



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)**

Wednesday 13 May 2009

Mercredi 13 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

Wednesday 13 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 4, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm pleased to join in second reading debate of the government's proposed Mining Act modernization legislation. We've heard from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines on the key ways in which the proposed legislation makes advances towards benefiting all Ontarians, balancing a wide range of interests and providing clear guidelines to the minerals industry. My colleague has detailed how the proposed legislation would ensure that our Mining Act reflects the values of today's Ontario, while continuing to promote sustainable mineral development stewardship for the benefit of all Ontarians.

Certainly, as we've heard, the entire province benefits from Ontario's minerals industry. Not only does the industry generate an enormous range of employment options for Ontarians; it produces the minerals that are used in virtually every aspect of our daily lives. In the minister's review of the proposed legislation now before us he has referred to the "balanced approach," which is one of this legislation's key aims. The minister spoke of promoting balanced development and modernizing the way that mining companies stake and explore their claims. It's also more respectful of private landowners in aboriginal communities—development that balances social and economic interests.

To amend the Mining Act to achieve this balance is a very complex challenge. Fortunately, the government has been working towards proposed amendments to the legislation for some time. We have not worked in isolation.

We have been involved and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and aboriginal communities in a focused way over a period of several years, to understand how the government has arrived at this groundbreaking legislation that would first help many of our communities realize their economic and social aspirations and, second, help ensure Ontario remains one of the best places in the world for mineral exploration and mining investment.

Let me take this opportunity to provide the House with a brief review of the important initiatives, some of which the minister has touched on in his remarks, that have been undertaken for the proposed legislation before us. Our government's formal work on modernizing the Mining Act began in March 2006, when we released Ontario's mineral development strategy, a blueprint for the future of mineral development in Ontario. In fact, we could make the argument that the work began with the drafting of a mineral development strategy, providing for some of the founding elements for what we are putting forward today.

The strategy commits us to sound management, effective stewardship and responsible development of the province's mineral resources. It speaks to our concern for the environment and recognizes the need for more rigorous environmental standards. It acknowledges the need for clear rules to reduce conflicts and build collaboration at a time of increasing pressure for alternate uses of our natural resource base. And it responds to court decisions that have assisted in clarifying our obligations with respect to aboriginal treaty rights. By adopting a mineral development strategy, our government has moved to enhance the mineral sector's global competitiveness, while at the same time opening new economic opportunities for all Ontarians.

Ontario's mineral development strategy has been clear about the government's position on its obligation to consult with aboriginal peoples. It has reaffirmed our commitment to our responsibility to consult on activities related to the Mining Act.

If I could have just a minute, Mr. Speaker? The cold is really getting a bit too much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As long as you remain standing—is that okay?—the floor is yours. I'm just pleased I'm not in my place to catch that cold from you, that's all.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: You might get it yet, Mr. Speaker.

For the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, it involves continued collaboration with aboriginal peo-

ples, the minerals sector and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective consultation processes. The strategy also speaks to the need to promote positive relationships with aboriginal communities. We seek to build stronger relationships between government and aboriginal peoples and to foster partnerships between aboriginal communities and the mineral sector. Ontario's mineral development strategy reinforces principles of relationship building by promoting a climate of co-operation and involvement. Its goals are to optimize resource benefit opportunities for all people and to minimize unnecessary conflicts.

One of the first things we did to move forward on the mineral development strategy was to begin an engagement process with the aim of developing an improved aboriginal consultation approach. In February 2007, our government released a discussion paper that outlined some possible approaches toward general consultation and relationship building, as well as consultation on specific projects. At the same time, to better address duty-to-consult obligations, we said that we would consider proposing Mining Act amendments. To continue productive discussion, we posted our discussion paper on the Environmental Bill of Rights and our ministry website in English, French, Cree, Ojibway and Oji-Cree. In addition, the ministry mailed copies to all First Nations and aboriginal organizations across the province. We then embarked on a campaign of outreach to both aboriginal communities and the minerals sector. We are looking for a way to work with the aboriginal communities and the mineral sector to benefit all.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: To give our friend a bit of time, am I permitted to move my seat for a second?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Move your seat?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Or move myself to another seat?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No. Why would you want to do that? Maybe you could explain it to us.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am partial to the suffering of our colleague here, and consequently we'll just give him a minute to prepare himself for his continued speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): With the agreement of the House, we can give him—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The crisis is over.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That wasn't a point of order. The member may continue, if he chooses.

