed today.

For those who don't understand what the program's all about, it's about incenting good behaviour. It's about creating a culture of workplace health and safety. This is a program that we want to ensure is working well because it will have a tremendous impact on what our number one goal is: lowering lost-time injury rates in the workplace and ensuring that we don't have fatalities in the workplace. The only way to do that is to have employers with a good experience rating program in place, working with employees, working with labour, together to—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Not only are companies hiding injuries; the compensation system is condemning thousands of injured workers to poverty and destitution. Studies show that as many as two thirds of men and women who work hard and are injured through no fault of their own are being punished in a life of poverty. Once again, the Minister of Labour is standing idly by while the workers of Ontario are suffering.

When will this Premier do the right thing for injured workers and fix the flawed and deficient WSIB system once and for all?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: On this file around experience rating, the WSIB has taken leadership. Morneau Sobeco has provided a report with a number of recommendations. Within the WSIB, a special advisory committee has been set up by the board of directors.

Here's what Clive Thurston, president of the Ontario General Contractors Association and industry task force member, has to say about how Ontario is doing: "I am not aware of any other country that excels at health and safety like Canada does and in particular Ontario."

We have a commendable record, but we have much more to do, because any injury, any fatality, is one too many. We've lowered lost-time injury rates in this province by over 20%. We will continue to make progress and ensure the health and safety of Ontario workers.

LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. A recently released report from Ontario's Workforce Shortage Coalition indicates that the province's private sector includes a higher share of industries with high-skilled workers than the US. At the same time, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that even with strong immigration levels, Ontario could be short more than 360,000 skilled employees by 2025 and more than 560,000 by 2030.

In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I frequently hear from business owners and employers that they are having difficulty finding skilled workers to fill available positions in their companies. I also hear from frustrated new residents in my riding who encounter many obstacles when they apply for jobs in their areas of expertise. It can be very difficult for workers trying to find these jobs.

Minister, at a time when Ontario needs skilled workers, what are you doing to ensure that Ontario employers have access to a deep pool of qualified candidates?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. Members of the Legislature may be aware that at last year's Council of the Federation meeting, all Premiers, including the Premier from Ontario, committed to ensuring labour mobility becomes the norm for workers in regulated occupations.

As a follow-up to that decision by the Premiers, last week I was pleased to introduce legislation, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, which, if passed, would remove barriers to opportunities for workers in industry. It would mean that an individual certified in another province or territory will not have to complete any additional training, experience, examinations or assessments in order to be certified in the same occupation in Ontario. For businesses, it will help address critical skills shortages and improve their competitiveness, and for workers, it will eliminate delays involved in certifying workers in Ontario who are already certified elsewhere in Canada.

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm glad to hear we are making it easier for skilled workers to have their credentials recognized. Here in Ontario, we pride ourselves on maintaining high standards. These standards ensure that the best of the best are teaching our children, ensuring our drinking water is clean, and building safe, energy-efficient homes.

I understand that in some cases Ontario's training and education standards are higher than those in other jurisdictions, and vice versa. For instance, the Quebec legal system differs from the rest of Canada. Therefore, lawyers trained in Quebec are only familiar with their civil law systems, while Ontario and the rest of Canada use the common law system. This makes it impossible for Quebec lawyers to find employment in Ontario without further training. Could the minister tell me how this proposed legislation will balance the free flow of workers while maintaining Ontario's commitment to excellence?

Hon. John Milloy: The member raises a valid concern. We certainly recognize that some training standards in regulated occupations are vital to protect health and safety, and therefore our government remains committed to making sure that labour mobility is balanced with continued protection of public health and safety.

Exceptions to labour mobility in certain circumstances will be allowed in order to protect the health and safety of Ontarians, but I should stress that at last year's meeting all Premiers agreed that these exceptions would be rare and that provinces and territories would work to put forward as few exceptions as possible and also work together to better harmonize the standards so that full labour mobility would take place.

Labour mobility is about strengthening economic competitiveness and removing barriers to economic opportunity. We are working with regulatory authorities in Ontario and all governments across Canada to ensure full labour mobility does not—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Premier. In light of the response we just had, this is a very important question about labour mobility.

Premier, as you're well aware, the auto sector and Oshawa have been substantially hit with job losses, and with the truck plant closing this month it's going to be impacted even more. We realize that all are doing what they can, but the latest budget is listed as costing Oshawa and the region of Durham more than 1,200 additional jobs coming in. And the people in Oshawa would like to know, what is it that the PST workers are going to do in Oshawa once the HST has been fully implemented?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I thank the member for his question. It's certainly not the first one in which the member has come to the defence of his community, the industry in his community, and in particular the workers there.

As the member has alluded to before, the government's efforts to support and assist the auto industry also assist the suppliers and the feeder plants and allow for this industry to, long term, stay viable. This in turn will be of great assistance to the workers not just at GM, but at the feeder plants, as the member has pointed out.

I want to congratulate as well and acknowledge the work done by the mayor of Oshawa and council who were present at the GTA economic summit, about which I'll have more to say in my supplementary. But we will do everything we can to work with the member to assist the workers in his community being hit with these hard times.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, the question was regarding the harmonization of the PST and the GST. Once the HST comes into play, the PST workers—of whom there are over 1,200 in Oshawa and the region of Durham—are going to be substantially impacted. These

workers need to know what's going to happen with their jobs once the HST is implemented, and we'd like to know that. Can you give us an answer, Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Certainly I'm happy to sit down with the member and work with officials in the Ministry of Finance here, but especially with officials with the federal government, with whom we have been working closely to address these issues as we see the harmonization of these taxes, which is going to have an impact, as the member said, with respect to these workers.

We want to sit down and look at what we can do either in terms of training assistance, assistance directly to the community, economic development or new job creation, in addition to sitting down with the people and seeing what exactly they see their future as from their perspective as we engage in this transition from the current tax system to the harmonized sales tax, which I will say is going to have a massive and positive impact overall on the community, in this greatly export-oriented economy that we have, to increase the economy. But we still have to address these individuals whom the member has raised. I assure the member that we will—

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

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WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Once again, the Minister of Labour has failed to protect workers in Ontario. The latest failure is part of a larger pattern. It is a pattern that includes too many workers being injured, with no action on the part of this ministry. It is a pattern that has witnessed unacceptable waiting lists for investigations into employment standards issues. We know that the minister has failed to enforce his own ministry's laws and to protect nannies. How can this Premier continue to defend a minister with this kind of record?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. It gives me the opportunity to say, as Minister of Labour, that I've listened to, I've heard, hundreds of stories from injured workers, from families and friends who have lost loved ones in the workplace, from vulnerable workers, and that's what I'm going to continue to do. I'm going to continue to reach out to the community and make sure that we can put the right protections in place for these workers.

Our record has been one of very positive numbers in terms of lowering lost-time injury rates in the workplace: an improvement of over 20%. We have added over 200 inspectors to ensure that health and safety standards are being upheld in the workplace. We're going to continue to work for—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I could go on about the failings of this minister in this portfolio. The WSIB experience rating program is a disaster and you know it. The practice of deeming is still there, and I've repeatedly called on this

minister to fix it, to no avail. The recent revelations about pregnant women and new mothers losing their jobs are very disturbing, and yet it has continued despite the minister's good words.

The minister is not up to this job, and Ontario workers are suffering the consequences. When will this Premier finally do the right thing and protect workers in Ontario and get rid of this minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The most important thing that we are doing, as the government of Ontario, under Premier McGuinty's leadership is ensuring the health and safety of all Ontario workers and making sure that everyone who leaves their home for a hard day's work will come home safe and sound. That's why we have moved on a great deal of legislation here in this House to protect Ontario workers, and in particular, our vulnerable workers. We're going to continue to do that, and the best way that we do that is through consulting, through listening, through going out into the community and ensuring that we get it right for those workers.

This member may not be taking this issue very seriously, but I can tell you that I do as Minister of Labour, and this—

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

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Minister, every year the government of Ontario and governments from across Canada and around the world gather at the world's leading biotechnology event, named BIO International, taking place this year in Atlanta. The BIO International convention is the largest global event for the biotechnology industry. It attracts the biggest names in biotech, offers an opportunity to secure investment and partnership opportunities, and provides insights and inspiration on the major trends affecting this pivotal industry. The event features keynotes and sessions from key policy-makers, scientists, CEOs and celebrities. Past speakers include President Bill Clinton, Michael J. Fox, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan and General Colin Powell, among many others.

Minister, what are the government of Ontario's aims in attending this important international conference, and how many stakeholders and industry leaders will be participating with the government?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank my friend for the question. I'm pleased to be leading the Ontario delegation to BIO Atlanta this year. Team Ontario is delighted that the Premier will join us. There will be over 20,000 in attendance, and some 450 delegates from Ontario. I am especially pleased to announce that the Premier will receive the Biotechnology Industry Organization's second annual International Leadership Award.

This international award honours one individual each year from around the world who has shown a strong commitment to advancing biotechnology through policy mechanisms that facilitate and strengthen a country or a

region's innovation frameworks. It will be the highlight of team Ontario to be down there with the greatest—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: There is no doubt that jurisdictions around the world are making tough decisions in the face of the current global economic crisis. I know that our government's commitment to funding health research makes us a leader at BIO. In my own riding of Ottawa Centre, our government has invested over \$1.6 million at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre and the Ottawa Health Research Institute. For example, our government has invested almost half a million dollars to investigate models of ovarian cancer at OHRI.

In these difficult economic times, some governments, shockingly, believe it's easy to cut science because it doesn't get a lot of votes, while some other governments have chosen to create their own future. As an example, the Obama administration has recently renewed the American commitment to scientific exploration. What policy measures in Ontario's success story will the government be highlighting to attract investment in this critical industry of the new economy—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: What you would do is exactly what our government is doing. In our recent budget, there was a commitment of some \$715 million of additional investments in regard to research and innovation. That brings the Ontario innovation agenda commitment to some \$3.2 billion. Specific things that we're doing in regard to venture capital: our Ontario venture capital fund; our new emerging technologies fund, some \$250 million; \$150 million for the biopharmaceutical investment program.

Just last week, I announced the new, \$100-million global leadership round in genomics and life sciences. Is it any wonder that Ontario is leading the world when it comes to biotechnology, that we have inspired leadership in this province that's being recognized now around the world?

We are looking forward to going to Atlanta, and we believe that we can come back with the jobs. The people of Ontario expect our government to act as a catalyst to achieve for our home province.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a result of your failure to follow through on your oft-repeated promise to introduce a new funding formula with respect to rural transportation funding, school boards in Renfrew county have been forced to implement limited staggered bells.

No one likes this. Parents and students and teachers are against this. Municipalities have passed resolutions opposing this. The boards have proceeded reluctantly, only because you have threatened them with penalties if they don't comply with your order to cut transportation funding.

Keeping your promise would solve this issue. Would you commit to fair funding today for rural school boards and transportation or would you simply tell us what you have against students and families and people in Renfrew county and rural Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Quite the contrary. Our support for transportation in this province has increased every year, and if we look at Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, transportation funding has gone up 17.7% since 2002-03. Transportation funding for the Renfrew County District School Board has gone up 41.2% since we came into office.

What I will say to the member opposite is that we have worked with school boards across the province to put into place consortia so that there is a rational transportation process in the province, so that boards are working together to make sure that those transportation facilities are being used, those vehicles are being used, as efficiently as possible. It means that boards do need to work together, but we think that's a good thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: My goodness, the minister has been busier than Ruby Dhalla's nannies.

The staggered bell system may work in Toronto, but you need to understand that Renfrew county is nothing like Toronto. You need to get out of the city more. You need to see what it's like getting students to and from school safely in rural Ontario. Last week your government once again showed its bias against rural Ontario by voting against my gas tax fairness resolution.

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Minister, we're not asking for swimming pools. We're just asking for enough money to get our children to and from school safely and without putting them and their parents into unacceptable situations. It's time for you to step up to the plate and base funding on where the needs are, not where the votes are.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been to Renfrew county; I've seen the rural community that the member opposite speaks about. In fact, this year, rural boards have received \$131.6 million in new investment. That's in the face of serious declining enrolment across the province. What we have done as a government is we have continued to increase investments because we recognize that even when there are not as many students in the system now as there were a few years ago, boards still have those costs. Boards still have to look after their schools. Boards still have to have principals in their schools. In fact, the school foundation grant that we brought into the funding formula guarantees that any school a board deems viable will have a principal and will have a secretary. That's a major change from the funding formula the party opposite introduced that did not guarantee those resources at all. We have support—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Earlier today, I sponsored a press conference highlighting

the concerns condominium owners and condominium boards of management have about this government's latest unfair tax grab. Costs of everything from contracted services like plumbing, landscaping and utilities will rise by 8% as a result of the dreaded HST. As you know, many condo owners are seniors living on fixed incomes who pay significant monthly fees for maintenance purposes. They cannot afford to pay more.

This tax grab will force people out of their homes by raising costs by 8%. Will this government listen to these condo owners and put the brakes on this wrong-headed tax grab now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As my honourable colleague knows, the single sales tax is part of a comprehensive package of tax reforms that includes both cuts to business taxes and cuts to personal income taxes. We firmly believe, after listening to so many representations from around the province, business and non-business alike, that the single most important thing that we can do to strengthen our economy and to create more jobs is to move ahead with this package of tax reforms that are part of our budget. My colleague knows, for example, that corporate income taxes will drop from 14% to 10%. That is a significant advantage for those people doing business, including for those in the condominium business, in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I cannot believe what the Premier has just said. You're talking about condominium owners as if they are all going to make huge scads of money. It's going to cost them money.

Linda Pinizzotto and Stanley Smith are here in the gallery today. They are, respectively, presidents of condominium boards, one in Toronto and one in Thornhill, and they've come here to say that the HST tax grab will hurt many thousands of Ontarians and may force people out of their homes. These are very serious matters. Condo maintenance costs will increase by a whopping 8% at a time when people can least afford it, and this government doesn't seem to care.

Why won't this Premier stop and listen to the people who have come here to give this message today and axe this tax?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We need to level the playing field for Ontario businesses. One hundred and thirty other countries have in place the equivalent of a value-added or single sales tax. Those businesses enjoy an advantage over ours. It's time that we levelled the playing field.

Something my honourable colleague needs to keep in mind is that those people who are at present paying a provincial sales tax will qualify, going forward, for an input tax credit that will reduce their input costs. That will reduce the costs overall of the products that they're selling to the public. That will be an advantage to consumers. I know it's not easy working our way through this transition, but four other provinces have done this; 130 countries are already there. It's especially important for us at this time in our history that we move ahead with this package of comprehensive tax reforms to strengthen our economy and ensure that we can create more jobs.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The issues around long-term-care homes are known to all the members of this House. Also, these issues have been raised by my constituents on a regular basis. Recently, Minister, you made an announcement at the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors' annual general meeting about regulations that are going to come soon to protect vulnerable people: seniors, who worked very hard to build this beautiful province. Minister, can you explain this announcement to us and how it is going to benefit my constituents and all the seniors across the province of Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question because it's a very important one. Members of this Legislature would know that the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, received royal assent on June 4 but cannot be proclaimed until all the required regulations are in place. The development of these regulations is guided by the need to improve care provided to residents and the need for clear, enforceable standards that are consistently applied. The draft regulations are about safeguarding resident rights, improving the quality of care and improving the accountability of long-term-care homes. They reflect the recommendations made by Shirlee Sharkey.

Specifically, the regulations are about strengthening requirements for the prevention, early identification and treatment of potential areas of high risk, such as skin and wound care, continence care, fall prevention, pain management and responsive behaviours. They introduce clear definitions of abuse and neglect and strengthen accountability for investigating and addressing all alleged, suspected or witnessed incidents of abuse or neglect of residents.

The draft regulations call for increased requirements for appropriate use of restraints in our homes, and a requirement for infection prevention and control—

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

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: Today, I am asking members of this House to join me in condemning Israeli Apartheid Week by supporting a resolution I have filed. As members of this Legislature in a country that has consistently opposed to the apartheid regime in South Africa, we can no longer stay silent while the injustice of that regime continues to be diminished.

The term "Israeli Apartheid Week" is not only offensive to the fully democratic state of Israel—a state that respects the rule of law and human rights—it is also offensive to the millions of people who suffered under true apartheid in South Africa.

While there is room for discussion and debate on Israeli politics, to equate this democratic country with an apartheid state reflects a lack of understanding of the meaning of that word. Debate should be focused on facts, and forgo the use of terminology that serves only to demonize an opposing point of view and spread misinformation and hatred.

When I addressed this House on this matter in December last year, I said the term "apartheid" belongs in the same category as such terrifying words as "genocide." Today, I again want to stress that neither word should be used carelessly; otherwise, they will become meaningless and their true victims will be forgotten.

Recently, we commemorated the victims of the Holocaust. We all know that the central theme of any ceremony commemorating the victims of genocide is "never again." Today, I am asking the members of this House to condemn Israeli Apartheid Week and, by doing so, to ensure that victims of the apartheid regime in South Africa are never forgotten and the lessons of that terrible period in history are truly understood.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I deplore any equation of Israel with an apartheid regime, and I ask all members of this Legislature to join us in condemning Israeli Apartheid Week.

WARSAW WACKOS

Mr. Jeff Leal: Warsaw is a small rural community located about 25 minutes from the city of Peterborough. The Warsaw Caves Conservation Area and Campground is a popular tourism destination. Most people who know Warsaw automatically think of the caves unique to this area.

I rise in the House today to talk about another unique feature associated with the Warsaw community. I'm going to speak about a special group of women who are members of the Warsaw Wackos hockey team. Earlier this year, they were successful in being selected as one of the top 10 Canadian finalists in TSN's Bring Home the Cup contest with Mark Messier.

Every Wednesday during the winter for more than 35 years, this diverse group of women from all backgrounds and all ages has gathered to play hockey in Warsaw, Ontario. This team gives new meaning to the phrase "team spirit." Wednesday's Warsaw Wackos have a unique style of play that supports players of all skill levels. Their passion for the game is so strong that when a shift is over, members don't take to the bench; they take to the goal net. I'm told this can lead to as many as seven goal-tenders in net at one time. This is community spirit at its best.

Congratulations to the Warsaw Wackos women's hockey team.

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak on the genetic disorder, muscular dystrophy, and how it affects those diagnosed in doing the things most of us take for granted, such as walking, sitting up, smiling and, ultimately, breathing.

Muscular dystrophy is a disorder that weakens the body's muscles. It is caused by an error in a specific gene associated with muscle function. The disorder weakens muscles over time, making it difficult to do the simplest tasks, such as crossing the street.

Today, there is no cure for muscular dystrophy, but doctors and scientists are working hard to find one, and that's where we can help.

Muscular Dystrophy Canada has launched the first annual Chair Aware Challenge. It is a fundraising campaign that will challenge able-bodied people to experience what life is like in a wheelchair. Their goal is to raise \$150,000 to assist those living with muscular dystrophy, and they're going to have lots of help making this happen.

The honorary chairperson of the campaign is 1010 CFRB's own Bill Carroll. Other personalities lending their time to assist muscular dystrophy are former Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman, 99.9 Virgin Radio's Mad Dog, Global TV's Leslie Roberts and CEO of the TD Bank, Tim Hockey.

I'm very pleased to be able to highlight the good work Muscular Dystrophy Canada is doing to help find a cure for this disorder, which afflicts approximately 50,000 Canadians.

To donate time or money to this worthwhile cause, please go to www.muscle.ca for details. I thank you for your support.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's my pleasure to inform the members of this House about the new green jobs that are being created across the province of Ontario. Schools everywhere are being retrofitted, and no school board is being left behind. The Thames Valley District School Board is receiving over \$14 million to redesign how they consume energy. All areas of energy usage are receiving an investment, from conducting energy audits that help manage and conserve energy to designing new heating and air conditioning units that will save the schools millions of dollars.

Minister Matthews, Minister Bentley and I brought the announcement to the attendants of Blessed Kateri Catholic School last Friday. The students, faculty and community members were excited to be at the forefront of the green energy program. Many were satisfied that sustainable, well-paying jobs were coming to their city, as we were not immune from the mass layoffs and plant closures Canada has seen.

As well, environmental education is now part of the mainstream curriculum. It's important that we teach our

young people the necessity to be environmentally conscious from a very young age.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make this statement. I want to thank all the people who participated in this event, because it's very important to save our environment.

NURSING WEEK

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is with tremendous pleasure that I rise today during Nursing Week to recognize and pay tribute to our hard-working and dedicated nurses. I want to express my sincere appreciation to all the nurses for the exceptional and vital contributions they make to patient care in this province.

This event began in 1971, on May 12, the birthday of nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale.

Whether our nurses are considered respected, vital professionals caring for you or individuals that we can't live without, it is all true. Throughout our lives, nurses are there helping us. Public health nurses ensure people stay healthy by helping them quit smoking or eat well. Nurses in long-term care improve the quality of life for their residents. Registered nurses and RPNs in primary care clinics help people manage diseases like diabetes. Our nurses in hospitals work with people who are struggling with acute illness. And, of course, there are nurses who provide care at home so patients can be there with their loved ones. No matter where, throughout our lives, nurses are there to provide support to us. They are the heart of our health care system.

We urge the government to hire the 9,000 new nurses desperately needed, and we congratulate and thank them all for a job extremely well done.

ABITIBIBOWATER

Mr. Howard Hampton: Some \$1.25 billion of Ontario taxpayers' money has been put into the financial restructuring of Chrysler Canada to help sustain thousands of jobs in Windsor and Brampton. This is what I think people across Ontario, especially workers, expect, but people in communities across northern Ontario are asking why the McGuinty Liberals continue to ignore the similar financial restructuring of AbitibiBowater, where 4,000 good manufacturing jobs in northern Ontario are at stake.

The McGuinty government, rightfully, has paid attention to sustaining the jobs of workers at Chrysler Canada, but it seems to want to ignore those workers at AbitibiBowater. At the same time, the Quebec government has put \$100 million of debtor-in-possession financing into the financial restructuring, and the Quebec government will be at the decision-making table when it is decided which mills will be kept open, which mills will be closed and which mills will be sold. Yet the McGuinty government is nowhere to be seen when it comes to the jobs at AbitibiBowater.

People in northern Ontario are asking, if the McGuinty government could put \$1.25 billion of financial restruc-

turing into Chrysler Canada, why can't it also pay attention to the workers at AbitibiBowater in northern Ontario?

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PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Mike Colle: As you know, over the weekend, the Premier of this province came out strong in favour of bringing a third NHL franchise to southern Ontario, making it seven in Canada.