0910

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Thank you. I appreciate the intervention of my colleague. I think some better cold medication might be appropriate.

Back to the important matter before us: Throughout this outreach process, we engaged in more than 50 community-based dialogues in both northern and southern

Ontario. Our aboriginal engagement teams met with tribal councils and political territorial organizations across the province to set the stage for more in-depth discussions. We sought advice through the Northern Table's mining technical table process. We engaged our mineral sector stakeholders at regional workshops and presentations and at talks with individual companies.

Other workshops brought together aboriginal and mineral sector representatives in an effort to clarify their consultation-related challenges and to begin identifying options to manage or resolve these challenges. In addition, the engagement process provided opportunities for First Nations, Metis and other mineral sector players to highlight their successes, allowing others to learn from and build upon them.

Throughout this undertaking, we listened hard and learned some important things. For example, in our discussions with the aboriginal communities and organizations, we heard that there is no single, generic aboriginal view toward consultation, accommodation benefit sharing and capacity building. Aboriginal communities are all different—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm receiving much help.

Aboriginal communities are all different, and no single approach can encompass the needs and outlooks of the more than 100 First Nations and Metis communities in Ontario. Our dialogues taught us that communities have different perspectives and understandings of mineral exploration and development. Communities need to know that they can participate in and support these activities if they choose to do so. The advice we received in our dialogues usually reflected the individual community's level of support for mineral activity.

Some communities support mineral activity. Their concerns often focused on how they can promote business relationships with mineral sector proponents and how the ministry can best support these relationships. Other communities are less ready for mineral development. They tend to focus on the impact of exploration activities. They want to know how the government, through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, can take a leadership role in the consultation.

Communities also differ in their preferred approach to consultation and accommodation. Some are community-based in their outlook. They believe consultation, accommodation and benefit sharing should occur at the community level and the community should have the capacity to participate effectively. Others prefer a collective approach in which the tribal council or political territorial organization assumes a coordinating role. They tend to support a two-tier approach in which First Nations benefits are also shared across the larger community.

We realize that the government's aboriginal consultation framework would have to be flexible enough to accommodate all of these differences. At the same time, it would need to ensure that basic consultation requirements are always met and that investment would continue to be encouraged.

That initial process of engaging with aboriginal communities and stakeholders about the province's mineral industries prepared the government well for the extensive and comprehensive consultation we undertook to prepare for the Mining Act modernization.

I'm just going to skip to the end. The government wishes to continue with the consultation here in the Legislature, as we do across the province, and to continue to work with all our partners to ensure a bright mineral future for all Ontarians.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I extend my compliments to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, the parliamentary assistant on this day. I do think he made his points rather well in the short time he took to make them. I hope he's feeling better today by seeing a doctor; we have such a good health care system in Ontario.

However, I think I'm really more interested in listening this morning to our member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr. Miller, our member from the north, who has considered this to be an important move forward. But he does have, and I'm sure he will raise on our behalf, some well-considered concerns. We really understand the fundamental importance of the resource sector to our economy—that is not in dispute at all—and modernizing the Mining Act is certainly something that I heard from the association when we met with them earlier this year. So I commend the minister for moving forward.

As we all know, the clarity in property rights will fundamentally be an issue here that will have to be dealt with, moving forward. Those consultations that you often refer to are important. That being said, I believe that the deeper message—this is my own interpretation—on the issues of sovereignty and resource sharing for the First Nations is pivotal. In fact, you might argue that the federal government is still wrestling with that sovereignty issue. I know that's a big mouthful in terms of trying to get it right or get it perfect, but at least you're trying, and I think that commitment to dialogue, the commitment to working with, would certainly be our strategy. I won't make any disparaging remarks to some of the other issues in Ontario where there are ongoing disputes that are being ignored to some extent.