This third franchise to southern Ontario would create hundreds of millions of dollars of GDP to the community chosen, whether it be Hamilton, Markham, Vaughan, Mississauga, Kitchener, Peterborough, Brantford or Oakville. Bringing the Phoenix Coyotes back to Canada would create high-paying jobs in construction, tourism, food, beverage, marketing, promotion, and hotel and restaurant industries. No matter which city is chosen, one thing is certain: A third NHL franchise in southern Ontario would positively impact on Ontario's economy and would create incredible excitement and economic development, all the while recognizing the world's most loyal hockey fans.

The potential is tremendous, and I hope that Mr. Bettman and the NHL owners do not stand in the way of these jobs and this hockey team coming to southern Ontario. We have been loyal hockey fans, we are the greatest hockey fans in southern Ontario, and we want the Coyotes here, Mr. Bettman.

RICK SHAVER

Mr. Jim Brownell: Today, I rise in the House to congratulate Rick Shaver, the general manager and co-founder of the Seaway News, as he was recently awarded the Canadian Community Newspapers Association Silver Quill. The Silver Quill is presented to an individual who has been an owner, publisher or executive officer of a community newspaper, in recognition of 25 or more years of service to the industry.

Rick was a student in my very first class at Cornwall's Viscount Alexander Public School back in 1969. He was active in school life then and remains a positive force today as one of the voices of the print media in his community.

Rick founded the Seaway News back in 1985 with his colleague Dick Aubry. Since then, the Seaway News has brought important local stories to its readers on a weekly basis.

To quote Rick, "We tell the stories of our community, the stories of our readers. In our paper, the school bake sale doesn't have to fight for space against the war in Afghanistan."

Community papers bring the news that is closest to their readers' hearts, and there will always be a place for them in Ontario.

Rick is also a past president of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

I want to commend both of these newspaper associations for the work they do and for the services they provide to our citizens.

The CCNA could not have chosen a more deserving recipient or one that is more dedicated to his craft and his community.

Next year is the 25th anniversary of Rick's labour of love, the Seaway News, and I'm sure he is planning to make this momentous occasion something special. I wish him well in the future.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to stand in my place today to bring to the attention of all members that my riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane is scheduled to host the International Plowing Match during the week of September 21 of this year. Today, I want to give members and Ontarians an update on the progress of our community and government working together.

First of all, the McGuinty government has continued to provide support, on top of the \$1.7 million already committed in the 2008 provincial budget for highway improvements. These investments include \$75,000 for the Ministry of Culture's attraction fund; \$59,000 from the Ministry of Tourism, through Celebrate Ontario; and \$35,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

I'm very proud of my local communities. The logistics and the organization is very complex, including some 1,000 volunteers, 53 subcommittees and an expected 80,000 visitors. This event will truly be unique to northern Ontario and a unique northern experience, as the organizers will be showcasing life in the north, including mining and forestry exhibits and demonstrations, in addition to the agricultural displays and events. The Ontario Northland Railway will be making daily trips to the IPM site, and there will be a tent and trailer site that will accommodate close to 2,100 spots, with over 1,200 reserved to date.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the committee, the volunteers, the municipal leaders and surrounding communities who have dedicated their time and energy to this project. The website is www.ipm2009.net.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES PROFESSIONS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend various Acts related to regulated health professions and certain other Acts /
Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui

concerne les professions de la santé réglementées et d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. David Caplan: In ministerial statements, Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Hon. David Caplan: It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to discuss legislation that, if passed, would lead to increased access to care, further interprofessional collaboration and enhanced patient safety for all Ontarians.

The amendments I propose to several health professions acts under the Regulated Health Professions Act, like the Nursing Act, for example, would expand the scope of practice for various health professionals. The health professionals covered under this legislation include nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dietitians, midwives and medical radiation technologists. We're also proposing to revise authorities for prescribing, administering, dispensing, compounding, selling and using drugs in practice by chiropodists and podiatrists, dentists and dental hygienists, midwives, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists and respiratory therapists. This legislation, if passed, would allow these regulated health professionals to better utilize their hard-earned skills and training. It would help promote a health care system that is more efficient and more easily adaptable to new technologies.

I'd like to take a moment to thank Barbara Sullivan, head of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, for her recommendations with HPRAC. Barbara, your hard work has brought us here today and I want to say thank you very much. Please rise.

Based on the recommendations made by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, or HPRAC, we're taking steps to better utilize all of Ontario's health professionals. We're taking steps forward by optimizing the scope of nurse practitioners by removing some of the limitations on what nurse practitioners are currently authorized to do, like ordering X-rays; physiotherapists to communicate a diagnosis to a patient; dietitians to take blood samples from a patient to check blood glucose levels; respiratory therapists to independently administer certain substances—for example, oxygen; and pharmacists to extend or adapt prescriptions.

Ultimately, patient safety would be enhanced by strengthening the health professions regulatory system through these proposed legislative changes. The proposed legislation would increase teamwork amongst all regu-

lated professionals and build on existing, highly successful team environments.

Our population is aging and growing. A large portion of Ontarians will soon be placing ever-increasing pressures on our health care system. This new legislation will mean increased access to care for Ontarians. It will allow for more efficient health care services, more providers working together in teams, and an enhanced regulatory system that will increase patient safety. It will also remove barriers that prevent health care professionals from delivering services that they have been trained to provide.

This is a positive first step, and we plan to review other HPRAC recommendations in the future. Our goal is to ensure that Ontario's health regulatory system is responsive to the continuing changes to health care delivery. We believe in the need to make the best possible use of all the members of the health care team for the greater good of our health care system.

Thank you very much, and I hope that this legislation will be supported by all members of this assembly.

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CANADIAN INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise today to recognize that next week is Canadian Infertility Awareness Week.

Becoming a parent is one of life's most rewarding and enriching experiences, one that many Ontarians take for granted. But for the tens of thousands of Ontarians who cope with infertility, their hopes for building a family are shadowed by anxiety, isolation and heartbreak.

Three years ago, the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada, an association that helps Canadians struggling to start a family, launched this international campaign so that people diagnosed with infertility would know that support and education are available to them. Our government, too, believes in the need to shine a light on this often unspoken matter.

Certainly, our hearts go out to those who suffer: to the woman who said, "After I had four miscarriages, my body was a mystery to me. Something wasn't working, but no test, no doctor, no treatment could reveal a definitive problem"; and to the hopeful mother who talks of "those two weeks each month spent between sanity and insanity, where time turns so slowly, it seems like an eternity." Even the simple question "Do you have kids?" can be devastating to those who want a child but yet have been unable to conceive.

We believe that everyone should have a fair opportunity to have a family. That's why, last summer, we established an expert panel on infertility and adoption to take the first crucial steps to see how we could better support people who want to start families.

The panel is exploring ways to make both fertility treatment and adoption more accessible in Ontario. This 11-member team—comprising adoptive parents, people who have had personal experience with infertility, and representatives from the medical and adoption commu-

ities—is chaired by David Johnston, a leading academic and president of the University of Waterloo.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the panel for their ongoing work and their commitment. I've met with them; they are knowledgeable, empathetic and determined to find just the right solutions.

Certainly, there is strong public interest in their work. As part of their in-depth research, the panel asked to hear from Ontarians on their personal experiences and views regarding infertility and the adoption system. We heard from 1,800 people who had struggled with infertility. Clearly, this is an important issue for Ontarians. I look forward to receiving the panel's recommendations next month.

As more women wait to begin their families, infertility is becoming more common. Today, one in eight couples struggles to build a family; one in six has faced infertility at some point in their lives.

People often think that infertility affects only women, but only half of infertility is solely related to women. Male infertility, unexplained infertility and combined infertility account for the other half.

The unnecessary shame and stigma of infertility often means that these Ontarians are suffering alone, in silence. This week is our chance to let them know that we support them.

There are many dedicated people in our communities who work hard to help Ontarians realize the dreams of parenthood. I'd like to thank them all. I'd like to thank the support groups that encourage and listen during a sometimes difficult journey, and the community organizations whose informed advice and guidance have helped so many Ontarians build their families, be it through fertility treatment or adoption.

During Canadian Infertility Awareness Week, there are activities organized around the country to engage and inform those struggling to start a family. For a list of activities taking place in Ontario, I urge you to visit the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada website, iaac.ca.

As a mother and grandmother, I know that having a family is life's greatest gift. I simply cannot imagine my life without my family.

Our government will continue to do our best to support those who want to be parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

CANADIAN INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join in marking Infertility Awareness Week in Ontario.

I want to begin my comments with the fact that the Ontario government has appointed an Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption to study the matter. As the minister said in her remarks, the fact is that this panel is set to provide recommendations to government in the next month. But I can't help but compare that to the Quebec government and Premier Jean Charest, who, during their recent election, promised to maintain Quebec's

leadership in Canada for providing support for couples facing fertility challenges. Just a few months later, the Charest government not only delivered, they exceeded that promise by announcing full funding for three in vitro fertilization cycles. I'm sure that this is welcome news for those in Quebec who find themselves in this very unfortunate position, both emotionally and otherwise. Certainly, I've received letters from many of my constituents who have made this kind of comparison between the recognition and the opportunity provided by the Quebec government and the silence that we have in Ontario on this issue. As the minister mentioned, the government did make a promise in 2007. We certainly await those recommendations becoming public.

But I also want to draw to the attention of the minister that receiving recommendations doesn't always guarantee, in our experience, that you are actually going to act on them. The important thing for people in Ontario is to be aware of this expert panel, but I, along with them, will be holding the government to account on making some kind of decisions, having received these recommendations. It forces me to ask if this is just another example of gesture politics, or are we really going to see something that supports people in the province?

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to respond to the new legislation dealing with the changes to HPRAC. This is a large bill and it's going to amend, I understand, some two dozen different acts. Of course, it's going to expand the scope of practice for many of our health professionals. That's somewhat ironic today, at a time when the government of course also has, as of April 17, imposed a hiring freeze on doctors joining new family health practices, and saying today that they encourage these interprofessional relationships—and yet we have a shortage of 2,700 physicians in the province right now. We've got about 2,600 doctors retiring and we have a freeze on the hiring of family doctors to family health teams. It's a little bit bizarre and contradictory.

Having said that, these changes, I think, on the whole are probably worthy of some very serious consideration. I know it's a huge task. I want to congratulate Barbara Sullivan and her team. I think she does very good work. I want to compliment her on the recommendations that she has brought forward. I think they have been very thoughtfully considered. We'll now wait to see what the reaction is of the stakeholders and, obviously, the public.

Certainly, taking a look at the nurse practitioner changes, I know there's some reason for hope and support. I do know that the RNAO is somewhat discouraged by the lack of expansion of the scope of practice for nurses. Of course, if we take a look at pharmacists, obviously they are overjoyed to see the expansion of their scope of practice as well. I know the physiotherapists are quite happy; they've spoken to me. In the area of midwifery, where we have a crisis, any expansion is certainly worthy of merit.

So we will closely look at the changes that have been made. We appreciate, again, as I say, the role of Ms. Sullivan and the work that's been undertaken. It's a big job—I know from my experience, having served as Minister of Health—and we just want to make sure that at the end of the day our primary concern is that patient safety will always be foremost in the minds of everyone and that these changes do address that.

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to have a chance to respond to the introduction of this new health omnibus bill. There is no question that many of these changes are needed and are welcome. I would say that some of them are long overdue. I also want to add my voice and thank Barbara Sullivan for the good work that she has done and the many reports and the many pages of those reports.

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It is essential that our health care system has the ability to adapt in order to best serve the needs of its population and take advantage of the full scope of practice that our health professionals can offer. New Democrats welcome the basic spirit of this legislation, but we are concerned about some of the aspects of the bill and the many blanks that are yet to be filled. One example: This bill does not go far enough when it comes to nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners are increasingly being relied on to deliver primary care in this province and have started to move into the field of hospital care. This is a good thing but must be reflected in the scope of practice.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario have pointed to two blatant problems in the bill: the failure to have open prescribing of medication for nurse practitioners and the authority to admit and discharge patients from hospitals, as fewer and fewer family physicians ask for privileges to do hospital work. New Democrats would like to see these gaps closed.

The other concern that I have is with the government plans for remote dispensing machines in Ontario. I am extremely concerned about the motivation and underlying goals of this aspect of the bill. While the minister is fond of talking about these machines as a tool to increase access to pharmaceuticals in remote communities, I have yet to see anything in the proposed legislation that would ensure improved access. I have been told that the decision as to where the machines will be left is a business decision. In my riding, where 80% of the land mass does not have access to a pharmacy, there is no business case to be made in Gogama, Mattagami, Foleyet or any of those little communities, so it leaves me a little bit uncomfortable that it's not going to help them.

How can this government be leaving such an important issue to a question of corporate profit and gain? Should not the needs of Ontarians in remote and rural communities take precedence over all else? What is the government's plan for ensuring that the legislative changes will have an outcome of better care for all Ontarians? All of these questions are left unanswered.

There are many more questions in this bill, and serious gaps, but, as has been the government's habit, it leaves far too much to regulations that we have yet to see. I look forward to working on this bill through second reading as well as at committee and seeing what the stakeholders have to say.

CANADIAN INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm also happy to have a few minutes to talk about Infertility Awareness Week. I'm happy to have a chance to rise today and speak about this important issue. There is no question that the families in Ontario who are coping with infertility need our support. All too often, these individuals and families are left coping on their own. We still have a long way to go before the issue of infertility can be talked about openly and in a supportive manner. We hope that infertility awareness week will move these important goals forward.

The issue of infertility is a very difficult issue, and it is something where, with Mother's Day having just passed, many of us can relate to the strong emotions that this issue evokes. I know that there is currently an expert panel reviewing the status of Ontario's fertility treatment services, and that is a good thing. The field of infertility has changed dramatically over the last 10 years, and Ontario needs to ensure the relevancy our services.

When it comes to the services offered, it is the role of government to balance the desire of infertility in individuals and families with the scientific evidence and best practice coming out of the medical world. Because right now, people seeking help always end up frustrated, exhausted and, most of the time, financially broke, we must ensure that families who have been searching for an answer to their infertility are not taken advantage of by the costly promise of yet another treatment that is not covered by OHIP. We must listen to the experts in the field and develop fertility treatment options that are tailored to and best for everyone in Ontario.

New Democrats look forward to the results of the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption to be shared this spring and for steps to be taken for quick implementation following this report.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the members to join me in welcoming to the east members' gallery Barbara Sullivan, the former member from Halton Centre from the 34th and 35th Parliaments. Welcome back to Queen's Park today, Barbara.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with your indulgence, I would like to introduce Tim Eye,

who is the chair of the Durham labour council political action committee. His work on pensions is part of the petition I'm about to present, which reads as follows:

"Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail' legislation) which permitted GM to underfund the pension benefit guarantee fund; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy; and

"Whereas, unlike stakeholders such as vendors and suppliers that accept the risks associated with business, GM retirees and surviving spouses entered into their GM pension plans in good faith, based on the understanding that the funds set aside on their behalf would be secure; and

"Whereas GM salaried retirees contributed a percentage of their annual income to pension plan 0340950 and were permitted only limited contributions to RRSPs due to the federal government's CRA discriminatory RRSP restrictions for defined benefits pension plan members;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo salaried pension organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the pension benefits guarantee fund; and

"That, in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made that General Motors fully fund pension plan 0340950, and that General Motors continue to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with employment entitlements and retirement agreements; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect GM pensioners."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas physically present pharmacists have served the Ontario public well over the years by ensuring high levels of safety and care, the requirement for the physical presence of a pharmacist to operate a pharmacy and compound, dispense or sell a drug in a pharmacy should be left intact to protect the public interest;

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

"We request that the laws requiring the physical presence of a pharmacist to operate a pharmacy and compound, dispense or sell any drug in a pharmacy be left intact; specifically, clauses 146(1)(a) and (b), and 149(1)(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act be left intact and unchanged, and

legislation should not be introduced which undermines the protections and service offered by physically present pharmacists."

I agree with the petition, will affix my name hereto and will give it to Zachary to be delivered.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

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

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerk's table.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I have signed this.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment ... conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and ...

“Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

“Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

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

“That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area.”

I’ll sign the petition and provide it to Alexis.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the proposed harmonization of Ontario’s retail sales tax with the federal GST”....

The added costs “would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times; and

“Organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders’ Association have estimated that harmonization would add \$15,000 in taxes to the price of a new Ontario home.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of the GST and RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition while, at the same time, I turn off my BlackBerry.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

“Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres ... creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

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

“That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

“That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres ... to 120 ... to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country.”

I have signed this petition.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the federal government’s employment insurance surplus now stands at” over \$50 billion; and

“Whereas over 70% of Ontario’s unemployed are not eligible for” the federal employment insurance program “because of Ottawa’s unfair eligibility rules” for the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

“Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in” Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland or Nova Scotia, “thus ... not qualifying for many retraining programs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario’s unemployed workers.”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

“Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

“Whereas residents of Bruce-Grey have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

“Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province.”

I have signed this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

“Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with

consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

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

“That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

“That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country.

I would affix my signature my signature thereto.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by the Damoff family of Oakville. It reads:

“Whereas Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has the highest average ticket revenue per game in the National Hockey League; and

“Whereas the Toronto Maple Leafs are ranked the most financially valuable team in the NHL; and

“Whereas many Hamilton and greater Toronto area hockey fans are unable to attend professional hockey games due to a lack of adequate ticket supply; and

“Whereas the Hamilton and greater Toronto area boast the biggest and best market in the world for hockey fans, with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment bringing approximately \$2.4 billion to the local economy over 10 years; and

“Whereas a new franchise in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area is valued at \$600 million by some economists; and

“Whereas competition in both business and sports is healthy for both the Hamilton and greater Toronto area economy and sports team performance; and

“Whereas, despite having the most loyal fans in the world, the Toronto Maple Leafs have not won the Stanley Cup in over 40 years; and

“Whereas Hamilton and greater Toronto area fans deserve competitive professional hockey teams;

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

“To request that the government of the province of Ontario express its strong support to the board of governors of the National Hockey League for the relocation or expansion of a second NHL hockey team in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area in order to realize the economic advantages to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and to provide healthy competition to the existing Toronto NHL franchise.”

I agree with this and will sign the petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to the harmonized PST and GST. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is planning to merge the 8% provincial sales tax and the 5% federal sales tax; and

“Whereas the new 13% harmonized sales tax will be applied to products not previously subject to provincial sales tax such as gasoline, home heating fuels, home renovations, haircuts, hamburgers, television service, Internet service, telephone and cell services, taxi fees, bus, train and airplane tickets, and dry cleaning services; and

“Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by the harmonized sales tax, as will seniors and families;

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

“That the McGuinty government should remove this harmonized sales tax from its 2009-10 budget.”

I support this petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I've a petition 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.

“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 as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs;

“Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide \$6,000 in personal care, per resident;

“Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario’s ability to meet the demands of our aging population;

“Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for an LTC bed;

“Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick;

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“Whereas dedicated LTC homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require;

“Whereas devoted LTC staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations;

“Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in LTC beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

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

“That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario’s 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care, per day, within a year;

—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce LTC wait lists of more than 24,000 people;

—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of LTC homes.”

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

OPPOSITION DAY

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to move opposition day motion number 5, which reads as follows:

Whereas over 65% of working Ontarians have no workplace pension coverage;

Whereas the current economic and financial crisis has highlighted the weaknesses in the Ontario pension system;

Whereas the stock market meltdown has highlighted the negative impact on individuals near retirement saving solely on their own;

Whereas legislation currently under debate clearly states that the province has no obligation to ensure that the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF) can meet its commitments, potentially leaving tens of thousands of workers and retirees in the lurch and without a secure retirement; and

Whereas the underfunding of the PBGF means that members of underfunded plans may not even receive the \$1,000 per month minimum amount guaranteed, something that has never happened before in Ontario:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should ensure that all Ontarians who currently lack a workplace pension have access to a decent retirement income by:

(1) providing a universally accessible, province-wide pension plan;

(2) fully backing the province’s pension benefits guarantee fund so that all current Ontario pensions are fully protected. This would require an increase in the monthly benefit guarantee to at least \$2,500 as recommended in the Arthurs pension report; and

(3) ensuring that all pensions are fully portable and that plan members receive all monies paid into their plans, including all monies contributed by employers.

This is addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 5. Debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s my pleasure to be the first member of our caucus to be speaking to this motion, and I know that as the afternoon continues, we will have a number of other people from the NDP caucus rising in support of this motion, particularly our current pensions critic, Paul Miller, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I’m also very pleased that today in the Legislature we’ve had some people join us to support the motion by being here, and those are retirees and the members of a couple of different unions, particularly the CAW as well as the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. We’re glad to see that they’re here listening to the debate today, because it’s an extremely important debate. I say that because we know what’s happening right now in this province. We know that there are hundreds and hundreds—probably thousands and thousands, in fact—of workers in this province who are very, very worried, who are very, very concerned that they are either on the brink of retirement right now or that they know retirement is coming sometime soon, and the pensions that they have been paying into all of their lives may not be there for them when they retire.

These are working people who have dedicated their lives, in many cases, to the work that goes on in the plants where they work. They work hard. They are loyal to their employer. They have put in year after year after year, and have put away some of their deferred wages. Instead of wage increases, they’ve taken those wage

increases and deferred them into pension plans, into defined benefit pension plans. These are pension plans that are guaranteed—supposed to be guaranteed for workers when they retire. A defined benefit pension plan means the benefit at the end is defined. There are no surprises. It means that you know exactly what it is that you're going to have as an income in your retirement.

That's why defined benefit pension plans are the most important piece of social legislation, if you want to call it that. They're the most important piece of our social safety net, if you want to call it that. Why? Because it guarantees that hard-working people of this province can retire with an understanding that they will have the income they need to be able to have a decent quality of life. What else does anybody want in their retirement years? What does anybody want once they've finished work, once they've toiled for decades at their place of employment? What else does anybody want but to know that once they retire, the income they're going to receive will provide for them a decent roof over their head, decent food on the table, a decent quality of life and a decent opportunity to be able to age, go through those golden years with dignity, with a good quality of life?

I don't think that's a lot to ask. I really do not believe that's a lot to ask. Unfortunately, we know that in the province of Ontario some 65% of workers do not have any pension plan whatsoever. So we know that 65% of the people of this province who end up retiring, and we see them in all our ridings, are people who didn't have the opportunity to have a pension plan when they were working. So now those workers are hitting retirement—especially now—and they've seen what little they were able to put away in an RSP, if they were lucky enough to do so, completely lose value because of what's happened in the market. Some of those workers who don't have a workplace pension plan were able to save a little bit through RSPs, but those RSPs have been flatlined because of what's happened to the economy.

A lot of workers don't have RSPs. A lot of workers weren't able to scrimp and save, because they weren't paid the wages. They weren't paid a decent amount during their working years, so they didn't even have the opportunity to put away any money whatsoever. So when they retire, what are they left to rely on? A totally inadequate Canada pension plan and the old age security system, a system that we know very well keeps senior citizens today, in this current year of 2009, living in destitution and poverty. There is no doubt about it: You cannot make ends meet. You cannot have a decent quality of life in this province with some meagre \$900 a month or so on old age security and Canada pension plan.

And you know what? There are workers in this province who are even further disadvantaged when you look at the Canada pension plan and the old age security system. Why? Because those workers, over their lifetimes, didn't have the chance to be able to pay into those systems like many other workers. Who am I talking about? I'm talking about women workers, many of whom in their lifetimes maybe didn't engage in paid work at all,

raised families, or maybe they engaged in paid work for a portion of their working career, which means they weren't maximizing their contributions into these systems. So these workers, women workers particularly, are seriously disadvantaged when it comes to the current environment in terms of our pension system, both the federal and workplace pension plans.

Immigrants who come to this country, oftentimes in their 30s and 40s, miss out, for many years, the opportunity to pay into the Canada pension plan or any other kind of pension plan for that matter. So we know that not only the Canada pension plan system but the Ontario pension system is wholly inadequate.

I think it's really obvious that the economic storm that we've been through in the last little while has simply opened up and highlighted the complete inadequacies of our pension system in this province. People are left worried about whether they can keep their homes, worried about whether they can maintain a decent quality of life—for no reason, not by reason of anything they did. They did what they were supposed to do. They worked hard all of their lives. They worked hard and they were dedicated, and they did the right thing. They joined a union, right? They bargained. They had part of their collective bargaining process put in place, employer pension plans, and they thought that when the day would come that they would need to rely on those pensions plans, they would be there for them. Not so, here in the province of Ontario.

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Unfortunately, what we've seen in this situation, as it stands right now in Ontario, is a government who, although—when I was first elected, I was the pension critic. I had the opportunity to travel around this province, I think it was, in the winter of 2004-05. I spent several months travelling to 10 or 12 cities in this province having round table discussions about Ontario's pension system. That was five years ago, and the government did nothing. I issued a report. The report spoke to a number of problems with the plan. At that time, the Ontario pension system—it had been 20 years since it had been reviewed. Now it has been 25. We know that the government has put a review in place and we have a report sitting on a shelf, the Arthurs report.

What we talked about back then, five years ago, were things like portability of pension plans; things like changing the pension benefits guarantee fund so that the minimum amount is increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500, so that it actually reflects what the workers who pay into their plans need, to top up if for some reason their pension plan gets wound up and it's underfunded, which we know is happening right now. We know it's happening everywhere. There are threats of it happening with GM and with Chrysler. We've seen it with steel. We've seen it in my own community, actually. We've seen it with GenFast in Brant. We've seen it in all kinds of situations—AbitibiBowater in northern Ontario—where workers are at threat of not being able to receive their full pension. So there's this fund that's supposed to top up,

and what we see is a wholly inadequate amount of top-up, which is \$1,000. We need that to go up to \$2,500. That's not new; that's something I was saying five years ago and something Harry Arthurs is now saying in his report—not that I agree with everything in that report, but there are some nuggets in there that I certainly support.

The issue is that this debate is not something that the government is prepared to engage in. In fact, all the government wants to do is punt the issue up to the federal government and say that it's a CPP issue, a Canada pension plan issue, and it has nothing to do with what's happening in this province. That's not where they want to go. I've got to tell you: The workers of this province want to go there and New Democrats in this province want to go there. We believe it's time to have a serious debate about the income security of people when they finish their working careers. We believe there need to be significant changes made. We believe they should have been made five years ago when the economic times were good. But at the very least, it needs to be looked at now, when so many workers either don't have a pension plan or see that their pension is not going to be there for them when they finish work.

It's unacceptable, and what's the response of the government? There has been two: "Punt it up to Ottawa because it's not our issue," or their second piece was to turn their backs on the pension benefits guarantee fund at the very time when workers need it the most. How shameful is that? This government—instead of saying, "We are going to make sure that fund is solid; we are going to make sure it's there for workers when they need it," they turn their backs and say, "This fund is never going to have enough money in it to help those workers." Shame on the government for a wholly inadequate response to the crisis that's hitting workers in this province right now. It is a shameful show of their lack of consideration, their lack of concern and their total lack of capacity to understand the fear and the worry that are in the hearts of workers across this province.

So, yes, we believe changes need to be made, and we're going to be putting on the record a number of specific things that we want to see changed in the pension system. A number of those things relate to the pension benefits guarantee fund. I've already mentioned one being the increase to \$2,500 monthly, but there are others.

I mentioned the crisis in the economy and how that has raised this issue and put it on the front burner, but this is not the only jurisdiction that's dealing with this. While the government of Ontario is saying, "This is not our problem; it's a federal issue," we see other provinces beginning to have a debate about this very issue. We see British Columbia and Alberta talking together about the possibility of a provincial type of pension plan. We see that right now. We see Nova Scotia engaging in that same kind of conversation. For some reason, the most populous province, Ontario, isn't interested in having this conversation, notwithstanding the fact that most of the

workers are right here in this province. So we're going to put on the table some ideas, because we think this debate needs to happen. We believe this debate should have happened a while ago, but it certainly needs to be happening now. We believe the province of Ontario has a significant role to play in upgrading our pension systems.

I want to put three specific issues on the table that I think we need to consider. I'm not saying we're going to design the system right here in this Legislature today. What I'm saying is, there are pieces of a provincial pension system that we need to look at, and they are serious issues.

One would be the issue of the 65% of people in this province who do not have a pension plan right now. Of those 65% of people, there are options that we have to consider in how we get them to have some kind of coverage.

Should the plan be a top-up option for those who already have a plan? So if you have a plan and it is a meagre one, should we put a plan in place and design it such that you can top up with an Ontario plan? Or should it be only for people who have no plan at all so that they can have something? There's an option that we have to decide upon.

Should it be a mandatory plan so that all workers and all employers should be paying in, so that they can make sure that everybody in fact has a minimal amount of a pension plan in their retirement? I know that BC is going one way in this particular debate. I think we need to think seriously about whether or not opting out is something that we would consider in designing an Ontario pension plan for Ontario workers.

Other issues: contribution levels. What does that look like? What would be the contribution levels that we would expect to be able to create a pension system in this province that everyone could rely on?

Those are three issues just off the top of my head. There are many others that need to be considered in the designing of an Ontario pension plan.

I know one thing for sure: It is absolutely unacceptable, absolutely inappropriate and absolutely reprehensible that the government of Ontario is not engaging in a very, very proactive way in what has become such a significant crisis not only in terms of our existing pension system, our existing pension act, but also in terms of looking proactively at how we make sure that as people finish their working careers, they are able to access some kind of dollars, some kind of financial security, through a pension system if it's not provided through their employer.

I'm going to end my remarks there because I know that my colleagues have a great deal to contribute as well in this debate. But I really want to emphasize one last time that New Democrats believe this is the time to have this debate. We believe it's incumbent upon this government to be proactive. We believe there are opportunities and that the government needs to seize the day and show the workers and the people of this province that they understand the fear and the worry that they face

today, not only workers who have current pension plans that are at risk but workers who are worried about the future for them and their families.

I would urge every member of this Legislature to take your position here seriously. This is a place where we create legislation, where we make positive change. If there's one place where positive change needs to be made in this province at this point in time, it's in the pension system and the capacity of people to retire with dignity and quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to speak to the opposition day motion, and I want to start just by reiterating something we all know: The economy of late has created a level of anxiety in Ontario, in Canada, and frankly, throughout the world. There are workers, there are retirees, there are families and, frankly, there are businesses and employers who are concerned with the economic state that we find ourselves in today. Certainly, this is driving a debate in a variety of areas, not the least of which is the matter of what happens to workers when they finish their employment, whether that be through retirement or, in some cases, because employment disappears.

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So this is a broad and intense discussion that is happening in a number of jurisdictions, not the least of which is and has been this Legislature. I would suggest that no party in this Legislature, and probably no member in this Legislature, has not been or will not be part of that ongoing discussion and debate.

And there are no quick and easy answers to be found. The reason there are no quick and easy answers is because each of those quick and easy solutions has consequences that have to be thoroughly and thoughtfully considered, have to be communicated, and have to be consulted on throughout this province.

It is not only because of the economic climate that we found ourselves in over the past year, but also because of this government's interest in and concern for the long-range needs of workers as they move out of the workforce, particularly into retirement, to provide some level of assurance in the longer term, that we are looking out for their best interests, that they are looking out for their best interests, and in a co-operative fashion, whether it be government, employers or workers, we find a means to provide that level of security.

I would suggest that is, not the least measure, the reason that in the latter part of 2006, encouraged by the labour movement, encouraged by industry, encouraged by employers and government, we established and struck the expert commission on pension reform. Something of this magnitude dictates and demands that we draw upon those with expertise in the field, that we ask them to consult, that we ask them to seek advice and that we ask them then to prepare, through government, recommendations in the form of a report.

The expert commission on pension reform did just that. It consulted widely, over an extended period of

time, and provided a broad range of recommendations—some 142 recommendations, I believe, within the report.

Now, when a report of that magnitude, with such long-reaching and far-reaching implications, is received, it's not a situation where governments can act quickly or unilaterally. This talks about the long-term implications and the long-term needs of pension reform.

It is now part of our obligation to consult, in the context of these recommendations, with Ontarians and with the partners involved in this whole situation. Those include workers—those who are not in the organized labour force and those who are in organized labour—the business community, and our other partners. One of those other, major partners must be the federal government.

That is the reason why in this Legislature, over the past number of weeks at the very least, when questions have been raised about pensions and pension reform, particularly in light of the economic climate and specifically as it relates to the large automakers here in North America and Canada, the Premier has been quite clear and, I would suggest, steadfast in saying that we need to have that dialogue. We need to have that dialogue broadly, but to have that dialogue, we need to have it in consultation with our federal partners. That's why the Premier has written to the Prime Minister to ask for that engagement, to ask for that national dialogue that is so necessary. This is not just a matter for Ontario; it's a matter for Canadians in each provincial jurisdiction, and our federal partners as well.

There are a number of matters that will need to have consideration. I look to the recommendations within the motion.

The motion speaks specifically to “providing a universally, province-wide pension plan.” We haven't had that discussion. We don't know what the costs of that are, and we don't know who will bear those costs and how they will bear those costs. Each time we have discussions of this nature, we have to be cognizant of the potential implications to the taxpayer—not just those who contribute to the pension fund directly, but will there be implications for the taxpayer? To what extent will the taxpayer be expected to contribute, or not; to guarantee funds, or not; and to what extent are those who contribute to the plan responsible?

The second part of the recommendations speaks specifically to an increase, as recommended, to some \$2,500 from the current \$1,000 limit. We haven't had the debate about what the cost of that is. We haven't had the debate around what the contributory portions are, about who would make those contributions and whether there would be any expectation that taxpayers should be engaged in that process.

Full portability of pensions, as a third element in the resolution itself, is a complex matter. If you have portable pensions between companies and between different business elements, how much of the burden will be carried directly with the employer? How much of that burden will be the employees'? What is the cost of that transfer of responsibility on a new employer? How fully

are pensions portable between companies, between industries, and between public and private sector entities? Clearly those are the types of initiatives that need more than a cursory review. It's the reason that the expert commission was called into play to provide a series of recommendations for us to have that opportunity to consult.

We're anxious to engage our federal counterparts in this broad debate. I know the Premier is anxious for a national summit, so that Canadians can address the pension needs of those in the workforce and, frankly, opportunities for those who find themselves in the workforce without the benefit of a pension plan.

The province will, through its budgetary policies, continue to provide support for those who find themselves in a vulnerable situation. Certainly they include seniors, some on low pensions and some without any pensions. We'll do that through a great variety of measures, whether it be mechanisms to provide protection in their homes through property tax and property rental agreements, such that we are providing support where they need it. We'll continue with the enhancements we have already put in place in that regard as we move through this budget year and subsequent budget years.

We're all anxious for an ongoing dialogue, but that has to be a dialogue on an even broader basis than just Ontario. It clearly needs the engagement of our federal partners, and we certainly would anticipate that the continuing call by the Premier and others for that dialogue on a national level will only enhance the discussion we're going to have.

The consultation around the expert commission will continue as well. We need to look carefully at those recommendations so that we understand the implications, not only to workers but to employers, and not only to workers and employers but to all Ontarians—all those who will have some obligation in that regard.

I can suggest to you that we welcome the dialogue. Having said that, I'm not in a position, nor do I believe that members of our caucus will be in the position, to support the opposition day motion. Clearly when you come down to the very specifics of the recommendations that are before us, they're beyond this Legislature to support. It's beyond this Legislature to arbitrarily support the recommendations as they are put before us today.

I appreciate the time that is available to us for the debate today. I welcome the discussion that will occur on this floor so we can garner yet more ideas, and Ontarians can draw to our attention and to the attention of our federal counterparts the need for a national dialogue, and particularly a summit of the national leaders in respect to pension reform in this country.

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Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak today. First of all, I must say, in dealing with the issue, that it's a very contentious issue in Oshawa, and as many would expect, we get a lot of calls on both sides of the issue. By any stretch of the imagination, it's far from unanimous either way.

It all comes down to how the process began and where it comes from, back from regulation change 5.1 back in

1992, I believe, when the government of the day, the NDP, came forward with the "too big to fail" issue. At that time, it may have been the perceived method in order to assist the companies, but the end result is that a lot of people have a lot of strong concerns now. I'm hoping that this legislation goes far beyond just the direct impact and actually addresses a lot of other aspects of pension issues province-wide.

After the issue of the regulation change 5.1 came forward, our government was in power, and at that time the number one question that I got on the line was very specifically, "Do we have to work another weekend?" When you're dealing with that aspect, when the concern comes forward, it's like, "We're not concerned about the pension issue." I never heard one concern about the issues being readdressed and funds being put back in, because the perception was—

Interjection: The economy.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: That's right, because the economy was moving along wonderfully, cars were selling and everything else was happening.

For a lot of individuals who don't understand the process, I should explain some aspects of it. We get a lot of calls, and I do a lot of explaining of what takes place with this pension top-up fund up to \$1,000. What that effectively means is that whatever percentage of shortfall is found within the fund is the percentage that is made up, up to the \$1,000. My understanding of that is—I hear various rates—that the fund of the line workers at General Motors would only be approximately 40% funded now. That would mean that the top-up pension aspect would top up the 60% shortfall to the \$1,000, which would mean \$600 a month.

If we get a turnaround in the markets because there was a substantial—about 18%—drop in the fund markets that their funds were invested in, that would mean there would be less of an onus requirement for the province to step in.

The concern here is that if the province had never stepped in, the fund would be fully funded and there would be no issues or concerns. Governments of all stripes have had this kick at the cat, so to speak, and nobody has really fixed the problem, taken care of it or addressed the issues. My understanding is that Chrysler and Ford have no issue, but General Motors did not comply.

A couple of precedents were set in the province. One was Algoma Steel. Our party supported their pension fund; otherwise, it would have broken the very base fund that we're talking about and lost all the funds. The other one that took place, which the current government assisted with, was Stelco. What do you do in situations like this? I'm going to give some options a little bit later, but I want to talk about some of these things.

What are you going to do with a 92-year-old individual—my uncle, for example—who's very dependent on his General Motors pension? He never missed a day of work in his entire life, and until he was 91 years old, he never went to the hospital. Here's an individual who has

contributed his entire life and never missed a day of work, who has a very, very meagre pension. That individual, if you walk into their house, every wall is white gloss paint. There are no luxuries there. It's very basic. It has a garden the size of the official opposition party, and that's how they supplement their income, by taking care of those things.

What about my mother-in-law, 86 years old? What about my sisters-in-law and my aunts? There are a lot of individuals who are very concerned with what takes place with this and how it's going to be impacted.

And I have to tell you, the individuals most concerned about not having the taxpayer supplement their income are the workers. They believe that the best way to make sure this fund can continue to pay is by ensuring viability within the company so that the company should pay due diligence in ensuring that all the funds are kept up-to-date. That is directly from the individuals that I met.

I see he happened to step out—but just joining us now is Mr. Tim Eye, whom I happened to meet on Friday, and we discussed that very issue with him. I know he can't participate in the debate, but I'm hoping he didn't pass on my confidential information that I passed on Friday. It's either a yes or a no—okay, very good. Thank you very much, because I've been trying to deal with this issue in a different aspect.

Effectively, the leader of the official opposition has said, "We're going to put some ideas on the table," and I'm going to do the same thing right now. I've been trying to draft legislation for an extended period of time. It's been shot down, and I fully expect it'll be shot down the next time as well because it effectively deals with options that are available.

When you're looking at contributions, who is eligible to contribute in the province of Ontario? Self-employed individuals? Workers who do not otherwise have a pension plan? What about people who may work for an Ontario employer but don't work in Ontario? For example, when the Kuwait issue took place, there was a huge contingent of people from Ontario that went to Kuwait to put out all the fires on the oil rigs, and those incomes there—they're Ontario-based companies but they're working out of province. Are they eligible to contribute? What about the amount of the contribution: Is there a minimum? Is there a maximum? What about the tax implications, if any, for a contribution? Specifically, is there a deduction from the taxable income for the amount of the employee's contribution? What about portability? What happens when an individual—and we talk about today's society and the amount of time that they spend in one particular job. What happens if they move from job to job to job, and what happens to the employer's and the employees' contributions in particular situations like that? If an employee wants to contribute, is the person's employer also bound to contribute? These are all questions that need to be answered when you're looking at a potential opportunity.

Effectively, what this is leading to is an Ontario pension plan bill. What this is designed to do is bring in

all individuals in the province of Ontario, so that it would be managed and funded in the same fashion as the Canada pension plan—not necessarily to replace the Canada pension plan but to supplement it. So when my kids start their—not their paper routes, but the first time they get a paycheque where there are deductions on it, they can contribute into the fund, so that when they achieve a retirement age, they know what their level of support will be.

What is the mechanism for collection, enforcement and investment? Who manages those entire processes? What about integration, say, with the public service pension? If you're going to move forward, how do you include all those other pension funds in Ontario in order to bring it in so that it can be managed by the province of Ontario? Quite possibly, the British example might be one to lead; that is, for those individuals who have a set fund now, it would be fixed in the fashion it is, but those moving forward would also have to contribute to a general fund for an Ontario pension plan. These are some of the things that a lot of us have been considering and have been working on for a considerable amount of time.

When we talk about the impacts here, when we talk about General Motors, everybody thinks of Oshawa. Well, quite frankly, the number one employer in Lindsay—and I see the member from Lindsay—is General Motors; the number two employer in Peterborough—and I see that the member from Peterborough was just here—is General Motors; and the number one employer in Port Hope is General Motors. So a lot more than just Oshawa is impacted.

What we need to do is ensure that there's consistency throughout the problem, so that the issue is resolved. What are some of the options? I met with Mr. Eye on Friday, and he had a suggestion whereby under the bankruptcy act, for any corporation that goes bankrupt, the assets are seized by the government in order to pay off any back taxes. Now, his idea was to declare any unfunded pension liability as a tax. I don't know if that would be possible, but there is the opportunity of declaring that in the same fashion that bankruptcy takes place, the taxes are paid and then the unfunded pension liability is also taken into consideration. I know the discussions are very much about who buys the assets, where they come into play and how all that plays out, but where does it take place? You have to start somewhere, and I think this is one of the key issues.

There's a lot of concern that taxpayers' dollars are going to go into supporting General Motors or high-paid General Motors workers who don't deserve that. But quite frankly, if the government of the day had not given the exemptions that took place, we would not be in this situation, because either General Motors would have gone under at that time, saying, "We can't afford it," and the pensions would have been secured, or we wouldn't be in the situation we are in now. We need to make sure that these individuals are taken care of.

There are a lot of considerations. For example, when I'm talking to individuals throughout the riding—what

are we going to do with a senior who's in their 80s and in a retirement home? Their pension comes in and pays for the retirement home stay to take care of that individual. Who is going to pick up that cost when that pension is gone and lost? It'll be the taxpayer in another form, because the support is not there. These individuals need to be taken care of. There are a lot of other areas that need to be addressed as well, because it's not just a matter of the funds; it's the other support categories that take place.

For example, if and when the funding from the pensions is reduced or lost for these individuals, what's going to happen for Canada pension plan when they file their taxes? Instead of the other aspects, now they will receive greater support from their other form of support, being the Canada pension plan effectively, which means the taxpayers, in another fashion, will be taking care of that instead of General Motors.

1430

These are all the considerations that I explain to individuals when they call in. It's not just a cut-and-dried issue. It's going to happen. I know on my own street I can think of the lady across the road, beside her, skip one, the next two up, the lady right beside me, the next two on top of that are all General Motors pension individuals who are very dependent on that. Their houses were built in 1958, three-bedroom bungalows, not the lap of luxury, so to speak. These are very concerned individuals: Who is going to pick up the tax base and where is it going to come from? If General Motors folds in Oshawa, the tax base alone to the local community will then fall on the residents and the other businesses, which will effectively mean either cut services or increase the tax loads in those communities as well.

I think there are a lot of considerations that need to be addressed here, and I want to make sure that everything is put on the table so that everybody realizes the real effect. We need to think outside the box. When I speak to the individuals, whether it's the local labour council individuals or whether it's local union presidents, on this, they realize there's no quick fix for the immediate situation. What we need to do is think outside the box and in the long term.

What I've done here is give some of those options or opportunities to think about. I certainly hope the third party will consider some of the things that I've brought forward because we need to think as a whole on the entire best interests of the entire province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I would like to welcome some guest from the CAW to the Legislature today, and I hope I get these names correct: John Gatens, Sandra Carricato, Armindo Vieira, Dean Lindsay, Richard Kratz, Orville Thacker, Don Wright, George Appleton, Gerry LeBlanc, Asit Das, Tony DiBartolomeo, John Priestman, Sherry Hillman, Roland Kiehne, Dave Champagne, Chris Wilski, George Bagorski and, from CEP, Josephine Petcher. Welcome.

I would just like to speak out on this issue. This is not a new issue; I can remember four or five years ago lobby-

ing in Ottawa for the United Steelworkers to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. At that time, the red flags were up about pensions in this country. This is not a new phenomenon, but it surely has hit our province, with all the job losses, and our pensioners are in dire need of help. This is the time for action.

Over the months since I was first elected to this Legislature, I have raised my and my party's concerns about the fragile pension system in this province. Just a year ago, on May 28, I asked the Minister of Finance, "Will you act immediately to significantly increase the monthly pension benefit protected by the pension guarantee fund?" I pointed out that "Many Ontarians are worried about their pensions and whether they will be able to enjoy a financially secure retirement. They're worried because Ontario's pension protection legislation is badly out of date and full of holes. In fact, the coverage provided by the Ontario pension guarantee fund hasn't been updated since 1980 and now covers only a small part of the typical monthly pension benefit."