So I look forward to the remarks of our member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I'm sure we'll be much more enlightened, and our critic will bring those concerns that we have to your attention this morning.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too want to wish the member from Algoma-Manitoulin a prompt recovery to health. I can't help but notice that our member from Timmins-James Bay and I think the member from Sudbury, as well as the member from Thunder Bay, seem to suffer from the same type of bad cold. I'm happy to say that the member from Nickel Belt so far is healthy, so maybe there are some patches of health in the north. Anyway, prompt recovery there.

As far as the comments from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, he certainly went into some depth in describing the consultation that has taken place. This is certainly something that the New Democrats support. In order to bring a review to the Mining Act, a consultation needed to happen, and it did happen. It was exhaustive, and here we have the result in front of us.

I come from the riding of Nickel Belt. When people think about Sudbury, they think about mining, but you have to realize that there are no mines in Sudbury. The mines are all in Nickel Belt. There is a smelter operation in Sudbury and a mill related to the mining industry, but all of the mines really—and I could rhyme off a dozen of them—are located in Nickel Belt.

The Mining Act, we all agree, needed to be revamped to take into account much of the development and exploration that's going on in the far north and some of the issues with exploration in the south on private land. We agree that the act needed an update. There is some concern about what is being put forward.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Well, it's certainly a reflection of the dedication and determination of my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin and parliamentary assistant that he, despite not feeling well this morning, was here to make his remarks. The member for Nickel Belt is quite right: There are others who are suffering from colds as well, but northerners are tough. We just carry on. We don't give in very easily, and that's also the hallmark, may I say, of this legislation.

I am very grateful to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for outlining in particular the extensive and quite remarkable consultation process that was undertaken with the Mining Act, and I'm also grateful for my colleagues supporting that extensive consultation process. An important part of that was that, although the formal consultations in terms of the Mining Act itself began in August last year, there was a process leading up to this, particularly with our aboriginal stakeholders, to determine the best form the consultations should take. That was also part of the mineral development strategy that our ministry put together in 2006.

So this was a tremendous process. Over 100 First Nations were involved: the Métis Nation of Ontario, the political confederacy of all the First Nations leaders in the province, the mineral industry themselves and environmental groups, all working together on a very, very close basis through what has been a complicated but, I think, a very positive process.

0920

Our challenge, as I said many times, was to find the proper balance between maintaining a positive investment climate, being properly respectful of our aboriginal partners and recognizing the need to improve situations for private landholders. I think we accomplished that and I'm grateful to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for outlining that today.

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

The hardy member from Algoma–Manitoulin, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I first want to thank all the members for their advice on cold medications that I received in the interim and their best wishes for my speedy recovery. I would point out that many of us do seem to have a cold that came from northern Ontario. I don't think it's specifically about being in the north, but who knows?

This is an important piece of legislation. I appreciate the comments from the member from Durham, the member for Nickel Belt and the minister himself. It is a difficult piece of legislation which required an extensive amount of consultation with groups involved in the aboriginal communities, whether First Nations or others. It required a great deal of work with ministry stakeholders, whether they be prospectors, mining companies or junior companies, and with all Ontarians.

To get a piece of legislation that finds the correct balance between the interests of all of us is a tremendously difficult challenge for any government to undertake. I'm very proud of the consultation that the ministry did undertake throughout the entire province with all the stakeholders trying to understand the new and modern approach that we need to take to developing our mineral sector in a sustainable way. It is clearly a key to Ontario's prosperity. As I mentioned in the speech, we use minerals in virtually every product we use today, whether it be nickel from Sudbury or any of the other minerals we have—salt; you name it, we use it. We produce much of it here in Ontario. We need it and we need to have those benefits for all the people of Ontario.

Thank you to my colleagues for all their advice on cold medication.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure this morning to get an opportunity to comment on Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, 2009. I'd like to start out my comments by simply saying that I recognize and the PC Party recognizes just how important mining is to the province of Ontario. Mineral production in 2008 was some \$9.6 billion. Toronto is certainly a centre for mine financing capital: 57% of the world's mining companies are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Mining is important for development of the far north, for sure. It's one of the opportunities for economic activity in the far north. It's important for jobs in the south, as well.