The government's response to this serious, important question was to include in legislation that the government has no responsibility for a healthy, properly funded pension benefit guarantee fund and also that they would like to start dialogue with Ottawa. Well, the time for talk is over; the time for action is now.

On October 9, 2008, I raised the concerns of workers who wanted "pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their employer when they close or leave the country, including not only severance, but holiday pay." An example would be the company I worked at and am a pensioner from, formerly Stelco, now US Steel. I have a real problem with some of the CEO buyouts and some of the things that have gone on. For example, Mr. Rodney Moss—was it Moss?—anyways, he walked away. He was from the States, he came up to Hamilton, he revamped the company, painted a bit of machinery, bought some people out, made it look saleable, got some pension money from the government to help out with the pension fund a little bit, and then he turned around and sold it to US Steel. We had estimated from our union that Stelco was worth in the neighbourhood of \$1.2 billion for assets. He turned around and sold it to US Steel for \$1.3 million, and Mr. Mott, Rodney Mott, personally walked away with \$68 million in his pocket after only 18 months of employment. But they're telling my pensioners and my workers to give up \$4 an hour, to give up benefits. My pensioners are going to have to bleed the pension fund—but you've got this stuff going on in North America; outrageous. This has to be addressed.

This past March 12 I talked about US Steel-Stelco and noted that to begin collecting pensions, workers must have 30 years of credited service acquired through their years in the plant. At Lake Erie Works, about 50 workers fall short by months. The number doubles when you add workers who have 30 years of service but are short on their pension credits because of layoffs or strike time. I asked for bridging to help those people who were a

couple of months away—it didn't happen; not even discussed; it fell on deaf ears—two months away from getting their pension. At Hamilton Steel, where three quarters of the workforce have more than 25 years of service, there are about 300 workers in this position. On that same day, March 12, I raised the issue of hundreds of workers slated to be laid off at Stelco who are just months short of qualifying for their pensions.

The heart of the problem is that there are hundreds of workers who are coming up a few months short and will be forced to rely on EI if the practical bridging solution is not found. The difference between a pension payment and employment insurance is significant. With a typical Stelco pension averaging approximately \$2,600 a month, employment insurance pays a maximum of \$1,800 a month, so the pensioner falls short again.

On April 22, I told this House that New Democrats are outraged that this government is shutting down the debate on its budget by allowing only one day for public hearings on a matter of such critical importance. The Premier ended the debate on a budget bill that contains far-reaching provisions about the security of retirement incomes of millions of Ontarians. The CAW workers I rallied with in Windsor are gravely concerned about their pensions, and they should be. There's a shortfall of billions of dollars.

At the Protect Our Pensions rally on April 23 on the front lawn right out here, I was standing with my brothers and sisters in the labour movement who are deeply concerned about the state of their pensions: steelworkers and other unions. Again, I stand in this Legislature to make sure that the calls for pension protection from workers all across Ontario are heard. Those at the rally worked hard all their adult lives believing that when they retired they would have a pension to live on. Let me tell you, those pensions are deferred wages. They are negotiated contracts, that these people in good faith believed that the company would meet their obligation to these pension plans so that at the end they'd have something. So they gave up money to have secure pensions. Where do they find themselves now? In dire trouble.

This government is forcing them to live in uncertainty. Pensions have been underfunded, and this government has done and continues to do nothing to protect these workers, but says, "We're going to start dialogue. We're going to start talking about it." Talk about johnny-come-lately.

On April 30, I raised the concerns of people who work hard all their lives and defer their earnings to a pension plan. The least they should expect is when it comes to the end of their working days, they can count on the retirement income that they put away after decades of dedicated work to their companies. Yet we had Abitibi-Bowater in the north going to court to suspend pension payments towards its unfunded liabilities for workers. This government is trying to deflect the blame to the federal government when in fact the majority of the responsibility falls on this government's shoulders.

We are still shocked that this government brought forward a resolution to deflect its responsibility for pensions

when so many thousands of Ontario pensioners are in jeopardy. How could this government introduce legislation absolving the province of any legal obligation whatsoever to ensure that pensioners get every last penny owed to them? Shame. Shame on you.

1440

The NDP and I are not only the voices speaking out on the pension guarantee fund. Last week, Marie Kelly, assistant director for the United Steelworkers and vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, spoke before the committee hearings on the budget. Listen to what she had to say regarding her concerns over this government's pension policies:

"[W]e really believe that the pension benefits guarantee fund has to be there for our workers. It has to be there to protect the most vulnerable right now in this economic crisis. That's the reason it was built up; that's the reason that it needs to be in place now more than ever."

From another union often referred to by the Premier and his ministers, Ken Lewenza, president of the Canadian Auto Workers, also spoke before the committee. Here are some of his comments:

"Until now, the practice has been that the province has always stood behind the fund. The new provisions in Bill 162 explicitly say that the government has no obligation under any circumstances to make any loans or grants to the fund.

"At the precise time that workers and retirees most need support, the possibility arises that it may be taken away from them. Thousands of workers and retirees have received significant support from the PBGF in the past. The potential victims of future plan failures should not be abandoned; instead, they should be reassured that society at large will be able to protect them."

On a uniformly accessible, province-wide pension plan we need to think, people, about the 65% of Ontarians who have no pension plan at work, who must rely on their RRSPs—if they haven't already spent it because they've lost their jobs—and they have to rely on old age and Canada pension. I don't know about you, but \$1,100 a month doesn't cut it if you live in a home and you're on a fixed income. It just doesn't cut it. Sixty-five per cent of the people who don't have a pension plan deserve better treatment in our province.

I have been working for over a year on a new pension program for Ontario. It may be different from my colleague's in the Conservatives, but we believe that employers have an obligation to the people of the province that spend their lifetimes building wealth for them and working hard for them, and they should not have the rug pulled out from under them at the end of their lives. They've worked hard for the money that they deserve and they should get it. We in this Legislature are responsible for protecting our seniors, protecting the working people of this province, and we have an obligation to see that a new set-up for Ontario is there. You cannot rely on passing it to the feds. We need an Ontario pension plan.

There are pension plans like this in other sectors of the world. There's one in Saskatchewan, right next door to us—or two down. There's one in Finland. There are some in France. There's one in Germany. We have the ability to create a fund that won't chase businesses out of Ontario. It will be a few cents an hour. We have a humanity fund in the Steelworkers by which we raised millions and millions of dollars for a couple of cents an hour from our workers that went in there.

If an employer came to me and said, "Mr. Miller, I'm going to give you a dollar raise, but 25 cents an hour of that is going to go into your pension plan," am I going to complain? I can't even get a coffee for that. That 25 cents an hour, starting at age 25, and I retire at age 65, is going to give me anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month on top of my old age and Canada pension. Maybe I can stay in my home; maybe I can have some dignity; maybe I can live a life that I deserve. That could start now. It's too late for me because I'm too old to start into an Ontario pension plan, but we need to help our seniors and the pensioners now to make sure their pensions are secure and start setting up a plan to work for our kids and grandkids. We've got to start thinking outside the box. We haven't done this for many years, and it's time.

I know that 100% of the people in this House want to help pensioners, they want to do the right thing, but you can't keep talking about it and deflecting it. You have to face it. We have all kinds of information to share. Unions have been working on this for a long time, especially my steelworker union. We have a lot of valuable material that can move this process along.

In closing, I'm going to leave a little time for my colleagues: no more talk, no more creating tours through Ontario. We know what the problems are; they know what the problems are. We have to stop deflecting; we have to face our responsibilities and do something for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Huron—Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate on the opposition motion. One of the things that is, quite frankly, not being talked about today is what is happening with the economy other than all the hardships that the people of Ontario are feeling today, what we have done as a government: the \$32-billion investment in infrastructure and the financial commitments that have been made to so many of our sectors, be it forestry, be it the auto industry, be it agriculture—a very long list of the work that has been done in order to ensure that we stabilize our economy.

One of the things that I also want to speak about for just a couple of minutes is the whole issue of taxation reform that is being presented in the budget, moving towards the single tax. One of the things that we have to continue to do is to bring about reforms and to adapt to the times and the realities that we face today. I think about the hardships that we are facing. We've seen unprecedented financial impact. We haven't seen it like this in over 80 years. I know when you're out and about, as all of us in this House are, people are very concerned.

What does the future hold for them? What will their golden years be like? That's not people who are close, like myself, who had a birthday yesterday, so I'm a lot closer, but it's people who are very young.

Mr. Michael Prue: Twenty-six?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Twenty-six again, yeah. I thought I had to bump it up to 29 because my kids are almost there now.

When we think about that, for someone just starting out, they want some guidance and they want some assurances of what they can expect. Also, as legislators, what we're looking at is what we can do in order to ensure the people of Ontario have their golden years—that they are safe, they are secure, and they do have financial security.

Then it comes back to, how then should that be provided for? We know that stabilizing our economy, obviously, is one of the greatest tools that we can use, because, quite frankly, these discussions have been going on in this House for a couple of years, but out in the general public, unless you were affected directly, not so much.

When we think about the Premier sending a letter to our national government, 65% of the people of Ontario do not have a pension. Therefore, what they rely on is CPP and old-age security. So this affects 65% of the people, we could say; if they did not have the ability to put enough aside, this is the funding that they rely on. Obviously a national discussion needs to happen for the majority of the people.

Then when you break it down even further, into the pension benefit guarantee fund, we know that it needs to be stabilized. We know that it needs to look to the future. What should that fund be able to encompass, what can a worker expect of that, and how then would that be paid for?

When we go back to the 65% who aren't making an annual contribution or don't have the ability to do that other than from their own personal registered retirement funds, the RIFs or whatever, and we look at the pension benefit guarantee of the percentage of the people, how then should that be paid for? Then we get into the discussion about, should it be premium-based, should there be something that can fall back on the tax base, or should it be a combination thereof?

But what we all agree on is that we have to get to the stage where it is sustainable. Obviously, as in all things, when you plan, you plan for the worst-case scenario and hope that is the worst-case scenario that you ever get to, and then you continue to build that system that will sustain that report. When we look at the Harry Arthurs report that was commissioned in 2006, we know 142 recommendations have come from that report. There's been wide consultation. So now where do we begin and how do we begin?

The Premier has sent a letter, to begin, at the national level—65% of the people, if you break it down. How do we move towards the pension benefit guarantee?

1450

We have also looked at tools to stabilize our economy—obviously, that's one part of it. Then, the short-

term relief—what has been provided. There has been an extension of the solvency amortization period from five to 10 years. There has been deferral of catch-up payments to provide one year of cash flow relief.

We also looked at locked-in accounts, which have gone from zero to 25% in one budget to 25% to 50% in this budget, which has certainly brought us to the national level. I know this is something that we hear a great deal about from our constituents as well.

What we can agree on, given the financial circumstances we find ourselves in today, is that we have to not only transform our taxation system; we also have to give to our companies, our small businesses and our large businesses the ability to transform themselves. By moving to a single tax, we have given the lowest corporate tax rates in North America and we have helped out our small businesses, and all of that is a full package going forward. That's one part of it. The stimulus is another part, and financial stability is another.

I come from a rural area, and we like to get to the money fairly quickly. I wanted to have some figures about what this motion represents for people in their pockets. We've heard a great deal from the opposition that it's not the time to come forward with our tax reforms, but this is what this means, in sum, to pay for what you are recommending: A self-employed businesswoman making \$40,000 would now have to pay \$4,000 a year. A company with 10 people making \$40,000 each would be charged an extra \$20,000 in taxes. So if your paycheque is \$40,000 a year, it's an additional \$2,000 that you're going to have to pay out of your paycheque to cover this. I just wanted to give it some financial perspective as well.

I do want to say that I am grateful to be able to enter the debate—quite frankly, this is a discussion that will be ongoing. We really must ensure that we have the tools in place to provide a bright future for the people of Ontario while ensuring that Ontario remains strong.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this, and want to make it very clear at the beginning that I believe there's a general sentiment of wishing to do the right thing on this NDP motion. There are three fundamental recommendations, as has been stated, one of which I believe is probably widely supported on all sides of the House, which is to provide "a universally accessible, province-wide pension plan." That would be an ideal state for us to be in.

We could say we have federal plans that tend to achieve some minimum amount of coverage. That should be the goal; in fact, it was one of the recommendations in the Arthurs report itself. Having worked for a number of years in a personnel function at General Motors, I'm reasonably familiar with the issues, but also conflicted, to the extent that I did work there.

Number two is the issue that's really before us here, the pension benefit guarantee fund, and it's generally very poorly understood. I don't mean that to be critical;

it's perhaps just a way of expressing things. In fact, very few companies even belong to that fund. To belong to the fund, you must be a single employer pension plan, SEPP. They're the only ones that actually belong to it. Multiple employers aren't covered.

If you look at the numbers, roughly 70% of people don't have a pension of any sort, really, and 25% to 30% actually have some form of pension. Most of the public sector pensions aren't covered by the pension benefit guarantee fund, and the employer of record there isn't like General Motors, Ford, Chrysler or Stelco. The employer of record is basically the taxpayer. So the taxpayer is paying.

If you look at those public sector pensions, they're in worse trouble than most of the pensions we're talking about. The teachers' pension fund, the largest one in Canada, is short about \$35 billion. They actually had a very important ruling just last year that, going forward, teachers hired in September no longer get an indexed pension. They have a huge liability issue.

OMERS, the Ontario municipal employees, has a huge problem. All the pensions that you can name here today have a liability, all of them—not some, all. That's why they've had a federal commission as well as the Arthurs report on pensions. It's a huge, huge issue. I say this with some suggestion that the government should look at this pension issue, which they have, and there are some recommendations.

Number two is the problem. Who would qualify under the pension benefits guarantee fund? First of all, it has to be a certain type of pension, a single employer: Stelco, General Motors—you could name a few of them; there are probably about 12 of them in the Ontario. The rest of the pensions don't belong to this fund; let's be clear about that. They're not covered by it. The general misconception in the public is that they are.

What are they covered for? Well, it's only up to \$1,000, so if the pension fund was funded at 75%, of the first \$1,000, 75% would come from the employer even though it wasn't fully funded. The other part would come from the pension benefits guarantee fund, which in this case, if it was 75% funded, would be around \$250. The rest of the pension would come from the employer, not from the fund. It's important to clarify some of these things; it's technical.

Why am I interested in this? I'm a retiree of General Motors, with over 30 years. I worked in personnel, and I've basically studied this; I took the securities course to be licensed as a securities investor. But I've also talked to some of the experts in the pension field on my own just to become educated, because, provincially, we could argue that we were part of a government that cancelled the pension as we would know it. I've spoken with Cameron Hunter—who is the head of Eckler and associates, a firm that represents many pensions—as well as others. I'll just leave it at that.

I would say that the issue here that I want to get on the record is that we should be doing the right thing, but we're not the government. The real issue here is Premier

McGuinty. To be straightforward, he's the government, and if you want to really be specific, I think that FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, is on the hook. In fact, I'd go so far as to say whoever was involved in negotiating pensions, pension entitlements and these options knew full well that the workforce was changing. We're outsourcing everything, so the base of contributors is getting smaller. There are fewer people paying and more people collecting. It simply doesn't work. It's finished, I'm telling you. So the government has a serious problem here.

At all levels, pensions don't work. They only work when the company keeps growing—it's like a pyramid—and they don't outsource. Why are they outsourcing? Because most of the pensions want to earn money. They want to earn a 7% return on equity or capital. I don't think the government can solve it. But Premier McGuinty's the Premier; it's his problem, and he should fix it. This is an agreement made in good faith between employees and employers. The regulator here, FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, is his boss, and they have a job to do. It appears to me that they're trying to shuffle around it.

Now, there's a suspect portion in the last budget, Bill 162, the budget bill. There is a provision in that bill to set aside an amount of money to fix this problem, I believe. It doesn't say specifically, but there's a whole section on pensions. Have a look at the budget. They know there's a problem. They got the Arthurs report, there's a federal report, and this thing has been going on—I was the PA to the Minister of Finance, and I would know it has been going on for a long time. I think there's been a lot of inappropriate intrusion by government, I would say, starting in 1992—we all know that—2005, 2007, more recently in 2008, and now 2009. They're in this up to their ears, and the people of Ontario are being held hostage.

I think there was a very good suggestion made by a person that's with us, Tim Eye. It's one of the suggestions that are on the table. I'm going to read it, with your indulgence. It's a very good point of how this could be resolved. I hope the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Arthurs, is here today, Mr. Leal, who's from Peterborough—I know he has met with some of the stakeholders—and other members here who represent working people. We all represent working people. They want a fair shake, so stand up for them.

1500

Under Tim's memo here, it says, "Under Canadian bankruptcy law"—CCAA—"governments are the first creditor in line to divide corporate assets for taxes owed prior to secured and unsecured creditors." In other words, taxes are the first creditor for any money that's left in an organization. You'd think at the same time that the government recognized this and put the best interests of Ontario ahead of the bank.

Here's what he says: "We believe the government of Ontario has the legal and moral obligation to do what is best for all Ontarians. In the same context, a new law or

regulation giving the government of Ontario the power to declare"—this is the key—"any unfunded liability on a windup basis of ... workplace-sponsored pension plan owed...." If it was taxes owed to the government of Ontario and payable to the same upon disposition of assets sharing the bankruptcy, then the government really wouldn't be ponying up the money; they'd be taking the first residual assets, which would be shared to the extent that they did cover the liability.

I really feel that the government should be stepping forward. They're the government. They've been here for eight or nine years. Anybody who knows anything knows that this is a problem, and it has been a problem even going back into the 1990s. In 1996 there was a problem. It went to the Supreme Court of Canada. It was called the Monsanto case, about disclosing surpluses and who owns the surpluses. I believe that our critic, Mr. Sterling, will echo our response to this in a formal way.

I want to put on the record that I wrote to Mr. Bob Christie, who was the CEO and superintendent of financial services, on December 1. I wrote to him advising him of some issues around the pension plan. At the end of that, he wrote to me—I'm looking at my file on this. Mr. Christie said to me, "Re. General Motors Canadian retirement program"—Mr. Christie reported to Dave Gordon, deputy superintendent of pensions, and then eventually to Julina Lam Lyn. I spoke to Julina Lam Lyn directly, and she manages most of this plan; she is the one manager of the plan. I can tell you, I've spoken to others. I have spoken to many of my constituents whom I work for, and my pension is dependent on my constituents keeping me here—because formally we don't have a pension, if you want to put it that way.

In fact, you see, we really do. This is the story that's untold. Our pension was wrapped up around 1996. For members who were part of that plan, they got a payout.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You've got a defined contribution plan.

Mr. John O'Toole: A defined contribution plan is what we have. That contribution plan is like the marketplace itself: It's down about 40%, roughly.

I want to leave time. I want to be on the record as supporting the workers who, in good faith, signed, and they're entitled to their entitlements, as has been said before by Prime Minister Chrétien. In good faith, these people will find themselves in court, in dispute with the McGuinty government, to do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I have only a few minutes so I want to deal with this in a very positive, profound and tough way. I believe, New Democrats generally believe and most workers believe that every worker deserves economic security and a dignified retirement. When you start from proposition, everything else should flow. If you think that every person deserves a dignified retirement and economic security, then it is incumbent upon us in this Legislature to try to do something about that.

If you look back into the history, it wasn't that many years ago that this debate was up in Canada, and the

government of Canada established the Canada pension plan. They did so so that no one had to fear growing old anymore; no one had to fear poverty in their old age. Sadly, 65% of the people of this province do not have a pension plan—not a direct benefit pension plan, in any event.

Leslie Frost, the grand old man of Ontario politics, way back in the 1950s was looking at an Ontario plan. He dreamed of having a plan where everyone would pay into a pension and would be eligible for that pension at the time of their retirement. Sadly, he gave up on that idea when the Canada pension plan came in because he felt that the Canada pension plan would cover most, if not all, of the citizens of Ontario. Therefore, in his opinion, the Ontario plan was redundant.

I think we ought not to fall into that same trap. Pensions should be for all of us; pensions need to be for all of us. The Canada pension plan, in and of itself, is not sufficient to make sure that a person stays out of poverty, enjoys one's retirement, has economic security and lives in dignity for the rest of their days.

There is an argument—and I see it almost every single day in the newspapers—that the pension plans are just too rich, that all of those pension plans that were paid into by the paperworkers in northern Ontario, all those pension plans that were paid into by steelworkers across southwestern Ontario and throughout the rest of Ontario, and especially all those pension plans that were paid into by the many CAW workers, are simply too rich. They're too rich.

I read right-wing editorial after right-wing editorial saying, "They're too rich. We can't afford them. We have to find a way out of them. Look at Toyota versus General Motors." What spurious arguments these are. Toyota is of recent vintage in Ontario. They've only come here in the last few years. I would hazard a guess that they don't have any retirees at all. I would be shocked if they have any retirees at all. They've only just opened up operations. They hired people in their 20s. It's not conceivable that there are any retirees at all, and if there are, they must be at an absolute limit. But people turn around and say, "That pension plan they paid into for so many years is just too rich."

Well, I want to talk about what's really too rich. I don't know how many people get Maclean's. Last week's Maclean's, May 11, talks to me about pension plans, and the ones that I wish all of us had: real pension plans. It highlights six individuals, on pages 30 and 31.

The first one is Michael Sabia, BCE. How did he earn his money? "When Sabia took over BCE in 2002, its stock was struggling in the mid-\$20 range. He was hired to fix things, but when his planned privatization fell apart, the stock plunged right back down to where it was when he took over." His pension plan: \$21 million.

Robert Prichard, Torstar, the one that I saw in the Toronto Star this week, taking the GO train: How did he earn his money? "During his tenure, Torstar's stock fell by two thirds, and the company recently announced that its dividend will be slashed in half. Just after a large

quarterly loss and writedown were announced, it was revealed that Prichard would be leaving with \$9.6 million."

Tom Parkinson, the next one, Hydro One: How did he earn his money? "Parkinson left after scathing criticism of his billing practices from Ontario's Auditor General, but he still managed to pocket \$4.8 million on his way out, including severance of \$3.3 million and \$1.5 million in salary and other payments."

Not to be outdone, of course, we have those people in the United States who have ripped off the entire system. They go on to talk about this one: Robert Nardelli, Home Depot. How did he earn his money? "Nardelli was lured to Home Depot with a promise that he'd get 90% of his pay no matter how poorly the company did. He resigned in 2007 after years of slowing profits, and still got one of the largest packages ever awarded"—\$210 million US.