I think back to just a couple years ago. I had the pleasure of touring the new mine being developed in Sudbury, the Nickel Rim mine, with our past leader, John Tory. When I was touring that mine, they had spent about \$1 billion at that stage sinking the shaft down into the ground a considerable distance, and the mine hadn't started producing yet. But when we were touring the property and looking at the various equipment being installed in the mine, it was pointed out that most of it came from southern Ontario and was produced in the Toronto area and various places in southern Ontario, whether it was

the big winches—all kinds of different pieces of equipment. There's obviously a real importance of mining for the economy of southern Ontario, not just the north and not just the far north.

Of course, mining is very important for aboriginal communities. In fact, mining is the biggest employer for aboriginal communities. It's quite significant. They're high-paying jobs and jobs that require a lot of skill, so it provides opportunity for aboriginal communities. The newly opened diamond mine in Attawapiskat is a mine that is employing many of the people in the Attawapiskat neighbourhood, and First Nations people, so that's a positive thing.

But there are also conflicts in mining. Those sorts of conflicts are, in southern Ontario, between surface property owners who don't have ownership of the mineral rights, where the crown still owns the mineral rights. There have been some conflicts, particularly in eastern Ontario. And of course there are concerns about the environmental effect of mining as well.

I note that the government has done a pretty good job of getting the major stakeholders onside in terms of supporting the provisions of this legislation. They have groups like the Ontario Mining Association, and Chris Hodgson. They have the head of the prospectors' association making positive comments about the changes proposed. They have some environmental groups supporting the legislation, and some of the aboriginal groups. Grand Chief John Beaucage, of Anishinabek First Nation, and Regional Chief Angus Toulouse were also making supportive comments.

I would say that I'm generally supportive of what is being proposed in the modernization of the Mining Act, but it is my job as the opposition to point out those that are not 100% supportive of the proposed changes, and also to make suggestions for improvement to the Mining Act. So I will try to get on the record some of the concerns that have been raised with me, as the northern development and mines critic.

It has been 100 years since the Mining Act was first introduced in this Legislature. Much of the proposed act enables processes that will be detailed in regulation, which will be developed in the next few years. Those provisions deal with map staking, prospecting licences, staking claims, regional division for claims and dispute resolution with First Nations. In other words, some major parts, pretty significant aspects of this legislation, will be decided in regulation.

We've heard about the consultation that has gone forward to this point, where they say a thousand people have been involved and many First Nations. I would say generally, from what I've heard, the consultation has been quite significant. I just say to the government that, going forward, it's probably more important, because so much of this bill is being left to regulations, that they do that same sort of open consultation in terms of the regulations. Otherwise, it could be good or it might be an absolute disaster.

Obviously, and understandably, the act was due for some changes, as times have changed. I'd like to now

look at a little bit of history. In Ontario, over the last 10 years, there have been some pretty drastic changes. Ontario was the engine of the economy of Canada 10 years ago. Now we're in last place. Ontario was first in the world for mining activity and it can no longer make that claim.

So what has changed? Well, to start with, the attitude of the government has changed. For example, under the PC government, Ontario created a positive climate for resource development. In February 1999, Northern Development and Mines Minister Tim Hudak received recommendations of the Mining Standards Task Force, a joint committee of the Ontario Securities Commission and the Toronto Stock Exchange. As a result, the PC government brought Ontario's geoscientists under a system of licensure that set out professional standards establishing a self-regulating body for geoscientists, to ensure that the information that was coming forward was accurate, reliable and reviewed by professionals.

In 2000, Ontario's mining sector contributed some \$5 billion annually to the province's economy and sustained hundreds of communities across the province, particularly in northern Ontario.

Some 40% of the world's mineral capital was raised right here in the province of Ontario. The PC government of the day brought in programs like Operation Treasure Hunt, a record investment in geophysical and geochemical survey.

In the budget for 2000, we cut the Ontario mining tax rate in half, to make it the lowest tax rate in all of Canada. For new remote mines opening up in the province, the government created a 10-year tax holiday, and then a further reduction in the tax rate after that, to spur economic investment in the area. I would say that it had a lot to do with stimulating prospecting in the far north, and it is probably why we have a diamond mine west of Attawapiskat now.

0930

As well, the PC government brought in an Ontario-focused flow-through share program to spur investment in grassroots prospecting and development, a move that spurred the federal government of the day to act on that initiative as well. These programs worked.

Let's take a look at the economic climate under the current government relative to mining. In March 2007, in the Liberal budget, Premier McGuinty announced he would impose a tax of up to 13% on profits generated by Ontario diamond mines. At that point we didn't have a diamond mine, but we had one just about ready to open. The minister has talked a lot about certainty. I agree, certainty is a good thing; certainty for companies that are going to invest billions of dollars to develop a new mine. They want to know that after they've spent the money searching for the mine, finding it, developing it and going through the process, the rules won't change. Unfortunately, the rules did change.

De Beers spent \$1 billion developing this new diamond mine west of Attawapiskat, with lots of engagement with the First Nations, impact benefit agreements,

getting ready to open the mine, and then all of a sudden the provincial government changed the rules: It tripled the tax rate. I simply say that is not fair. I know that at about that time the Ontario Mining Association was having its annual Meet the Miners reception here at Queen's Park. They feature a different company each year, and it just so happened that that year they were featuring De Beers. They had some of the beautiful diamonds, the best in the world, that come from Ontario's north, on display there, but the representatives of De Beers just could not—they were trying to be polite, but they couldn't help but criticize the government for changing the rules just as they were about to open the mine. I think that's understandable, because certainty is something that the mining industry requires.

A 2005 Fraser Institute report on investment attractiveness of mining jurisdictions states that the key problem facing mining is uncertainty. The government has consistently signalled uncertainty to the mining community, and we have seen the results. Your Mining Act review has been under way for several years now, yet this act creates only a rough framework, with the detail to be happening in regulations. Depending on which aspect of the regulations we're talking about, it will be at least a couple of more years—up to five, I would say—before the regulations are drafted, reviewed, refined and in place.

On the map staking side, we're talking about a process that will take two to five years at a minimum, and it will be particularly challenging in the far north to implement.

What is the effect of the uncertain policies and regulations created by the McGuinty government? Well, let's see. We'll go back to December 27, 2001, and I'll read a press release of the day from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

"Ontario Soars to Top Ranking as World's Best Destination for Mineral Investment"

"Ontario's hard work in support of the minerals sector has paid off in the form of a top-place finish in the Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies, Northern Development and Mines minister Dan Newman said today. Ontario shared the spotlight with Quebec for the highest rank on the institute's overall investment attractiveness index.

"I am delighted with our province's showing," said Newman. "This is a ringing endorsement from the mining industry for the Ontario government's efforts to build a favourable economic and regulatory climate that will nurture a strong, sustainable, environmentally sound minerals industry today and in the future."

"Released December 18, the Fraser Institute's fifth annual Survey of Mining Companies interviewed 162 companies to assess mining jurisdictions in Canada, the US and other countries on their mineral exploration investment attractiveness. The ranking is achieved by comparing policy, regulatory and mineral potential factors that influence investment decisions.

"Both Ontario and Quebec scored 90 points out of a possible 100 in the 2001-02 survey. The other top 10

mineral investment jurisdictions were Australia, Chile, Brazil, Nevada, Alaska, Peru, Mexico and Manitoba.

“Last year, Ontario was rated as the best jurisdiction in Canada and third in the world for mineral potential and investment attractiveness.

“Newman attributed Ontario’s improved international ranking to a series of significant policy and regulatory measures that make the province more attractive for mining and mineral exploration. Over the past six years, the government has cut taxes, initiated one of Canada’s most aggressive geoscience survey programs, funded mineral exploration research, reduced red tape and supported the activities of prospectors.

“‘These positive measures have made Ontario a great place to do mineral sector business,’ said Newman. ‘We look forward to continue working with the industry to foster economic growth and job creation in the mineral exploration sector.’”

That was back on December 27, 2001, when Ontario was the number one in the world, tied with Quebec. Quebec is still in that number one position; however, Ontario is now sadly in 10th position. First to 10th is what has happened under this government.