Rick Wagoner from General Motors: How did he earn his money? On March 7, "when Wagoner was forced out of GM's CEO office after eight years on the job by the Obama administration, he left it teetering on life support. That didn't stop him from driving off into the sunset with a pension package worth roughly US\$23 million."

And then, of course, not to be outdone by all of those guys, you have Stanley O'Neal from Merrill Lynch. How did he earn his money? "Under O'Neal's leadership, Merrill delved deep into subprime mortgages. When the market crashed and Merrill reported a quarterly US\$2.2-billion loss, he left with about \$161.5 million in stock options and retirement benefits."

If you want to know about gold-plated pensions, look at what the CEOs give themselves and look at what the companies set out for them; don't look at the poor workers who spent 30, 35 or 40 years on the line, working their guts out. Look at these guys. I'm telling you, I don't want to hear anything from the other side. I don't want to hear anything at all about the pensions being gold-plated. Thirty-five or 40 years of work and they end up here, coming to you, looking to you, trying to get a pension plan looked after. They're looking for an interim pension guarantee fund, and they are being attacked.

1510

The other side says, "We need debate." Debate about what? I don't need a debate, because I can look across this country and see that British Columbia and Alberta already started the debate and are already trying to make determinations. I can look to Nova Scotia and see them ahead of us, making determinations, and all I hear from the other side is a little bit of talk. We don't want that kind of talk. What we want is a mandatory pension plan that every worker pays into and that every worker, at the end of their 35 or 40 years, can expect to get back in return. That's what they want here in the audience. That's what you should be producing. The time for talk is past; the time for action is now. Protect the pensions that are out there and build the new ones for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Following up on the remarks from the previous speakers, I just want to bring

attention to the fact that in our last budget, we did put forward a number of proposals to modernize Ontario's pension system. One of them is to enhance the power of the superintendent of financial services to review certain pension arrangements in restructuring proceedings—and also introducing a package of additional pension reforms for the fall of this year, 2009. So we're not ignoring the issue; we're going to deal with the issue.

The question is not, are we going to deal with it? I think the question is how we're going to deal with it. And the question today in front of us is how we are going to deal with the pension benefits guarantee fund, which the leader of the third party brought up today, regarding the situation where people have not received the money that they thought they were entitled to.

I am totally supportive of people receiving a pension. Most people in Ontario, including my own parents, don't get a company pension; they rely solely on the Canada pension plan. The member from Beaches—East York is correct: It's not adequate enough to live on that, but somehow—I don't know how—they make it work. They don't buy certain things that other people would buy. They both worked, and worked long hours in hard jobs, like many other Ontarians did, and did not end up with a pension other than what Canada pension gives them. I guess now, at the age they're at, they get an old age pension as well.

But I think the crux of the problem is that back in 1980—it's not that hard to understand—the pension benefits guarantee fund was set up. I don't even know, and I'm not going to put the blame on any particular Premier or government, but whoever was in power in 1980 set up the pension benefits guarantee fund. It was designed to protect defined benefit pension plans and the members in those plans should those companies that they worked for wind up with insufficient assets through a bankruptcy or liquidation. It was funded by a small levy on employers, so it wasn't the employees who were paying, it wasn't the taxpayer who was paying; it was the employer who was paying into this fund. And that's the key: The employer was putting money into this pension benefits guarantee fund.

So all was fine and dandy. In general, it would pay out up to \$1,000 per month in pension benefits if something bad were to happen to a company. Lo and behold, the 1990s arrive and a recession arrives. An NDP government is in place here in Ontario. They decide at that time that they're going to change the rules regarding the pension benefits guarantee fund. Basically, six companies—GM Canada, Ford Canada, Chrysler Canada, IBM Canada, Sears Canada and Stelco—located here in Canada wanted flexibility to trim their pension plan contribution. In other words, they said, "Mr. Premier, we don't have the money right now, because of the recession, to pay into this fund. So we'll pay later when times get better." The problem was that when things did get better, they didn't fully pay; not all of them paid the full amount. Some of these companies had also improved the pension plans of their employees and did not accord-

ingly put in the same amount of money that would make up for that increase.

The day came that Stelco was no longer able to pay or function with its employees and pay out its pensions. Stelco's pension plan has a \$1.2-billion hole in it, and the pension benefits guarantee fund, this fund that I'm talking about, has roughly \$230 million in it. So we have \$230 million in this fund and Stelco owes \$1.2 billion in pensions. What do we do? That's the key question. To run to a rash decision today and to adopt this motion I think would be a little bit irresponsible, because there are other companies and other employees that work for other companies besides Stelco. The member from Durham worked for GM, and other members have spoken about other companies as well that are owed pension monies. Those companies, if they put money into this fund, deserve to get something out of the fund. But we're dealing with a fund that has roughly \$230 million in it. We need to decide how much more to put into it and how to distribute that money.

So I think two things need to be done: The first thing is to collect the proper data so that we can assess the true value and cost of the pensions; secondly, clarify through legislation the original intent of the fund, which is that it was to be financed through premiums and not by the taxpayer. Again, some people think that this is a taxpayer-funded pension plan. It's not. It was funded by these companies that joined in. Many of them were large companies and some of them were small, but they put money into it so that it was a sort of an insurance that their employees would receive a pension. It's run into problems. It's been mismanaged since its inception back in 1981, it hasn't worked properly since then, and we're left with a problem. We are working on it. It's in our budget. We are looking at a way to bring forward proper legislation, and that's the way it should be done.

It is frustrating. The member from Beaches—East York talks about how many people got so much money elsewhere in their pension plans. But we hope that by bringing forward the proper legislation at the right time and consulting—which we have done; we have the Harry Arthurs report. It was only commissioned in 2006. It's come back with a number of recommendations. We have to look at those carefully and then move forward from there and bring the proper legislation forward, which will serve all the people in Ontario who are entitled to a pension.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: At the outset, I want to thank the New Democratic Party for bringing this motion to the Legislature, because I believe that we have to discuss this. We have to forge ahead with some solutions to some existing problems that we have. A lot of people in Ontario, perhaps those who read the papers from time to time, think that this particular problem is associated with a few of our largest car manufacturers in the province of Ontario. Well, I tell you, it reaches beyond that. In the constituency that I represent, which is the west part of the

city of Ottawa, many, many Nortel employees are suffering and wondering what's going to happen to them next with regard to their pension rights and are looking to the government to find a solution to the fact that many of them may not receive anywhere near what they're receiving today or what they were expecting to receive when they retire. So this is not only a problem for GM and Chrysler; it's a problem for a lot of people around Ontario.

1520

I looked at a list of pension plans from across Ontario—and there are numerous ones; something like 15,000 different pension plans. Because of the number of exemptions, and the number of exceptions with regard to the pension benefits guarantee fund, I can't tell exactly how many are struck by—and protected, or supposedly protected, by the pension guarantee fund. But I assume that there are many pension funds and many people in Ontario who may suffer if a solution is not found.

I also want to address this problem that we have with the sitting government when they say, "We're going to talk to the federal government about this." Premier McGuinty has said, "We're going to talk about this at the end of May at a Premier's conference and a federal conference and we're going to talk about the solution to the pension problem that we have." The pension benefits guarantee fund is not a problem of Saskatchewan, it's not a problem of Quebec, it's not a problem of any other place in Canada but the province of Ontario. We have to solve that problem here in this Legislature, or that government has to solve that problem, as they are seized with dealing with that problem at this time.

We've heard a little bit about the history of the pension benefits guarantee fund. It dates back to the 1980s. I think that all political parties are painted with some degree of negligence with regard to dealing with the deficiencies that have occurred over that 25, 29 years, since it was created in the early 1980s. I can remember not only the problem that occurred at GM when the Rae government went in and said to GM, "You don't have to have your fund up to a solvency rate which is reasonable"—and they let them off the hook and they had to pay in a little bit into this pension guarantee fund, but nowhere near any kind of money that would cover the kind of risk that they were let off with, with regard to dropping their solvency ratio with regard to their fund.

The CAW was not lily-white with regard to what they were doing. Accord to the Arthurs report, they acquiesced with regard to allowing that solvency rate to go down in order for immediate compensation issues. I can understand that in terms of the union leadership at that time. Nobody thought GM—Bob Rae didn't think GM was ever going to go down the tubes. I'm not saying any one was at fault for the eventual collapse that has occurred, but I think everybody is sullied with a bit of the fault here.

This government, five months after they took office, wrote a cheque on March 31, 2004, for \$330 million to the pension guarantee fund to take care of the problem

with Algoma Steel. It was a loan. They gave them a loan for 30 years, with no interest paid on that loan. They gave them that money—\$330 million—then. As I understand it, looking at the last balance sheet for the pension benefits guarantee fund, they only have about \$160 or \$170 million left at this point in time. That amount of money, I'm told, would only cover some 7,000 Nortel employees that might be looking for help on their pensions for one year. That's how far out of whack this is. That doesn't take into account the Stelco workers we were talking about before, and it doesn't take into account the GM workers or the Chrysler workers or anybody else. So we've got to find a solution to this particular problem that we have.

Governments of all stripes, companies, employees and employees' representatives have all been part of the problem. It's been very convenient for all of us to shove this back and say, "Let's just deal with some of the other more urgent problems we have," but all of a sudden, with a thud, it's hit and it's hit hard. It's hit many, many people who are retiring now or are being paid pensions, but those pensions may be reduced dramatically and they are looking for help. We must address that problem directly here in Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: Dalton McGuinty should be addressing it.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, the government of the day is ultimately seized with this.

Fortunately, we had the Arthurs commission come forward and talk about some of these issues in a very logical, reasonable and intelligent way. Arthurs's findings are quite good, but one of the findings he makes is contained in the motion here, which I support very strongly, and that is, we must not only deal with the people who have defined benefit pension plans now, but we must deal with all of those people in Ontario—the other 65%—that don't have any pension plan at this time. I would say to the government, why not use this crisis as an opportunity to act now, not only for the people who need the help of the pension benefits guarantee fund, but let's deal with the other people and offer them some hope in their retirement as well.

We have an excellent report from the Arthurs commission, and it tells us how some of that could be structured. But it will take, as he points out, a champion for pensions to be present in our province. He suggests a commission to set up that champion, and have that champion come forward to lead the charge to change things here in Ontario. He mentions offhand that perhaps you could deal with the CPP and have it changed and all the rest of it. Quite frankly, I don't think that there's a ghost of a chance that the federal government is going to dip its toes into the mire that we are in here in Ontario—a mire that governments created and neglected over the last 29 years, since 1980, when this legislation was first created.

We must act, and we must act in a confident and thoughtful manner. I don't think it's fair to the 65% of the people who do not have pensions to say, "Pony up for all of these people who have a defined benefit pension

plan. You should bail these people out while you sit with nothing to go home to.” We have to address both problems at the same time. If this government was showing the kind of leadership that it should show on this very, very important question, important issue, for so many people in Ontario, they would pick it up and say, “I’m going to use this opportunity, this crisis that we have for our workers, to go forward with a comprehensive plan to not only take care of the people who have been left stranded, but I am going to take care of the people who do not have adequate retirement incomes going into the future in the province.”

1530

I do want to say that the Canada pension plan had significant problems in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The former finance minister at that time, who later became Premier of this province, Ernie Eves, went to Ottawa and worked with Paul Martin at that time, who was the finance minister of the government of Canada. They fixed the Canada pension plan so that it was properly funded. So these very large, serious problems can be recognized and can be dealt with if there is a will and a determination by the leaders in our province and in our country to do it, and that’s what we need here.

This is a crisis. This is a tremendous crisis. The people who come to my office who are from Nortel tell me about how securely they thought they had their retirement planned out, and now they find themselves in a terrible, terrible situation, a terrible dichotomy. They are worrying about their wives, they are worrying about their family and the ability to carry on, and all we seem to be getting from this government, from Premier McGuinty, is, “Well, let’s have a conference about it with the federal government. Let’s try to shift as much responsibility on to the federal government as we possibly can,” as this government seems so prone to do. As soon as they face a real challenge, they say, “Let’s go and call the feds in and see if we can dump the responsibility on their shoulders,” instead of standing up and saying, “Look, we’ve all been part of this problem. We’ve got to roll up our sleeves and find the solution.”

We’ve got an excellent report, the Arthurs commission. Harry Arthurs went to all of the pension experts from across this country and this province and talked to them about how we could address these problems, because he recognized the problem with the pension benefit guarantee fund. He recognized the problem with 65% of the people not having a pension and an adequate retirement income in our province. So the blueprint is here. All Premier McGuinty has to do is get together with his ministers and get this thing rolling, because we need to provide the people from the auto industry and the people from Nortel who are retiring, who are in desperate straits, with some confidence that somebody is working on their problem and is going to find a solution for them.

We in government, if we have failed our people in the province and if we have said to them, “We set up pension legislation. We regulate pensions,” whether it is a pension benefit guarantee fund or it’s FSCO or any other

kind of regulation that we’re involved in, then there’s an obligation on us to step up now and find a solution for these people and feel their pain and understand that we can help. And we can help if we have the determination to do it. We must determine very difficult issues, like who should pay. It’s very costly to deal with this, but we have to deal with it regardless.

I want to thank Ms. Horwath for bringing forward this motion. One of the problems I have with the motion, however, deals with the solution that they provide in one of the particular parts of their motion. I don’t think you can just say, “We are going to pay this or pay that,” without really saying who’s going to divvy up for that particular amount, who’s going to supply the funding for it. So there is a little bit of a problem with that, but overall I want to indicate my support and the support of our caucus for most of what is said in this motion.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity. I do hope the government has listened. I do hope they pick it up. I do hope they become the champion to seek a solution to this. I think together in this Legislature both our caucus and the NDP opposition would work in a non-partisan way to seek the best possible solution for all the people of Ontario, because we really need to work on this and give them confidence that they not only have to contribute to society during their working years, but that we will respect them in their retirement and want them to have the comfortable retirement they so richly deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: The thing that has not been mentioned here is that two years ago Premier McGuinty got Professor Harry Arthurs to undertake one of the most comprehensive pension reviews in the history of this province. This was before the meltdown. This was before all of this was in the headlines. This was before these opposition motions. And nobody said a word two years ago when Harry Arthurs undertook this study because the Premier and the Minister of Finance knew that there was a looming problem. This was undertaken by Professor Arthurs in great detail as he consulted to see what the blueprint could be, and now we have the Arthurs report. It was great two, three years ago. Everybody was riding the stock market. Everybody was listening to their financial gurus, all those talking heads on television, on cable TV, telling you where to invest your money, where to gamble your money, all the casino-type investments. They were all saying it was great. Nobody around here said anything two years ago when Harry Arthurs was given direction by the Premier. Everybody was riding the RRSP wave. There was no end in sight. The TSX was going to go up to 20,000. New York was taking off. Madoff was taking off. Nobody said anything because there seemed to be no end in sight for that bubble economy.

But luckily, we have the Arthurs report now. It is a very good blueprint. Let’s not repeat the same mistake made by the Conservative government of the 1980s and the NDP government of the 1990s. I’m not blaming

them, because as the member from Mississippi Mills said, government in general was asleep. We must all do something together to deal with this, and let's not make the mistake of not seeking expert advice like they did in the 1980s when they put together the pension benefits guarantee fund that was underfunded, then again in the 1990s when the NDP said, "Oh, GM is too big to fail." The NDP bought the old story of what's good for General Motors is good for everybody. That was not something that could hold up to any test, yet they went ahead without listening to experts and made these decisions in a dark room. That's what the NDP wants to do again. Without listening to experts, without getting proper advice, we'll make the same mistakes the NDP made.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Hamilton East wants us to make the same mistake.

We need to listen to Harry Arthurs. We need to—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: Here he is; he doesn't want to listen. He's still yelling because he doesn't want to learn from history. This is not something where they can say again, "Oh, it's too big to fail. GM is too big to fail." That's the idea they have.

There are people with all kinds of insights that we have to listen to. One expert we have is Keith Ambachtsheer, the director of the Rotman International Centre for Pension Management. He has been warning people about the need to have comprehensive action to deal with these pension issues. He's right up the street, and he has said to us over and over again that pension funds are actually extremely viable entities—much more so than the RRSP approach and asking people to depend on the stock market for their future income—because pension funds don't rely on the gambling that takes place and the exorbitant fees charged to people who are forced to rely on the stock market for their future income. That's what Keith Ambachtsheer says, and we should be listening to him.

Also, there's a very good proposal out of BC. BC has much the same problem. Their pension funds have lost \$300 to \$400 billion, huge amounts of money, in the same way ours have lost money.

1540

That's why I think the Premier is saying that we have a role to play in Ontario, and we're going to do that based on the Harry Arthurs report. Secondly, what we're going to do is sit down with other provinces that have the same situation—the vast majority of Ontarians are not protected by a guaranteed pension. They have zero pension. Those individuals, who have worked very hard all their lives—30, 40 years of work—and have so little, also deserve attention. They're not to be forgotten. They weren't working for General Motors; they were working for very small wages their whole life. Just as the General Motors worker who is retired now needs protection, that little person who worked their whole life also needs protection, and we must pay attention to both.

As I said, we need to listen to the experts and not go blindly into the dark like the NDP did back in the 1990s

with their "too big to fail" approach, because this is a global thing. This is something that requires a comprehensive approach, and that's why the Premier has said, very astutely, that all provinces and the federal government should look at the state of the CPP, with a comprehensive view to helping people, and not do what we did in the past; that is, a quick-fix approach.

I'm afraid that the thing that's lacking in this motion is a comprehensive federal-provincial plan. Also, they don't cost out. They say, "Providing a universally accessible, province-wide pension plan." What's the cost of that: \$20 billion, \$30 billion? They don't put that in the motion.

"Fully backing the province's pension benefit guarantee fund"—How many billions will that cost? The NDP, again in the dark, want us to make the same mistakes they made before by not listening to experts. We can't afford to do that again. We can't repeat the stupid mistakes of the NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to share with this House that in my constituency office I very often get seniors coming in for help. They come in for help because they've got their new MPAC assessment that will mean an increase in the taxes they have to pay. Their budgets are so tight that with the little bit of CPP and the little bit of old age security, they cannot maintain their homes.

Those stories are tragic, but the saddest ones of all are the single older women who have no CPP because they chose to stay home to raise their family. They depend on very little money coming in through their old age security and the top-up to make ends meet. For those people, as soon as their hydro bill goes up a little bit, as soon as any expenses come in, such as the new HST, they cannot fit it into a budget, which is so tight and doesn't allow it. It always means the same thing: They're going to have to cut back on their basic needs. You're talking about food, you're talking about clothing and you're talking about a little bit of transportation, most of the time to go to physicians' appointments—very limited.

As we go on and see more and more precarious employment, we will see more and more people who cannot live their retirement with dignity. This is why New Democrats support the principle and objective that all workers, including moms who work at home, should be able to look forward to an economically secure and dignified retirement. That means fixing the pension plans we now have and investing so that seniors can live with dignity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to speak on this particular motion. I'd like to focus on what I think is the salient part of this, which is that the NDP loves to spend other people's money. This is an interesting proposal, but it's wrong-headed. What it essentially does is give corporations a blank cheque drawn on the Ontario taxpayer.

Let's deal with the three aspects of this particular proposal. Providing a universally accessible pension plan:

This Ontario Legislature doesn't have the jurisdiction or the power or, I put it, the need to change or to reform the Canada pension plan, which already exists to do exactly what the NDP motion advocates, in providing a universally accessible pension plan. Does the NDP suggest that a Canadian, just taking their proposal, who may have been raised on the east coast or somewhere out in the western provinces and someone who retires in Ontario—do they suggest that they should not collect a pension, as they propose? If that's not their intent—I suspect it isn't, and I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt; I suspect that's not their intent—then perhaps they should just go through the motions, as it were, and ask their federal cousins to deal with the first part of this motion, which is to provide a universally accessible pension plan.

The NDP motion would ask Ontarians to sign a blank cheque on the pension benefits guarantee fund. What is the pension benefits guarantee fund? The pension benefits guarantee fund, for those of you who are watching at home and saying, "Never heard of it," is a fund into which pension plans pay so that in the event one of them fails, the pension benefits guarantee fund would be able to make up the difference, very much as the travel fund, if you were stranded somewhere, would reimburse you for travel. It's a loose analogy, but that's generally what it's intended to do. What the NDP motion proposes is that this pension benefits guarantee fund be completely guaranteed by you, by all of the taxpayers who don't have a pension to guarantee the pensions of the taxpayers who do have a pension. That probably hasn't been sitting very well with people where I come from and I'm pretty sure it hasn't been sitting very well all across Ontario.

So how much money is this? This is a lot of money. Let's be very clear. This is not just a few million dollars or even a few billion dollars but is very likely in the order of tens of billions of dollars, and again, from Ontarians, of whom two thirds don't have a pension, to give to the perhaps one third of Ontarians who do have a pension. The thing that bothers me about this is that it would forever absolve any and every company that wants to take its retired workers' pensions and fly the coop. They can take the pension money and run. You can chase them. You can talk about what you can do in terms of either civil action or criminal action, but at the end of the day, if this motion is adopted, it's the Ontario taxpayer who's left holding the bag.

That's not the intent with the pension benefits guarantee fund. This fund hasn't been managed very well in more than a generation. As my colleague from the other side put it, this goes through governments of all political stripes. So the first thing to do is to collect some proper data to set assessments that reflect the true cost—and this hasn't been done—the true cost of the pension guarantee.

Secondly, what we need here is not a motion like this but perhaps legislation that clarifies that original intent of the fund, which is that it was supposed to be financed through premiums and not by a future draw on taxpayers—through premiums; that part is important.

I think it's incumbent on us to have a closer look, particularly if pensions are intended to benefit seniors, at

what exactly has been done for seniors in the last few years. The enhanced permanent sales tax credit, which benefits low- to middle-income people, is going to provide up to \$260 per person, \$260 per person that's not available now. It would be refundable, and it's paid quarterly, not just once a year when you claim it on your tax but quarterly, so that it's actually a stream of income beginning in July 2010.

Property tax relief, in which the government of which I have the privilege to be a part has been a leader across Canada: We're going to be providing a new, refundable Ontario property tax credit. Again, the major beneficiaries are not the super-rich with the big mansions who don't need it, but it's low- to middle-income Ontarians, the very types of people who bought their homes in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and lived in them, raised their families and built their communities, and are now retiring in those homes. What's the best place to keep people when they've retired? In their own homes as long as possible, and that's what this measure does.

For all the best intentions of my colleagues and friends in the NDP, what they have proposed here would, in the end, be completely counter to what they intend, and that is why I'll vote against this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Seeing none, Ms. Horwath has moved opposition motion number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1551 to 1601.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Will all those in favour please rise.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	O'Toole, John
Gélinas, France	Marchese, Rosario	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Will all those opposed please rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Hoy, Pat	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Jeffrey, Linda	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Johnson, Rick	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bentley, Christopher	Jones, Sylvia	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 47.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

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 May 5, 2009, on the motion for third 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it's an interesting opportunity to speak about this bill. I want to give you some background on my thinking on this matter before I talk about the substance of the bill itself.

In 2002 I was in Johannesburg for the Earth Summit, an interesting process, an interesting meeting. In the course of that summit there was a speech made by Jean Chrétien, who was the Prime Minister of Canada at the time. Jean Chrétien made a very solemn, stirring commitment to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by Canada. I have to say that generally the environmental movement praised Jean Chrétien for taking that commitment on, for being willing to stand with the rest of the world to ratify Kyoto and bring Canada into that community of nations that were willing to address climate change.

I have to admit to you, Madam Speaker, that in that year I too praised Jean Chrétien, thanked him for taking that step, appreciated the forward movement that he was committing Canada to. And I have to say that I praised Jean Chrétien much too soon, because the reality was that even though that step was significant, even though Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol, in fact no plan was put in place to actually meet the conditions of the treaty to which Canada had bound itself. No plan was put in place that would have made Canada meet those targets. The budget allocations were never adequate to actually make things happen. So neither a legislative framework nor a financial framework was put in place to make that commitment live. However, the green ink for the government at the time was fabulous. It was constant, it was

rhetoric that scaled the heights, because people felt that a huge step had been taken forward.

As you well know, Madam Speaker, and as many may know who are watching this today, Canada's emissions grew faster than greenhouse gas emissions grew under the administration of George Bush, even though George Bush's America didn't ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

I tell you that as a cautionary tale, for when commitments are made to substantial breakthroughs into environmental areas, into environmental commitments, one can look back at the history of such commitments—the commitments by Jean Chrétien, the commitments by Dalton McGuinty in 2003 to shut down coal plants in Ontario by 2007, the commitments by Dalton McGuinty's campaign staffers in 2003 that new nuclear power plants were not part of the policy mix to deal with the coal phase-out. When I look at those commitments and I look at the commentary made by environmentalists about those earlier commitments, it makes me cautious; it makes me very cautious.

I approach this bill with that history in mind, those realities in mind, with a concern that on the one hand we need many of the elements that this bill would support, and a concern that in the end they won't be delivered, or won't be delivered in a way that actually gives Ontario what it needs to have.

We face an urgent situation in Ontario today, and everyone who sat on the committee that toured this province and heard people speak about the Green Energy Act, people who represent towns like Windsor, Hamilton, Kingston, people who represent ridings in the GTA, knows that we need action taken on a variety of fronts to deal with the profound problems, economic and environmental, that Canada is facing.

There are four substantial problems that we have to come to grips with. The first I'll note is that of oncoming climate change. People in this House have heard talk about this at length and over time. I'll say very simply that in April, in the journal *Nature*, reported in the British press but not particularly reported here, a peer-reviewed study noted that at the rate greenhouse gas emissions were climbing, we would hit the point at which dangerous climate change is expected to start occurring not in 2050, but 20 years from now, two decades from now.

1610

That is a very short time in the history of a society. Everyone here knows how long it takes to build power lines, to build power plants, to put in place rapid transit and roads, to reshape urban fabric. Twenty years is an extraordinarily short time in the life of a society. Yet that is the time horizon within which we have to substantially and dramatically change the way we deal with energy if we are going to have a better-than-even chance of avoiding severe disruption of our society and our economy. I won't belabour that point, but that's the larger context within which any substantial action on the environment has to be understood.

The second urgent issue we have to address in Ontario—and you are well aware of it—is growing unem-

ployment. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost good-paying jobs in this province in the last five years. Those people need work, their families need income, our society needs their taxes and this world needs their productive capacity. We need them to be contributing, yet they have lost and more continue to lose. And we in this province are losing the industrial base, the manufacturing base, we need to employ them in future.

This is a change that is not like previous recessions we've seen, where people are laid off and then, as demand returns, people are taken back into their place of employment. Hundreds of thousands of people are permanently losing jobs that pay decent incomes. That has substantial ramifications for our society and for the lives of those individuals and their families. If we're going to deal with that, we have to deal with a few other problems.

The third issue is the loss of our competitive position in the world. We in Ontario have continued to set the stage for higher and higher electricity prices. Some may argue that you need high electricity prices to force through conservation and efficiency. I would argue that what you need is investment in conservation and efficiency to control high electricity prices.

If you look at the report that was done just a short while ago by Don Drummond of the Toronto Dominion Bank—a TD economics special report in September 2008—he talked about the pillars of prosperity in Ontario. He talked about the Auto Pact, the rate at which the Canadian dollar trades and a variety of elements, including a well-trained and capable workforce, that are critical to us to hold on to a manufacturing base in this province.

A number of those elements are outside our control—we don't control Canada's exchange rate—but one element he talked about was the availability of low-cost, affordable power. That has been a huge competitive advantage for Ontario historically, and a consciously competitive advantage. When Ontario Hydro was set up at the beginning of the 20th century, Sir Adam Beck and those politicians—members of the Legislature and members of city councils—understood the advantage of taking the power generated by Niagara and providing it at cost so that companies would want to invest in Ontario. It was a huge advantage to us. We have lost that.

In his report, *Time for a Vision of Ontario's Economy*, Mr. Drummond talks about the subsidization of power rates in Ontario. He talks about the fact that power rates are subsidized, and talks about the impact of nuclear. He says, "A significant share of this implicit subsidy relates to the province's experience with nuclear power. As such, there are some concerns that the government's decision to invest heavily in existing and new nuclear assets will run contrary to the objective of lowering the degree of subsidization in the system."

My translation of that commentary is that the more we invest in nukes, the less affordable our electricity system becomes and the greater the negative impact on our economy. If we in fact take a course of action that does

not move away from nuclear power and does not move heavily into efficiency and conservation—our cheapest options—move into renewables, which have the potential over the next few decades to become without a doubt substantially less expensive, then we are going to be facing some very, very rough waters.

In the United States, recent studies of new nuclear power peg the price of power from those stations at close to three times what people are paying for power generation now in Ontario, peg the price for power from new nuclear at higher than the price that is proposed to be paid for wind power in the provincial government's program. Yet, the commitment to nuclear is fundamental and runs through all of the government's planning; in fact, I would argue it shapes the act before us, shapes it so that it contains the amount of renewable power that's generated, contains the amount of efficiency and conservation that is actually produced in this province, and thus sets the table for huge problems for us in years to come. Commitment to nuclear power will price Ontario out of the market; it will undermine our future as a job-creating centre.

The last point I want to make about context is that we are surrounded by jurisdictions that have increasingly figured out what the future is going to look like, that are racing ahead of us, and we are playing catch-up. In the United States, the new administration understands—and it may understand it very imperfectly, but the new administration understands that the future is going to be in clean energy. The federal government is putting in place funds to develop renewable energy to address climate change, energy independence and building 21st century industry.

If you look at Michigan, our neighbour, they have been battered heavily in the last decade or two by the decay of the auto industry. Their leadership, their state governor, is focusing heavily on renewable energy and development of clean cars, of electric cars, as the future for industry in that state. In April, Governor Jennifer Granholm of Michigan made this announcement: "Michigan's aggressive effort to grow the advanced-battery industry and the jobs it will create has resulted in four companies announcing plans to invest more than \$1.7 billion to launch advanced-battery manufacturing facilities in Michigan. The projects that will create" almost 7,000 "new jobs in Michigan were awarded state refundable tax credits that will help the companies in their quest for some of the \$2 billion in federal grants for advanced-battery research and development."

So the reality is that in our neighbouring jurisdiction of Michigan, they have a picture of where the future is, and they are moving towards it, because they want their people to be employed and they want industry in Michigan to support the future of Michigan's economy.

A few weeks ago, in Denver, Colorado, the American Wind Energy Association held their annual conference. Five years ago, 5,000 people would go to that conference; a few weeks ago, it was 22,000. Five American governors were there on panels hustling for business.

Michigan had a huge room in which they were presenting themselves as a partner for any industry that wanted to set up green manufacturing in Michigan. Ontario had three people in a little booth. Who's more serious about getting that green business?

In Colorado, they have a unit in the governor's office whose only function is to look at the supply chain for renewable energy companies, identify areas where businesses in Colorado can provide components, and go to those companies and try and insert themselves into that supply chain, or they will look at defunct industrial properties in that state and say, "We have facilities that could manufacture what you need to get your product out the door. Come work with us." They are consistently and aggressively going after that business.

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In Toledo, Ohio, this month, the Toledo Free Press reported that the alternative energy industry has become a bright spot in Toledo's otherwise dismal economy. There are 6,000 people in the Toledo area employed at firms contributing to solar cell development and manufacturing, according to Regional Growth Partnership, a non-profit economic development group. That number pales in comparison to the overall manufacturing loss in that region, but at 6,000 people, it actually is the core of what can become a growing industry in that area.

In the United States, jurisdictions that have faced many of the same problems we are facing here are aggressively going out and getting the manufacturing jobs and putting them in place. They're understanding, as I said, at the federal level in the United States that the world is changing very substantially. On April 22, the New York Times reported that the head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission—and for those who are watching this, I won't repeat that name often because I know that it's a sleep-inducing thought. The headline in the New York Times was, "Energy Regulatory Chief Says New Coal, Nuclear Plants May Be Unnecessary." This is not a minor researcher in a large federal department. This is the person who oversees the direction of energy investment, energy regulation, throughout the United States. He sees that the way that energy, electricity in particular, is generated and distributed in the United States is going to shift dramatically. That is a debate that is not over in the United States, but at least at the very highest levels they're understanding that there is that opportunity. It's there today, it's alive, it has to be taken, and it can have a huge positive impact on the economy.

In Manitoba, we have a government that has become a leader in geothermal, that provides funding for householders to put in heat exchangers so they can take cold out of the earth or heat out of the earth. That isn't electricity generation. That's taking advantage of heat and cooling storage in the ground, something we should be doing—an area where that jurisdiction is leading the way.

In Quebec, they have investment in wind turbines that are changing the face of the Gaspé Peninsula. When we talk about investment in wind turbines in Quebec, you

have to understand that they're very focused on the Gaspésie, on an area that has been chronically underdeveloped, that has been losing employment and losing population. When Quebec talks about 60% Quebec content for wind turbines, they're talking heavily about content from Gaspé. Companies are having to move into the Gaspé Peninsula to make wind turbines, to make blades, to make the whole range of equipment to actually put those wind turbines in place. So an area that for generations has seen nothing but depopulation is seeing young people come back into the Gaspé because jobs are there that pay decently.

Quebec is using their green energy sector as an economic development tool—frankly, like Minnesota, which has a similar strategy in the north end of their state—and seeing the positive results that you can see if you're willing to invest substantially and understand where the future is going.

We need to have the same approach here in Ontario. We need to have a far more thoroughgoing and far more committed approach. I don't know yet if this act will give us that. I think the decision to actually go forward is beyond the act itself. You have to know that Premier McGuinty has made statements about the Green Energy Act and about the need to invest in the 21st century. When this act was introduced, he talked about the need for clean power: "We need those jobs. We need clean electricity, and we need to assume our full responsibility in the face of climate change." I have to say that's a great statement. It's hard to disagree with that statement. The question for all of us here is, will this act, will his power planning, get us to that point? Will we actually get the results that the Premier himself has said are critical for this province to have?

On the face of it, what's before us is less than meets the eye.

When George Smitherman, the minister, rose in this House on March 2, he made this statement about the Green Energy Act:

"What we're anticipating in the first three years, starting in 2010, associated with the implementation of the Green Energy Act, is the opportunity for 50,000 additional jobs in the province of Ontario in all forms. We anticipate that the investments associated with the transmission and distribution system of \$3.2 billion will account for about half of those. In addition, we will see renewables coming to life in the province of Ontario and a very, very strong focus on the conservation side of the Green Energy Act, including \$300 million of investment in our largest industrial concerns so as to help them emerge using less electricity.

"Across the landscape of these investments, we feel quite confident that 50,000 jobs will be created."

Now, I went to the press conference that the minister gave the day he brought the act forward, and it was interesting to me to see that the Toronto Sun reported what I had heard. The Toronto Sun reported that one of the first projects coming out of the Green Energy Act is expected to be a new transmission line between Barrie

and Sudbury. That's what I recollect the minister saying; that was a major piece. Now, if you go to your computer, go to Google and enter "Power transmission line Barrie to Sudbury," you will find that a power line has been discussed for that stretch for a number of years. Ontario Power Generation owns a dam on the lower Matagami River. They want to upgrade that dam—nothing wrong with that; I think it's a great idea—and they need more power line capacity to carry the power south. So in fact the major job creator that was announced when this act came forward was a power line upgrade that had been on the books for a while. I don't think it's a bad thing to have that power line upgrade, I don't think it's a bad thing to increase the capacity of that dam, but I don't think it has anything to do with this Green Energy Act.

The question that we are going to have to ask is, will the new jobs happen? Will they happen because of this act? One of the concerns that we all have to have is that if, in fact, Ontario continues with its commitment to nuclear power, then the amount of employment that's generated by this act and by the investment in clean energy and renewable energy will be substantially reduced in scale, will not be anywhere near the capacity or the potential that Ontario has to offer.

About the time this act came out, the Ontario Power Authority put out a release setting out their picture of the supply mix for Ontario. For those who are watching, the supply mix is what's going to be generated by what sources. About 53% of the total electricity in Ontario, the Ontario Power Authority projects, will come from nukes when all this plan is in place—53%. Eight per cent will be generated by those gas-fired power plants that Mr. Sousa should be fighting in his riding in Mississauga South, that I fought in my riding, that people are fighting in northern York region; that's 8% of the power in Ontario. Twenty-three per cent is through existing hydro. So 53%, 8%, 23%, and what's left for new renewable power in Ontario is about 14%, when in fact you could be producing an awful lot more of Ontario's power from new renewables.

The minister, when he was asked at the press conference about this act—he was asked about the targets, about the caps, about the limits on renewable power—said that there wouldn't be any targets, and I remember clearly him saying that there would be no upper limit either, that you could just keep on building. I find that hard to believe, because the simple reality is that the process to build those nuclear power plants is on the way, and frankly, if you allowed Ontario to fully build out the capacity it has for renewable power, if you allowed Ontario to fully develop all the efficiency and conservation that is at hand, then those nuclear power plants that are going to be built at the cost of tens of billions of dollars would be simply redundant. There would be no market for their power. They would be irrelevant.

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Does anyone seriously think that we will pay for two electricity systems, that we will pay for full-scale development of nuclear power, with the power line develop-

ment that all that entails, and at the same time pay for all this renewable energy and efficiency and conservation? It is not going to happen.

In the course of debating this bill—and for those who are watching today who are not familiar with the process, a bill is introduced for first reading. In second reading we debate the bill. Then there are committee hearings where we go around and listen to what people have to say. Then there's a session where we go through the bill line by line, or clause by clause, as we say, talking about what changes we want to see, what changes are necessary to make the bill function properly, what changes have come to mind because in the course of listening to the people of Ontario, it has been decided that the bill has to be shifted one way or the other.

In his public statements, the minister commented time and again about the importance of efficiency and conservation. I just read his quote from Hansard. But in the committee hearings and in the bill itself, there is no firm commitment to efficiency and conservation as the top rung of a hierarchy, to steps that have to be taken to deal with electricity issues in this province.

No targets were set for efficiency and conservation in that act. If you actually want to have efficiency and conservation in there, if you want to have the programs to spend the money, if you want to direct the bureaucracy to deliver the goods, if you want to send out a signal to the larger world that this is the direction you're going to go in, it's best to put it in the act. It's not there.

The Ontario Power Authority has repeatedly declined to take advantage of all the cost-effective efficiency and conservation opportunities that have been identified. Why? Why would you not take advantage of the lowest-cost, most environmentally beneficial option that's out there? The answer in Ontario is that if you're fundamentally committed to the development of nuclear power, then you don't want to take all those efficiency and conservation options, because you're investing tens of billions of dollars in new nuclear power plants. You want the market there for the electricity. You want the demand there. You want people to pay you cash for the electricity you put in the power line.

If you want a green, renewable future that has efficiency and conservation at the centre, you take one course of action, you go down one road. If you want a nuclear-centred electricity system, one that is expensive, one that is unpredictable, one that has put a huge financial burden on the ratepayers and taxpayers of this province, then you go down the nuclear road. You have to choose one. I'd argue that the choice has been made that the information about exactly what is going to happen has already been set out in the media release from the Ontario Power Authority, and that the reality has been codified in this act, because this act does not go far enough to actually break the nuclear monopoly.

I have to say, in the course of hearing the presentations that we heard as we went around the province, one of the arguments that was made by those who are opposed even to the limited steps that are taken in this act

were that in Germany and Denmark there continued to be investment in coal-fired plants, that there were authorities in those countries who were saying that renewable energy was not living up to its promise. I have to say to you that people should be fully aware that what we are engaged in here in Ontario and in countries around the world where the matter of electricity is being settled is not simply an intellectual game where people sit down, go through the dry statistics, look at the numbers and say, "That's the best option." In fact, what we're dealing with is a battle in a wide variety of countries over market share. When it is said that renewable power can't replace nuclear, that is the argument not being made on technical grounds, because I don't think that that technical argument will stand up. It is not an argument that is being made on commercial grounds because the numbers don't work for nuclear. It is being made on the question of market share—who will make a profit and who will not make a profit. That is the basis of this conflict over the direction for electricity and energy in this province and around this world right now.

People should not forget that in April in this province we produced more power than we could consume, so that in fact companies were paid money to take electricity. We actually had to send out a rebate to companies that were customers so that the nuclear power plants that have to run continuously at a particular level weren't cut back; the term is "negative price for electricity." We paid money to customers, a number of whom were across the border, to take our power. That's the reality of electricity in this province. Do we really need to be in a situation where we're continuing to overproduce? Do we need to be in a situation where once again, just as we did in the last generation, we assume a mammoth financial burden to build nuclear power plants? I don't think we do. Given that approach, this act needs to be much stronger and far more directive than it is. You need to know that in the attempts to amend the act in committee, the changes that were needed to make the act effective in the way that it needs to be effective, to preclude the ramping down of renewables and efficiency so that the nuclear market is protected—those amendments were not accepted.

I want to talk about some of the mechanisms that were used to protect the nuclear market in Ontario. For most normal people, talking about the details of electricity purchase plans is eye-glazing, but there's one point I want to get across to folks who are following this issue, and that's that if you want to build new renewable power, if you want communities to build it, if you want co-operatives to build it, if you want First Nation communities to build it, if you want local utilities to build it, they have to know that when they put the money in, they will get a return. So if you put in, say, \$100 million, \$50 million—a lot of cash—into solar panels or biogas or wind turbines in your community, you're going to do the math and figure out what you're going to get back. One piece of the puzzle is probably going to be clear, and that's the amount that you will be paid. Those prices will be set by something called a feed-in tariff. But what is

missing in the act is an obligation for the power company to actually buy what you produce.

Let's say it's early June. The sun is out, the sky is clear; you're producing tons of solar power, and the Ontario Power Authority comes along and says, "Whoa, wait a minute. We're producing so much power, we have to pay customers to take it. We're not going to take power from you anymore. You're going to have to shut down. We're just going to cut off the mains; we aren't going to take any of the power that you make."

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If you're running a wind farm and you're running it in April and the nuclear power plants are going full tilt and Ontario is producing more power than it needs and the Ontario Power Authority comes to you and says, "The nuclear power plants, we've just got to run them and we've got to take their power, so we're afraid we're not going to buy your power. You're out of luck, too bad, so sad, good luck"—when you look at that issue, that's a central one for organizations to decide whether or not to invest in Ontario and invest in renewable power generation.

Tyler Hamilton, in the Toronto Star report on business, roughly a month ago talked about the impact of not having an obligation to buy that power that's produced by a renewable generator. He said—and it was a fairly straightforward column—having talked to a number of people who produced green power, that without that obligation in the act, their interest in investing in Ontario, making renewable power in Ontario, would decline very substantially because they wouldn't know over the next 20 years whether their power would be purchased or not and whether there would be a surplus of nuclear power that would in fact clear them off the table for years at a time. Who knows? The lack of that piece is a substantial concern for anyone who wants to see a lot of renewable power produced in Ontario.

The Green Energy Act Alliance, a group of environmental groups, a sustainable energy association that is profoundly supportive of this bill and did a lot of work to bring the government along and to sell the whole concept, had a panel of energy experts here in the Legislature a few weeks ago: speakers from Denmark; an unfortunate videotape from Hermann Scheer from Germany, who wasn't able to make it—he's a legislator in Berlin and he couldn't get to the event. Those people from California, Denmark and Hermann Scheer in his videotaped comments all talked about the necessity of an obligation to buy, take-or-pay piece in this agreement so in that in fact there was assurance.

In Germany, the legislation to put in place this feed-in tariff requires a purchase of the power. Just go on the Internet, go to Google, google it up, and you can read it; it's in English. They are extraordinarily successful—over a quarter of a million people working in the renewable energy sector. They have that obligation to buy the renewable power.

When I put forward the NDP amendment to have that obligation put into the legislation, to make sure that in

fact those who produce renewable power in the future will know that they can sell into Ontario's electricity system, I was told that the government couldn't support this because they needed to preserve flexibility. They wanted to look at other mechanisms.

I don't see an initiative to preserve flexibility when it comes to buying power from nuclear power plants. What I see when you talk about flexibility in renewable power is the ability to take or not take renewable power as the system sees fit, because the more fundamental decision has been made to commit to nuclear. That, I think, is a substantial problem for anyone who is going to come forward and want to produce power here.

If you look at the real experience that we've had in Ontario with renewable power in these last few years, you can see that we have underperformed—that less renewable generation has been put in place than Ontarians expected, than Ontarians wanted. There was a report that was put out in March with a very dry title, *Regulatory Risk in Private Investment and Renewable Energy Technologies: A study of the Ontario Wind Power Sector*, by three writers with a fair amount of background in wind energy. They argued that Ontario would benefit from formalizing its wind energy strategies through legislation. They suggested the Green Energy Act should enshrine in law long-term targets for renewable fuel capacity levels and restrict the ability of the minister to revise such targets outside the scope of legislation. They talked about the elevated risk in regulatory areas for those who want to put money into renewable energy in Ontario. They said that, in fact, you wanted to have some sense that there would be continuity, that a commitment today to renewable power would be there in the future. They note that since 2004, the identity of the Minister of Energy has changed four times. For a post that is central to this province's well-being, you have to ask about the level of commitment if we're changing a key minister on a yearly basis. That is a substantial concern.