What are some of the other negative impacts on mining development? According to the Canadian mining association, while global mineral prices are “a primary driver of investment, it is important to note that the industry does face a number of challenges....”

“— ... a present and projected shortage of labour—skilled and unskilled....

“—Project approval times and costs are increasing and the industry faces cumbersome consultation and regulatory processes. Parallel issues, such as unresolved land claims, can add to these costs and delays.”

While the government is proposing a dispute resolution process in this legislation, there is no detail available and no idea what time lines will be attached to this process; therefore, there is still no certainty for industry to encourage further investment.

I can tell you that in getting ready to speak today, I called the president of one of the major companies based here in Toronto—I won’t name it—to get their feelings about the Mining Act, and they gave me some input. They also said they are investing in countries other than Canada right now. They pointed out to me that they just developed a mine in Russia. You’d think Russia wouldn’t be the most stable place to invest; however, this president pointed out that they are looking for investment, and it took them three years to go from prospect to actually having an operating mine in Russia, whereas it takes about 10 years here.

The other point this president brought up with me was the tax rates for investment in mining in Canada not being as competitive, and I’ll get to that in a second.

While several other variables affect the competitiveness of an investment regime, members of the Mining Association of Canada identified three as being particularly important:

“Tax Policies

“Government tax policies should support a competitive and internationally active industry.”

When you combine provincial and federal taxes in Ontario, we are less competitive than Brazil and Chile, who are two of our major international competitors for mining investment.

“Investment in Infrastructure....”

Ports, railways, highways and international bridges are required to be able to “reach global markets with competitively priced” goods.

“In rail services, for example, the industry contributes a significant percentage of the freight revenues of CN and CP each year. These two railroads enjoy a monopoly position in many regions and it is therefore very important that rail services be efficient and fairly priced.”

In northern Ontario, “there is also a need for increased investment in transportation infrastructure to support economic development.... There is considerable mining potential in northern” Ontario, “where the interest of analysts and investors can be affected by the efficiency with which products can be moved in and out of prospective mine sites.”

Their third concern: “Efficiency and Effectiveness of Canadian regulations

“In proposing projects, Canadian mining companies and domestic and foreign investors depend on” all levels of government “for a clear understanding of information requirements, approval processes, timetables and responsibilities.”

Once again, this comes back to certainty, which I know the minister has spoken about.

Let’s delve a little deeper into the issue of regulations. In Ontario, we already have examples of this government creating regulatory challenges. We need only to go back to the Endangered Species Act. I at that point was the Ministry of Natural Resources critic and did get to have input to that.

Throughout the legislative process, the Minister of Natural Resources and his government promised to recognize the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and honour the forest management plans that are Ontario’s platinum standard and recognized as one of the most rigorous forest management frameworks in the world. I believe the minister was surprised when the government broke its word on that, because section 55 of the Endangered Species Act was not an exemption from forest sector responsibilities to protect species at risk or their habitat; it was an exemption from duplication of process. But this government didn’t care about breaking its promise to the forestry sector or the 230,000 working families that depend upon it. As the Ontario Forest Industry Association president and CEO Jamie Lim points out, this government instead moved to create a crippling process that further brought the forest industry to its knees.

0940

This is just another situation where the devil is in the details and where we have to trust the government to keep its word, because much of what this current Mining Act is about is going to be in the regulations. Frankly,

based on the track record to do with the Endangered Species Act, I just don't trust the government.

One of the changes proposed in the new Mining Act is a switch from ground staking, where you're physically on the ground, to map staking, where the staking is basically done from an office, based on a computer. That's the way many jurisdictions are going. Just to explain traditional staking, I at one point in my life did actually hold a prospector's licence. That was back in 1980, when—

Hon. Michael Gravelle: You were a child.

Mr. Norm Miller:—the minister says I was a child; yes, thank you for that—but when my good friend John Moses happened to be interested in prospecting and he needed another person to help him stake some claims. So in April 1980, I got my prospector's licence. There were a group of claims that were lapsing and coming open on April 1, 1980, I believe it was. So I was out in the bush at about 5 in the morning, ready for when they came open at 6:01 on April 1. I had snowshoes and had snowshoed out, and actually staked six claims for my friend and then promptly signed them over to him afterwards.