If you look at how we've actually performed, at investment levels, they say that "investment levels have fallen substantially short of initial expectations. At the end of November 2008, approximately 800 megawatts of new renewable capacity was in operation...." That was 60% of the target set in 2003, and frankly, far less than should be in place.

If you look at the American experience, American states that have put in place targets for the amount of renewable power that they want to have operational have done better than Ontario. In fact, at the end of November 2008, the investment in Ontario was approximately one third of the investment that's occurred in states that have a set target for the amount of renewable power. That's not good news for us. We have not done as well as was targeted. We're not doing as well as American jurisdictions. We needed to have in this act a commitment not only to an obligation to buy power, but targets.

The German legislation has targets so the government can be held accountable if those targets aren't met. You know as well as I do that if there are not targets in place,

then it is very difficult for us to stand here in the Legislature and say that you didn't actually deliver the goods, because the government can say, "In fact, we got 20 of these things in place. That's a lot. You should be happy." We say, "No, you should have had 100 or 200 in place." They say, "No, 20 was all we ever expected. We didn't put it into the law; 20 was a good number. We're sticking with that number."

Failure to put targets in this legislation means that, as opposed to American jurisdictions where they have targets, we're underperforming. It's not in keeping with the legislation in the leading state in the world that is moving things forward, and that's Germany. That is a huge problem for us.

In the course of debating this legislation, one of the issues that came up was the whole question of enforcing building codes. I said earlier that you need to have targets for efficiency and conservation. We didn't get those. In the course of the hearings it was pointed out to us that building codes in this province, when it comes to energy efficiency, are largely unenforced, and that's of consequence.

We had testimony from Sustainable Buildings Canada, and they commented specifically about large buildings, not homes but larger commercial buildings. If you stand up in front of this Legislature and look south, you'll see those buildings, those large commercial towers that consume huge amounts of power. The Toronto-Dominion Centre consumes about the same as Collingwood: one building complex; one city. They are major power consumers, and so getting it right with them and their building codes is a tremendous consequence.

Bob Bach was the speaker for Sustainable Buildings Canada. He talked about the reality of building codes in this province. I just want to quote some of what he had to say: "In 1993, Ontario introduced an energy code into the building code. An energy code is a document that lays down the way by which energy efficiency will be established. It in fact sets a level of energy efficiency. Furthermore, in 1993, the province developed a compliance review and inspection manual for building officials and also trained building officials across the province in how to apply the energy code within the building code." He went on to say, "I led that work and I delivered the training, and I can tell you that many building officials had trouble understanding the issues required to establish energy efficiency in buildings."

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He noted that the province may set the code, but in fact it is building permit officials at the municipal level who actually enforce it. So if you want a building permit issued, you go to building permit officials at the municipal level. They review your drawing and give you a year or a nay.

I asked him how broad was the non-compliance in this field and how effective was the Energy Efficiency Act? Did it really mean that buildings were built to a code that would reduce the amount of power they would use? He said he talked to people who were responsible for about

30% of the value of construction in Canada, a core group of people who oversee the act for the buildings that consume the most power in this country. They said the compliance level with building codes for energy efficiency was very, very low.

The reality is that we can design wonderful building codes; we can say in this act that we're going to have wonderful building codes in place. But if they're not enforced, then it doesn't matter how lovely they are, it doesn't matter how advanced they are, it doesn't matter how green they are; it means nothing.

I put forward an amendment to address this, because if you're not going to make energy efficiency and conservation the highest priority of the bill, then at the very least enforce the laws you have in place so that we get the benefit of the work that has been done to date. I have to say that that was not put in place; that amendment was not carried through. That was an error.

I want people to understand the scale of the energy issues we're talking about today. When we talk electricity, people think that's the whole energy picture. In Ontario, depending on the price of oil, we spend something like \$36 billion to \$46 billion a year on energy. That's for the whole shot: aircraft fuel, home heating, gasoline, diesel, hot water, everything—somewhere in that \$35-billion or \$40-billion-a-year range. We spend somewhere in the range \$8 billion a year on electricity.

If the Ontario Power Authority supply mix media release was accurate and this bill only actually results in 14% of our electricity coming from renewable power, we're talking about 14%, maybe about \$1 billion worth of electricity. A billion dollars is a lot of money, but compared to \$35 billion or \$40 billion, it's a small part of the spectrum. We need it to be much bigger in this act, because we import tens of billions of dollars' worth of energy fuel from across North America and around the world every year. That's money that flows out of Ontario and that is no longer in our economy, money that could be used to put people to work right here and is not used to put people to work right here.

When I tried to amend this act so that it didn't deal just with electricity, but at least with thermal, with renewable heating and cooling, which would have substantially expanded the scale of the act and the job creation potential, that was rejected by the government. What we need in this province is local job creation and broad thinking about where this economy is going to go in this century.

We need a sense of urgency about climate change. The economy is dominating our thinking right now, but just like the credit crisis broke on us last September and dramatically changed the way our economy functions, so too will climate change radically break on our society at some point and change the way our life is carried on.

We need a realization that we must go beyond the nuclear age. We are on the verge—and this act should never obscure that—of spending tens of billions of dollars on new nuclear power plants. Two of the leading contenders have substantial problems.

Areva, a French nuclear power company which is building a plant in Finland, is having huge problems. Questions have been raised about safety systems. There is now no confirmed date for the completion of that plant—and this is one of the most sophisticated nuclear reactor companies in the world.

Candu is proposing to build a nuclear reactor for Ontario that will be a prototype, that will not have been built before. I want to tell you that Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. and Candu have not always done well on prototypes. People have heard of the Gently-2 reactor in Quebec. Well, you need to know that there was a Gently-1, built in 1972. Because it was a new kind of reactor, they were sorting things out. It proved to be so unstable that within five years it was shut down. So Quebec got one reactor for the price of two. It is risky to build prototypes. AECL wanted to build a reactor to replace the reactors that made medical isotopes, the MAPLE reactors. They proved to be so unstable that they were never allowed to come into full production. They have been shut down. And now they want to build a new design, the biggest they've ever put together, and we in this province will be the guinea pigs for that. That is a risk that is not worth taking. It's certainly not worth taking economically, and it isn't worth taking in terms of our industrial future, of where we're going to put our intellectual capital, our understanding.

The government needs to hear a warning about the direction that they're taking. I have set out my assessment of this act, of where Ontario stands and what we have to do. The government needs to be warned that their approach to the bill and to electricity in this province is hugely problematic.

People in Ontario are in a difficult way. Depending on their current situation, they may be nervous because they can see family or friends in financial difficulties. If they have lost their job and can't find any other, they aren't just nervous, they are desperate. And they are looking for action. There are people who are nervous and desperate about the state of air quality in this province and about the prospects for climate change. All of those people—the nervous, the desperate, the environmentally focused and the jobs-focused—look at what's being done in Europe, look at what's being done in the United States, and say, "We want to see that here in Ontario."

This act has stirred up hope. There is no doubt about it. You tour around this province, and it may be cautious in some cases and unbridled in others, but there is hope that this act will be used to substantially address problems that people want addressed. So this government has garnered a huge amount of praise for bringing forward this act.

There is a deep hope that the act will be used to force the development of renewable power on to the stage in Ontario. People with that hope are of the opinion that we may or may not get a small part of what we need in this province, but they have that hope that it will go forward. Well, they need more than hope. They need the material rolling out of those changes, of those investments.

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As written, this bill is set to underperform. The way it has been written allows the minister and any future minister to constrain investment in efficiency, conservation and renewables so that the market for nuclear power will be undisturbed. That is a mistake, because we need to prepare to go beyond the nuclear age. Even the Premier will talk about the fact that if he had a magic wand, if there was the opportunity that we didn't need nuclear, that would be wonderful. He doesn't believe the time is at hand. Well, frankly, if the time isn't at hand now, the time may never come. The time is at hand now.

I have to say that it is wrong and it is dangerous to play games with people. The minister has the power to correct many of the deficiencies in this legislation with regulation. He needs to use that power. He needs to use it quickly. He needs that power to get people to work. He needs to use that power to take on environmental concerns. He needs to use that power to set direction for industry in this province.

If the act is simply used to divert attention and provide cover for a massive nuclear investment rollout, then we will see a substantial risk developing for the people of this province, both in terms of their industrial future and of their electricity future. We need to go beyond tentative measures. We need to go beyond baby steps in protecting industry, in protecting the environment and in protecting jobs in this province. The minister and the Premier ignore that reality at their peril and they also ignore it at the peril of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: The Green Energy Act, as has been said, has two priorities: bringing more renewable energy online and creating a culture of conservation. I want to speak to those two points and a number of the issues raised by the member from Toronto–Danforth in that respect.

The certainty with respect to the ability to generate and sell that power arises as a result of the feed-in-tariff model, when combined with the right to access the grid and with certainty about regulation. The feed-in tariff is one of those mechanisms that have been used around the world, and Ontario seeks to use it in combination with a number of other initiatives that say that if you're willing to make the investment, we'll buy the power. If the project is economic, we'll connect it, and we'll do that in a faster fashion than has been done before. So it's not about targets and limits; it's about certainty and moving forward.

The regulatory consultations have already commenced. The OPA is consulting with the renewable energy stakeholders on the design of the feed-in tariff. The ministry has commenced consultation on domestic content, and the first session of that has been recently held. That arises even more solidly from a government amendment that will mandate domestic content provisions within the feed-in tariff to ensure that the technology and solutions behind renewable energy will be based in Ontario.

That leads me to the importance of the jobs being here in Ontario. I want to highlight another article. My friend opposite commented on a previous article by Tyler Hamilton. On May 9, this weekend, Tyler Hamilton wrote an article where he refers to "90,000 good-paying jobs over the next 10 years," and that comes from Robert Pollin, co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts. He says, "In Massachusetts, we're talking about it but we're not doing anything." We're doing things here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The Green Energy Act does attract attention from a lot of people and the people of Ontario, but our caucus had a significant study done with regard to the claims that the government is making with regard to this act. We found that many of those claims are exaggerated, are very questionable and have no proof that they're going to work. I keep hearing these wonderful stories about Spain and Germany, how wonderful everything is in these two countries with regard to their efforts, with regard to their changing their energy mix and that kind of thing. As I understand it, in the most recent economic downturn, what country did the worst of all in Europe? Germany, because its energy costs are so high that businesses and manufacturers can't compete in that country anymore. So notwithstanding that we all are in favour of producing more electricity, more energy from renewable resources, it's kind of nice to have some jobs in the country as well.

As well, I'm told that all is not well in Spain with regard to their renewable energy projects. I'm told that it's a mess by people who have been there, who have seen it, with regard to what's going on in that area. So I ask, how much research and how much planning, by people who were objective and not trying to make a political statement but were really interested in improving our environment, were involved in this act?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Toronto–Danforth for his insightful one-hour remarks. I've got to say that this bill is not about building a vibrant and sustainable green economy, an energy system in our province. This is about nuclear. I'm really, really very keen on talking about this every chance I get. This government is not committed to a culture of conservation; this government is committed to a culture of nuclear and more nuclear. The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, a Conservative member who likes nuclear as much as the Liberals do—they're like this on that one—talks about the energy costs in some of these other countries being high. Well, it's nuclear that's been killing us for the last 20 years in terms of energy costs. We have this debt we cannot get rid of, have not been able to get rid of for a long, long time.

No one, not Tory nor Liberal, says how expensive nuclear is. They say, "Wind, solar, ooh—expensive. Look at Germany; look at the other places." But nuclear,

“Oh, no, it’s not expensive, and by the way, it’s clean”—please, please. You Tories and Liberals have it all wrong. Talk about how proud you Liberals are about your commitment to nuclear. Just stand up and say how proud you are and tell the environmentalists about your culture of conservation.

When the minister and the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore say, “We have a balanced approach,” why is it that the Ontario Clean Air Alliance recently showed that the McGuinty government is willing to spend 50 times more for a kilowatt of nuclear energy than it is willing to pay for a kilowatt of energy conservation? Please, Liberals, your commitment is to nuclear and nothing else. Stand up and be proud of it. Don’t be ashamed; don’t hide it. Just say it at every chance you get. But I don’t hear too many Liberals talking about it. Stand up; be proud; say it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I certainly will stand up and say that I’m very proud of the Green Energy Act. I’m very proud that nuclear is an important component of it. We understand that you need a solid foundation to work from. I have the largest nuclear generating station in North America located in my riding. I’m very proud of the work that they have done with the community. They are strong community partners, and I’m proud of the commitment that they have made to Ontario.

We generate 25% of the energy from my riding alone. We do it through nuclear, and we also do it through wind; 434 megawatts are generated from my riding of Huron–Bruce. We’re very proud of the contribution that we make to energy to ensure that we have safe, clean, affordable hydro, because we understand how important that is for a strong economy.

We also see opportunities and further expansion of clean, green energy.

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One of the things I wanted to talk about was how important it is to ensure that public consultation remains a strong part of the whole process, which will be included in the consultation with communities—that will be a part of it. There’s a working group formed right now—AMO, MOE, MNR, MAH and MEI are all working together on developing the processes—and health and safety will be taken into consideration, as well as the science base, as the standards are established. That is a very important component.

I want to be quick, because I want to give a practical application of this. One of the things we have a lot in my riding is dead stock removal. We have another group that is 185—unfortunately, I’m going to have to speak again—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Trinity–Spadina and Huron–Bruce for their commentary.

I want to talk first about the comments of the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. When you look at what is in place in other jurisdictions, when you talk about a feed-in tariff, there are three components. There’s the right of access to the grid—no question—and price that is set high enough to induce investment. But there’s a third piece, and that’s take-or-pay, the obligation to buy. You need all three of those, and the people who were here speaking on behalf of the Green Energy Act Alliance were very clear about the need for all three pieces to be in place to actually have the results you want to have.

The member refers to the study that was cited by Tyler Hamilton in Saturday’s Star. I actually went to take a look at the study. The writers talk about 90,000 jobs, not based on the Green Energy Act before us, but based on the scenario of Green Energy Act Alliance extended investment in conservation and efficiency. Effectively, you wouldn’t get those jobs if you went ahead and refurbished the Pickering B nuclear power plant. That has to be dealt out if you want to get those 90,000 jobs. That’s the choice. So when you say 90,000 jobs, be very clear that it’s because you’ve got 90,000 green jobs, not a whole bunch of jobs that get eaten up by the nuclear establishment.

The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills talked about electricity prices in Germany. Just to be very clear with him, electricity prices for the manufacturing sector are set at an industrial rate of about six euro cents a kilowatt hour, which is substantially less than their general electricity—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Madam Speaker, if I could beg your indulgence, I want to introduce a very close friend of mine who is visiting from Thunder Bay: my good friend Reg Corbett and his wife, Jackie Corbett. Welcome, Reg and Jackie.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: The Green Energy Act is progressive yet practical. It builds upon all the work this government has already done to build a reliable electricity system to increase Ontario’s supply of renewable energy. Ontario has been the leader on this front, and if passed, the Green Energy Act would help us continue to lead, establishing this province as the North American leader in green energy.

Last week, British economist and former World Bank chief economist Sir Nicholas Stern predicted that the Green Energy Act would be “extremely persuasive” to other jurisdictions and called the opportunities ahead an “economic no-brainer.”

This proposed legislation would indeed benefit Ontario communities in many ways. It would help to increase the development and use of renewable energy in this province, complementing our strong base of emission-free nuclear power and large-scale hydroelectric power, which together represent three quarters of the electricity generated in the province at present.

The Green Energy Act would also help us better protect the environment, boosting our fight against climate change and creating a healthier future for our children. It would build a strong culture of conservation by helping homeowners, the provincial and municipal levels of government, hospitals, schools and industrial employers transition to lower energy use. We all know that the most important kilowatt of electricity is the one we don't use in the first place, so conservation is very prominent in this bill.

This focus on renewables and conservation would combine to vault Ontario to the front of the pack in creating new green economies, spurring innovation and creating more than 50,000 jobs in the first three years, as well as at least \$5 billion of investment in infrastructure and expenditures on renewable generation and conservation.

If passed, the Green Energy Act would mean direct and indirect jobs in smart grid and transmission and distribution upgrades and in renewable energy and conservation projects. The Green Energy Act would help to create jobs in a wide range of areas, including construction, domestic manufacturing and assembly, architecture, trucking, servicing and installation, and other sectors such as finance, IT and software. Many of the new construction jobs would be created by local distribution companies and Hydro One as they endeavour to upgrade their network infrastructure in order to allow additional renewable generation to be fully integrated with the grid. There would be a need for manufacturing jobs as firms respond to the demand for new equipment associated with investments in renewable energy projects and the grid.

To accomplish its goals, the Green Energy Act contains a number of key measures. On renewables, this bill would create an incentive pricing structure called a feed-in tariff for energy generated from renewable sources such as solar, wind, water and biomass. The proposed feed-in tariff program would help spark new investment in renewable energy generation and create a new generation of green jobs. It would also give communities and homeowners, including First Nations and Metis communities, the power and tools they need to participate in developing electricity for the new green economy.

Our government has begun discussions on domestic content provisions for wind energy and solar projects. Those provisions, in turn, would support jobs in Ontario in manufacturing, design, engineering and other related industries. A feed-in tariff model, combined with the right of access to the grid and with certainty about regulation, is not about targets or limits; it's about creating certainty. It says to investors, "If you're willing to make the investment, we will buy the power. If the project is economic, we will connect it. We will do so more quickly than has been done before." That's why we have a renewable energy facilitator who will be appointed.

Ontario has learned from other jurisdictions that feed-in tariffs provide a fair and transparent incentive to en-

courage development of all types and sizes. The proposed FIT program would encourage more renewable energy projects in Ontario, which in turn would mean more transmission and distribution development. This government understands that increased generation must be balanced with new transmission capacity, and we intend to work proactively with our energy agencies to initiate investment in new transmission projects. Those new green energy projects, and related transmission and distribution development, will in turn bring more jobs and economic development to communities. In fact, our job projection numbers see 17% of Green Energy Act job opportunities coming from renewable energy projects.

To boost Ontario's attraction to renewable energy developers even more, the proposed Green Energy Act would ensure a clearer, improved approval process that would eliminate red tape and duplication, and offer service guarantees while continuing to protect public health and safety. Our government's goal of building more green energy projects faster in a timely way will always be balanced with the equally important objective of preserving and protecting our land, air, water, ecosystems and wildlife.

I know that this proposed approval process has been an issue, so let me add that through the committee process we heard from presenters, including AMO, who asked that the Green Energy Act recognize the importance and unique role of communities. Community involvement and engagement are critical because there is no question that Ontarians are eager to be part of the green solution. One of the most exciting elements of the proposed act is its potential to encourage thousands of smaller green energy projects, conceived and developed by Ontarians in urban and rural areas across the province. Certainly, Ontarians want and deserve a say as we move forward. That's why we introduced an amendment that clarifies that the proposed act must be administered in a way that promotes community consultation. Our government has made it clear that public consultation must be part of the approval process that is currently being developed by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

We would also task a working group of ministries, together with AMO, to develop a process to ensure that proponents consult with municipalities on site requirements and local infrastructure. As well, a fund dedicated to providing grants and assistance to local community groups would help communities and even citizen co-ops to generate their own power and power for the grid, leading to a greener power system for us all.

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Another key provision of the Green Energy Act would bring Ontario's entire energy system into the 21st century through a smart grid. A smart grid would allow us to meet the changing nature of power consumption in Ontario, positioning us to take advantage of conservation technology such as smart meters, as well as paving the way for innovation such as the plug-in hybrid car. It would also let us coordinate the production of power

from large numbers of small power producers. This would thereby enable many more small green energy projects to be built.

If passed, our legislation would eliminate local barriers in some jurisdictions that currently restrict renewable energy technology such as rooftop solar panels or ground-source heat pumps. We're also looking at ways to help community-based groups with some of the soft costs of project development so they could get up and running faster.

Finally, if passed, the act would clear the way for municipalities and local distribution companies to invest in renewable generating facilities below 10 megawatts in capacity. In this way, the Green Energy Act offers local governments and shareholders in local LDCs an opportunity to expand their role as energy leaders in communities and to contribute directly to building a new green economy.

In particular, local distribution companies are central to ensuring the proposed Green Energy Act would help communities become involved with renewable energy projects. Local distribution companies already have an established and trusted link to the electricity customer. We would depend on them to be leaders as we move forward on the priorities outlined in the proposed act, including, as I just mentioned, the ability to directly participate in small-scale energy generation. As well, we would expect LDCs to support other potential generators by working with us and other industry stakeholders to remove barriers, make system investments, and offer service guarantees.

If passed, the Green Energy Act would give the LDCs the ability to invest in grid expansion and upgrades to enable local renewable generation.

In the coming months, we will be working with energy agencies and the LDCs on the rollout of smart meters, which is laying the foundation for the smart grid. More than two million meters have been installed to date. The provincial rollout of time-of-use pricing is a key step in our drive to build a culture of conservation.

Indeed, at the heart of the proposed Green Energy Act is a recognition that LDCs must be in the driver's seat when it comes to delivering the conservation message to their customers. The Green Energy Act would give them more responsibility for provincial conservation efforts, including reaching targets.

Looking at conservation a little more broadly, the Green Energy Act recognizes that it's equally important as supporting more renewable sources of generation. Minister Smitherman has stressed that giving Ontarians the tools to understand and reduce their electricity use is good not only for the environment, but also for our wallets. We must work to build a culture of conservation now, because everyone knows that the price of electricity is under pressure to rise in the future.

If the Green Energy Act becomes law, about \$900 million will be spent on conservation strategies across all sectors over the next three years. By 2025, these investments, in addition to existing and other planned pro-

grams, should help a typical family in Ontario reduce their electricity consumption by 15% to 20%. The conservation initiatives that the Green Energy Act would engender would also be a key economic driver. We project that 15% of jobs created out of the act would be in conservation.

If passed, the Green Energy Act would allow amendments to the building code that would establish energy conservation as a purpose of the code. This is a major change. To help meet our conservation goals under these amendments, we would need electricians, builders, architects and renovators.

If passed, the act would also green Ontario government and broader public sector buildings and other facilities, establishing regular public reporting on energy use and establishing minimum standards for the new buildings that are equivalent to LEED silver. I've been at Humber College to see what the colleges have done in being able to measure energy use and reduce energy use. It's just tremendous how forward they are. Moving to a LEED standard will require skilled workers in the area of retrofitting, as well as workers with expertise in energy-efficient construction.

Further, the Green Energy Act would encourage energy conservation and demand-management plans from large electricity consumers and the broader public sector, including the municipal level, as well as universities, colleges, schools and hospitals.

On the homeowner front, I'm proud to say that last September I proposed a private member's bill concerning home energy audits which received all-party support. I wanted to ensure that consumers would be protected. The bill would have required a home energy audit report for all home sellers in the province. I'm sure you are all aware that the Green Energy Act contains a provision on home energy audits.

After listening to the views from across Ontario, we've added flexibility to this provision through an amendment that would address situations where the seller and buyer of a home agree that a home audit is not necessary. Under the amended provisions, the buyer could waive his right to receive a rating. Buyers and sellers are encouraged to go ahead with the energy audit; it is a small shared investment that would give a buyer a wealth of knowledge about their new home's energy use. To further help Ontarians make their homes more energy efficient, policies engendered by the Green Energy Act would establish Energy Star as the enhanced energy efficiency standard for household appliances.

The proposed Green Energy Act is indeed a bold and far-reaching plan. It would modernize and strengthen Ontario's energy system and bring more renewable energy projects, both large and small, to reality. It would ensure that our energy supply mix is one of the cleanest in North America and help our province continue to be a leader in the fight against climate change. It would help create a conservation culture, propel innovation, boost local economies and create good jobs all across the province in urban and rural communities, in the north and

in areas hard hit by the shrinking manufacturing sector. The next few years will see a wave of change in the job market, with, as I've said, at least 50,000 new jobs created as a result of the proposed Green Energy Act.

We're all poised to benefit from those opportunities. If passed, the Green Energy Act would give this province a blueprint for a greener future, one that would ensure a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Ontario full of vibrant, prosperous and sustainable communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise today in third reading of Bill 150—as my party calls it, the tax and power grab. It was a member opposite who's quite a good friend of mine who did indicate prior to an amendment to this legislation that the government would be removing the mandatory home energy audit, which hundreds of thousands of Ontarians opposed so vehemently—before they would then find that they would be slapped with the harmonized sales tax.

Of course, one of our concerns in the official opposition is how this information could get out in the city of Ottawa with the consumer affairs minister, Harinder Takhar, that this home energy audit would be removed, prior to public hearings. That's a valid question for us to ask.

We in the official opposition had, as you will recall, asked for this legislation, this omnibus Bill 150, to go to committee hearings after first reading, something that the previous environment minister, Dwight Duncan, who's now our finance minister, did with another previous energy bill. This is a complex piece of legislation and, we're going to see, something that's going to have ramifications well into our future, impacted in a very truncated period of time, I believe within the last two and a half months.

I will not be supporting this legislation, because not only do I feel it could have received wider and broader consultation, but also because it will increase energy bills by as much as 30% to 50% for the average consumer. Who can afford that these days? How will that impact consumers and this 8% increase on home heating fuel that we're going to see in the days ahead as a result of the HST? So I appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've got a couple of questions for my friend from Ottawa–Orléans because I know he's an engineer. As I understand engineers, they're mathematical in their thought, they're analytical and they're dispassionate, generally speaking. I want him to answer a couple of questions because I know that he will be fair in his response to my comments and that he will look forward to refuting some of the arguments, as an engineer would.

You Liberals have in the works the construction of two new nuclear stations in the immediate future, and then, after the 10 years, you probably have a lot more. As I understand it, based on the experience of Darlington,

these two new nuclear stations are likely to cost, with cost overruns, anywhere from \$30 billion to \$40 billion, we believe. That's a conservative estimate, with all due respect to the Conservatives. If that is true, how do you deal with these numbers? Don't you find it expensive? Don't you find it truly, genuinely expensive? That's one.

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Secondly, the nuclear waste: As an engineer, how do you deal with that? How have all of you engineers been dealing with nuclear waste in terms of the issue of safety? Because I happen to think it's not safe, and I don't know what they're doing with it. You might want to comment on that.

Thirdly, if you're building two new nuclear stations, in my view, with that extra capacity you are automatically building in a cap or a ceiling on renewables. That's how I see it, from a dispassionate point of view as well, of course, not being an engineer. But you look at those numbers and you say, "Hmm. If you've got two new nuclear stations, there's only so much of the renewables that you can put into the system." So if you could help me out and help the citizens to refute some of these arguments or to elucidate, for that matter.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was a delight to hear the speech from my colleague the member from Ottawa–Orléans, who makes a very compelling case for reasons to support Bill 150 in third reading.

I just recently had the opportunity to attend the Green Expo in Peterborough, and I want to talk about a small company that's owned by my friend Simon, who lives on Maria Street in Peterborough. He owns the Generation Solar business. He looks to Bill 150 as being a real catalyst for him to get additional and new business for what has become a very thriving small business in Peterborough, providing solar panels, solar technology to a large client base in the Peterborough area. He effectively looks to see that business building considerably over the next number of years. He'll also take advantage of the budget provisions to eliminate the PST for component costs in some of the technology that he will be purchasing in order to supply a rather large customer base.

In Peterborough, we also have a publicly owned utility, the Peterborough Utilities Services. The city of Peterborough retained their utility identity. The PUS has been very involved in a couple of projects. One is just north of Trent University, a run-of-the-river operation to produce electricity from the traditional run of the river. Secondly, we're looking at an opportunity on the Bensfort landfill site, where dollars have now been provided to capture methane gas, which is a by-product of decomposing garbage. The PUS will bring in the generator turbine set to start generating electricity from methane gas from a landfill site.

This bill, as clearly articulated by my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans, provides a real framework for the future that will generate and provide the next generation of jobs in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's interesting, this Green Energy Act has a lot of numbers in it, a lot of complication to it etc. I just want to relate to the members here, because I sit in a committee and I'm responsible for my party on Bill 162, and—surprise, surprise—this week, the government lifted part of that bill. They've taken their section dealing with advertising out of that Bill 162. They put in more restrictions as to how the government could advertise and spin a particular subject

Under the new act—the act that they're now going to wipe out, even though we passed it in second reading in this Legislature, and we publicly stated that we supported this particular act—it says, “The following are the standards that an item”—an advertisement—“is required to meet:

“1. It must include a statement that the item is paid for by the government of Ontario.

“2. It must not be partisan as determined under subsection (2).” And here's the real kicker:

“3. Any numerical data in it must be supportable”—they're wiping that out.

What they want is the right to go to the Auditor General and say, “We're going to say that this new Green Energy Act will create 50,000 jobs, but we won't have any supporting evidence for those 50,000 jobs.” So here we have the government opposite and the members standing up and saying that all of these jobs are going to be created, and on the other hand, what the government is doing and saying is, “We can spin this now without having to support the numbers that we're spinning out.”

Listen, guys, if you want to talk about numbers, support them and don't give yourself the right—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Ottawa–Orléans has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to thank the members for Nepean–Carleton, Trinity–Spadina, Peterborough and Carleton–Mississippi Mills for their comments. I'd like to go into the details of how nuclear has formed 40% of our base power for almost 40 years and will continue to do so, and then the other question he asked. I just want to concentrate more on the home energy audit because I had more impact in there.

I'd just like to tell you about the great rebate program. Canada and Ontario offer rebates on that. You can have the energy audit done for \$150, after you consider the \$150 contribution from the province of Ontario, and you get a nice report like I got from the EnviroCentre in Ottawa, a home energy report for my home which tells me, moving forward, what I should do. The people who own these homes, up to three storeys, that were built under section 9 of the building code—if we could take those 2.7 million homes and improve them as we should, it would cost about \$9,000 each, on average. You would get \$3,000 back from Canada and Ontario and you would have \$6,000 that would pay itself back in much under 10

years. So you would be putting an investment in your home and it would come back in a few years.

Your alternative, of course, is to pay energy, moving forward, with your home, that is not as energy efficient as it should be. There's about \$25 billion of expenditure that we can give to the oil companies or we can put in our own homes and make them cozier. Of course, if we put that in our own homes and make our homes cozier and more energy efficient, then we have these energy savings, moving forward. Not only that, but we will create something like 250,000 jobs over the 10 years, say, that it would take. We'd reduce greenhouse gasses by four million to five million tonnes per year. It would be a great thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak once again on Bill 150. This is not the first time I've spoken in the House about Bill 150 and my opposition to the many, many holes that exist within it. I will focus on two concerns for this debate.

As I've said from the beginning, naming a piece of legislation the Green Energy Act does not necessarily make it so. This legislation removes all oversight for planning for municipalities. No longer will municipalities be able to enforce reasonable setbacks for turbines, but this Liberal government will. This Liberal government will decide for the municipalities what's best for them. Municipalities that have spent thousands of dollars on planning will see all that of money and public input go to waste. This Liberal government will now tell municipalities what to do and where wind turbines can go.

I know municipal governments in my riding of Dufferin–Caledon, and 35 across Ontario, are very much opposed to Bill 150. They have spent incredible amounts of time and money in developing plans and a strategy for wind turbines in their municipalities. Now the power-hungry Liberal government wants to take it all away. The township of Mulmur in my riding has passed an excellent resolution that I think is very important, and I think all members of the Legislature should hear what they have to say:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has released Bill 150, the proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act, for comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights; and

“Whereas the township has expended substantial time, effort and money over the past two years to develop comprehensive policies to deal with alternative energy projects...; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was poised to approve much of the township's new policy until an appeal of the amendment was launched by a wind farm developer; and

“Whereas the ... wind farm being proposed for the Honeywood area within the township may not be appropriate for the site and area in which it is being proposed to be located, given the number of serious and as yet

unresolved concerns identified during the environmental screening process; and

“Whereas, since transition regulations have not been released, it is not yet known whether this project will be subject to the proposed new provincial requirements or the current processes and requirements; and

“Whereas there is no indication that the province intends to consult specifically with the host municipality or its directly affected ratepayers in a manner similar to that now conducted by the municipality under the Planning Act, a process which is considered essential to sound land use planning; and

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“Whereas there is no indication that the substantial costs to municipalities in reviewing and commenting on such proposals can be recovered in the same way that they are now recoverable under the Planning Act ... and

“Whereas the Niagara Escarpment Commission has forwarded draft comments on the proposed legislation for our review and input, which do not appear to go far enough to protect the integrity and preserve the sensitive, unique, world-renowned qualities of the escarpment; and

“Whereas the township believes that the Niagara Escarpment area is not an appropriate location for large-scale energy conversion projects of any kind, and that, at a minimum, a 1.0 km buffer beyond the boundaries of the NE plan area is appropriate; and

“Whereas both the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, up to now, have been in full agreement with this exclusion and buffer area....”

The township of Mulmur urges the province “to allow municipalities ... to continue to deal with and make decisions on proposals that have been initiated prior to the implementation of Bill 150.”

The township of Mulmur is not alone. The township of Amaranth, the township of Melancthon and the town of Caledon have all passed similar resolutions calling upon this Liberal government to not remove their planning oversight.

The resolution that Amaranth passed reads as follows:

“Whereas the township of Amaranth is concerned that the removal of local land use planning controls for renewable energy facilities will have a detrimental effect on the municipality; and

“Whereas the passage of Bill 150 will limit the ability of the township to provide meaningful comment and participation in the placement of wind and other renewable energy facilities with the removal of power under the Planning Act; and

“Whereas without powers under the Planning Act, the township will no longer be able to require agreements related to access, landscaping and securities for renewable energy projects; and

“Whereas the township will no longer be able to address the needs of the local area in such an agreement.

“Therefore be it resolved that the township of Amaranth requests that the province undertake a comprehensive review of the potential health and land use

impacts to the general public associated with the placement of all renewable energy facilities; and review the proposal to remove local and land use planning controls under the Planning Act through Bill 150.

“And further, the township of Amaranth requests that the province put a moratorium on all wind projects and related applications pending outcome of the above noted review.”

Municipalities are concerned, and they have a right to be. They are seeing their time, effort and money thrown out the window with Bill 150. The township of Melancthon passed a motion, as well, that reads very much like that of Amaranth. All municipalities in my riding have the same concerns. They do not want planning to be placed in the hands of the provincial government.

The township of Melancthon believes that municipal involvement should include at least the following components:

- a requirement that the proponent consult with the subject municipality prior to submitting an application under the Environmental Protection Act;

- a notification of the receipt of complete application and of any subsequent changes to that application to the municipality and to landowners within 400 metres of the proposed facility;

- circulation of all related documentation to the municipality for review and comment;

- municipal and public notification of the ministry’s decisions and directives on the application and on all other relevant matters;

- municipal and public notification on any changes in the terms and conditions of approvals; and

- municipal and public notification of any appeals, related hearings of the Environmental Review Tribunal, any appeals of the minister, and the related decisions.

The town of Caledon has also passed a very similar resolution. They’ve requested that the town be involved in the development of regulations of the act, particularly as they relate to new renewable energy project approval processes to ensure appropriate municipal consultation. They’re asking for a seat at the table.

Not only are municipalities concerned, but so are Ontario residents. They are concerned about their health. I know I’ve received at least 100 e-mails from those concerned about the health impacts of wind turbines, mostly because these are the people suffering from various health issues.

One e-mail from a constituent says, “We are suffering from ear problems, earache, running eyes, ringing in the ears, balance problems, sleep problems, as well as not being able to sit outside our house due to the constant roar from the turbines. How would you like not being able to open your window because the noise will not allow you to sleep at night?”

The e-mail goes on to give these setback recommendations: Setbacks and noise guidelines for wind turbine complexes must be based on open and transparent process; setback and noise guidelines cannot be based on the self-serving opinions of the wind energy industry or

the Minister of the Environment. And setbacks and noise guidelines must be developed based on valid, medically based research from independent professionals qualified to conduct epidemiological studies.

Another one of my constituents has a very similar concern:

“Some victims are suffering from sleep deprivation, which leads to serious medical problems.... Ontario victims have written open letters to Premier McGuinty detailing their family suffering from adverse health effects from exposure to wind turbine complexes. These reports cannot be ignored.

“Under Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, the McGuinty Liberals want to legalize the potential for serious harm to human health provided the serious harm is not irreversible. This irresponsible disregard for public health is alarming and unacceptable to residents of Ontario.”

Another Ontarian who is upset by Dalton McGuinty blatantly ignoring the comments of Ontario residents has said:

“Premier McGuinty has assured the residents of Ontario protection from adverse health effects by stating:

““The province will be able to use the most up-to-date scientific research and information from other jurisdictions to develop best-in-class standards for wind farm setbacks. The Ministry of the Environment will be responsible for developing the new standards, and consultation with the community will be part of the process.”

“In spite of these assurances, Mr. Smitherman has demonstrated his contempt for this process by publicly stating regarding setbacks ‘the distance currently envisioned is 500 metres.’ Clearly Mr. Smitherman has a preconceived position and bias that setbacks are to be based on economics rather than health or safety of Ontario families.

“This interference clearly demonstrates Mr. Smitherman’s disdain for the consultative process.”

Dr. Robert McMurtry, dean of medicine at the University of Western Ontario, appeared before the Standing Committee on General Government regarding Bill 150, and he had this to say: “Dr. Amanda Harry reported on 39 cases.... For these people, whose health and quality of life were compromised, she concluded that people ‘living near wind turbines are genuinely suffering.’

“Let me be clear, however, as to” my deepest concern. “Adverse health effects are occurring as we speak.”

Most disturbing of all are the comments describing the sheer anguish and sense of betrayal that many feel. No one seems to care, and you certainly get that impression, listening to all the chatter that’s going on in this House. No one appears to be listening to the residents’ plight. They feel they are losing their homes and their lives.

The situation has been exacerbated for many who have experienced denial and abusive behaviour by wind turbine representatives and, on occasion, from Ministry of the Environment officials. All this victimizes them a second time. These findings and victim accounts are new in Ontario, but not elsewhere. They have been described too often in other countries.

A company in Germany with the mission statement to “enhance the international promotion of environmental technology within the fields of recycling of ash and waste energy sources, renewable energy, environmental industrial development” says this about the location of wind farms: “The location under consideration should first be wind-intensive during the whole year”—makes sense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. Could you stop the clock for a second? I would ask members to take their conversations outside if they want to have them. We have a speaker here.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker.

From a company in Germany, talking about the siting of wind farm locations: “The location under consideration should first be wind-intensive during the whole year. Buildings, particularly housing, should not be nearer than two kilometres to the wind farm.” Remember, this is in Germany, from which the Liberals love to cite examples.

Riverside county in California has stated: “Restrict the placement of wind turbines within two miles of residential development unless the applicant supplies documentation that the machines will not produce low-frequency impulsive noise.”

We cannot put a cost on the health risks associated with the harmful effects of wind turbines located within close proximity to homes, schools and hospitals. It is precisely why municipal governments are asking for a seat at the table when they want to be participating in the regulations.

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One of the many e-mails I have received states, “The removal of individual rights through the centralized and fast-tracking of the approval process is alarming and undemocratic.” I couldn’t agree more.

It is unusual that an important piece of legislation such as this, with no less than seven pages of explanatory notes and 65 pages of clauses opening up and amending over 15 pieces of legislation, including the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, which would greatly effect my constituency of Dufferin–Caledon, would be called for second reading debate within 24 hours of being introduced for first reading. Now, a short couple of months later, here we are at third reading with no answers, just more questions for Ontarians. What a shame. Once again the Liberals have had a chance to get it right and instead they’re using their majority to trample over municipal and individual rights.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: In the time that I have, I want to speak to a couple of issues raised by the member for Dufferin–Caledon, to tell her that we have been clear that existing laws such as the Niagara Escarpment act would continue to apply. Renewable energy projects support a long-term sustainable energy supply that benefits our natural environment, including minimizing the important effects and impacts of climate change. As she knows, our

government is committed to getting this province off the generation of electricity by dirty coal, and renewable energy projects can be consistent with the principles of the Niagara Escarpment plan. That is an endeavour which we intend to undertake, and to ensure that the protection of public health and safety and the natural environment are paramount.

During the extensive public hearings on the bill, we had an opportunity to hear from those who highlighted the importance of protecting public health and the natural environment. As a result, the government has taken a number of steps to ensure that the proposed legislation responded to what we heard. We brought forward an amendment to the proposed legislation regarding the grounds for a third party appeal before the Environmental Review Tribunal. People raised concerns with respect to the grounds specifically restricting the appeals on the basis of health concerns. As that was not our intention, we adjusted the proposed legislation accordingly.

The Ministry of the Environment is establishing regulations that will set out the requirements for setbacks and that will include wind turbines based on noise, including the minimum setback, and will examine perceptible, low-frequency noise, audible and vibration. Those are all issues that have been raised across Ontario. We believe that a science-based standard, monitored by the Ministry of Environment, is an appropriate way to protect the health of the environment, the citizens and the planet.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to congratulate my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon. As always, she has entered this chamber with a very thoughtful précis of not only the bill but her views on the legislation before us. She comes to the table with some very valid concerns on how Bill 150, the tax and power grab, will impact Ontario's municipalities.

Like the speaker before me, I also appeared at committee hearings, where we heard from several stakeholders from throughout the province, particularly in the city of Ottawa, from those in the housing market, people who are trying to sell homes, from folks who are pilots of small aircraft, from farmers who are concerned with this legislation on what it would do to prime, agricultural land. We heard concerns with health risks, criticisms from the public that, when brought up previously in this Legislature, the members opposite were very clearly unprepared to acknowledge. Those issues have not been addressed in Bill 150. Again, it is an omnibus piece of legislation, and I do not believe that adequate public consultation has been given.

My colleague from Dufferin–Caledon again speaks to the need for greater support for municipalities as a result of this legislation and what it might do. As we know from the legislation, all municipal encumbrances, condominium bylaws and any agreement on real property can be overwritten as a result of this legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I wanted to comment on the remarks of the member from Dufferin–Caledon. Although I may be taking it from a different perspective, I did have concerns as well in the act about the overriding of municipal processes for planning and zoning.

Mark Winfield—formerly of the Pembina Institute, professor in the environmental law faculty at York University—who spoke to our committee, addressed this very issue of municipal planning approvals and the need to maintain the involvement of municipalities in this, both to ensure buy-in and also because—he made the argument, and I thought he made it well—if you think you're going to set up a whole other process for permits, building inspections and assessment, you are in a situation where you may well create a much more difficult process for wind developers than you have now. He had suggested that the province send out a policy directive to municipalities that would shape the environment within which they made determinations on wind turbines or other renewable energy projects, but that the mechanism used in the act was one that would ultimately frustrate not only municipalities but renewable energy developers.

I thought his counsel on this was wise, I thought the counsel from the city of Toronto on this was wise and I thought that it was an error on the part of the government not to amend the act to reflect the policy advice that they gave, which in many ways is comparable to the comments on municipal planning made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I wanted to respond to some of the comments made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon. Specifically, as I stated in my previous two minutes, 434 megawatts are what is produced, energy from wind, in my riding of Huron–Bruce. One of the barriers that wind development has experienced is municipal bylaws that are in place with regard specifically to setbacks. If we want to see the wind development go forward, and clearly we do, we have to establish provincial standards.

We also must be aware that they must be based on science, and that is part of the Green Energy Act. We also must ensure that it covers off our health and safety concerns, which it specifically does. And there has to be public consultation with the community. That's included in this as well.

So we understand in my riding, and this is one of the things that I'd like to talk about, that we can harvest the wind. We can reap the financial security from the wind while we also harvest the crops, and the two work hand in hand, glove in glove.

That brings me to agriculture. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to tell my story about the deadstock and how it's so important. It's a part of renewables. I have one deadstock collector who is now producing biodiesel. He charges \$50 to pick up the carcasses of cattle or whatever. He takes it all across the board. He's able to do that at \$50 because he understood a number of

years ago that you must look to the future, and the future was in producing green energy. On the other hand, I have another deadstock collector who unfortunately has gone out of business now. It was \$185 for him to pick up a carcass. So we have one—Atwood is what it's called, Atwood Pet Foods—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for Dufferin–Caledon has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have no idea what the member from Huron–Bruce was trying to tie in to Bill 150, so I won't comment on it. Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Nepean–Carleton, Toronto–Danforth: Thank you for participating in the debate.

So much of the detail that municipal governments and individual Ontarians want out of Bill 150, the answers that they are looking for, cannot occur because so much of the details are being left to regulation. There is no detail on setbacks. In fact, Minister Smitherman's speculation on what the setbacks may be is actually fuelling some of the concern that is out there across Ontario.

Municipalities are clearly concerned that the Liberals are steamrolling over them with Bill 150. Thirty-five municipalities across Ontario have passed resolutions, have participated in debate at their local council level, sharing their issues with Bill 150.

What we have here today is, again, the Liberals choosing to ignore what people are asking, what they want to raise, what they want to talk about. Instead, they will use their majority and steamroll ahead and forget about opposition because it's not important: "We don't care, municipalities, how you feel or whether you want your municipality to be unique. We'll just steamroll ahead and use our majority to plow through with Bill 150." I think it's a very unfortunate situation and does not bode well for what debate in this chamber is supposed to be all about.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o'clock, I declare this House adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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