But the ground staking process is such that you physically go on the ground. So as I say, in this case I snowshoed out into the bush. Each claim is a quarter-mile-square claim. As I recall, and I might have the corner wrong, you have to cut down a tree on the northeast corner of the claim, I think it is, and you square it off and put your brass prospector plate on. You write your name on it with your prospector's licence and the times; it was like 6:15 a.m. on April 1. The six I did that day were staked by me. That's the way ground staking works: You physically have to go out on the ground and do the staking. And then, to keep the claim up, you have to do a fair amount of line cutting, marking the boundaries of the quarter-mile-square claim and other work, or it would lapse, as these claims had lapsed.

So the proposed change is to go to map staking, and I think there are prospectors, certainly, who have concerns about that. I'll try to get some of their concerns on the record.

I would like to share some comments from an ad hoc committee that was formed by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. They point out that map staking will have a negative impact on stakers and line cutters. Fees for recording map stake claims will go to general revenue, with no benefit to either local stakers, communities or the mines ministry.

They point out that there are important benefits of physical staking in unsurveyed country, such as that there are usually claim lines and posts to enable one to find the claim. In areas of continuing exploration activity, many people earn a significant part of their income by staking claims. These people are also usually involved in the exploration sector at other stages, such as line cutting and prospecting. If they were to lose that part of their income earned by staking, they might get out of the industry entirely.

Map staking is much less conducive to identifying potential environmental hazards on the ground, and there-

fore the likelihood of acquiring a property with a potential environmental problem is increased, because with map staking, as I mentioned, as we move to that, you do that in your office via computer. You're not actually physically out there on the ground.

Ground staking puts people on the ground who establish a physical boundary and often gain valuable information about the geology, ground conditions etc. Ground staking also puts a constraint on the acquisition of huge tracts of land by one party. Map staking, the new proposed type of staking, can sterilize a large area very quickly, leaving most of the ground unexplored, but held by the transfer of work from small, key areas. Those are some concerns that were expressed by stakeholders, prospectors—and I do have some other prospectors that I will get to in just a second.

Other stakeholders: As I mentioned, there aren't a number of First Nations that support the proposed changes to the bill. The Nishnawbe Aski Nation has some concerns. I note that Stan Beardy, the Grand Chief, has issued a statement, and I would like to get that on the record.

“Grand Chief Stan Beardy acknowledges the attempts the government of Ontario has made to address First Nations concerns over mining in the Mining Act amendment bill introduced by the government of Ontario today, but is very concerned that the legislation might not fully recognize the rights of First Nations to decide on mining in NAN territory.

“Our primary concern is that NAN First Nations must have free, prior and informed consent before any activity can take place in their homelands,” said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. “That's the standard expressed in article 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that's the standard we expect Ontario to meet.”

“Some key areas NAN First Nations want addressed in the amended legislation include:

“(1) Free prior informed consent: No prospecting, staking, exploration or mine development will proceed without a written agreement in place, at the discretion of the First Nation.

“(2) Participation in regulations: All regulations under the new act must be made in consultation with First Nations in a government-to-government relationship.

“(3) Spirit and intent of the treaties (No. 9 and No. 5): These agreements to live and work together will be recognized by any person exercising authority under the act.

“(4) Environmental standards: The land, water, air and all living things must be protected—by the highest environmental standards with all exploration and development projects subject to the scrutiny of environmental assessments.

“(5) Dispute resolution: An independent dispute resolution mechanism involving NAN Nation communities that respects the values and laws of First Nations people.

“(6) Funding and capacity: A firm commitment to funding and technical resources to engage and respond to the project assessment process.

“(7) Land use planning: An assurance that new legislation does not pre-empt the current process, that land use plans take precedence over mining rights, and clear indication that land use plans will be respected, and will not be trumped by mining tenure.

“(8) Map staking and land designations: A commitment that consultation and accommodation obligations will be met and that capacity and technology will be provided to First Nations who want to participate.

“NAN has requested a commitment from the government of Ontario to a process that will see more meaningful participation by First Nations during the regulation and policy stages; detailed work that will be conducted following the implementation of the Mining Act amendment bill.

“‘The government of Ontario did not allow enough time to conduct meaningful consultation with NAN First Nations in the development of this legislation,’ said Beardy. ‘We will continue to insist upon a mechanism through which NAN First Nations will be consulted and will have meaningful input into the decision-making process.’

“‘We have a sacred responsibility to future generations to secure the protection of our homelands, which has been the basis of the survival of the people of Nishnawbe Aski for generations,’ said Beardy. ‘It is critical that any development of natural resources in the far north must respect aboriginal and treaty rights while supporting an environmentally sustainable economic future for our people.’

“Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5—an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.”

Mr. Beardy’s speaking for the First Nations in a significant land mass part of Ontario, so I do think his concerns are to be noted.

As a sidebar, I had the pleasure of going with Grand Chief Stan Beardy on a flight late last August, once again, with our past leader John Tory. We visited Fort Severn, which is up on the Hudson Bay coast. As well, on the return trip—we had chartered a plane out of Thunder Bay to make this trip—we visited Webequie. I mention Webequie because, I guess, it’s a community that’s doing very well, and mining is making a real difference in the welfare of that community. They’re in the midst of what’s called “the ring of fire,” so there is all sorts of economic activity, diamond drilling, going on in the area surrounding Webequie. The chief was Scott Jacob. I understand that he wasn’t successful in the last election, but he was the chief who was there when I toured last fall. I think they have a joint venture with a diamond drilling company called Cyr, and it’s really providing some benefits for that community. It’s an example of how mining can benefit First Nations communities, but obviously they do have concerns.

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As I mentioned, John Beaucage from the Union of Ontario Indians called the legislation historic for marking

a new way of doing things. He went on to say, “However, we have to move beyond basic consultation towards engagement and signing of impact benefit agreements between mining companies and First Nations.”

I have spoken with some individual prospectors, as well, who have outlined their specific concerns. I spoke with Bill MacRae up in Timmins recently and he outlined—these are second-hand, so I hope I get his concerns correct.

He had concerns about provisions in the bill that allow companies to pay money instead of doing assessment work after a claim is staked. For example, after a claim is staked by a prospector in the future via map staking, there’s currently a requirement to maintain that claim; that you have to do certain work, whether it’s line cutting or geophysical work. The bill will change that, where a company will just be able to pay money to maintain that claim. The money would go to the government, so obviously the government benefits. But that’s money that’s not going into work on the ground, so the prospectors won’t be benefiting from it, plus you aren’t getting the benefit of the work that would be done on the ground. He has concerns about that. He would like to make sure that the value is set high enough that there’s still incentive to actually do the work versus just paying the fee.

He had concerns about the exploration permits, because there’s going to be this new process put in place that, as more work is done, you require more complex permits. To do with flexibility, the example he gave me was if the permits and the plan you have to put forward is very detailed in terms of exactly where you’re going to do diamond drilling, it could actually be negative, in that you might drill the first hole and have a very significant ore intersection and that would change where you want to do the next three or four holes, and if your plan is so restrictive that you can’t make that change, he had concerns about that.

He also had concerns about uncertainty being created, wondering about timelines, wondering about whether the First Nations would have the capacity to deal with the new consultation requirements.

His fourth concern was just around the uncertainty in the period from when the bill passes, which I expect will be in the fall session of the Legislature, through to the point when all the regulations are actually finalized, which could be a couple of years at best and could indeed be longer—but I would expect it’s going to be a couple of years.

Finally, the request that was made to me was that when this bill goes to committee, which I expect is going to be some time over the summer, places in the north be on the map, included for destinations for the committee to hold hearings. He very specifically said that Timmins should be a place where committee hearings are held, and I would think that Sudbury would be a natural spot as well.

I also had a number of suggestions that were passed on to me by another prospector, and I will try to outline some of those concerns as best I can. They had concerns

about the prospector licence. There's going to be a requirement in this bill for awareness training. He said that the reaction they had at their prospectors' meeting was that a lot of the prospectors thought they were going to quit prospecting if they had to do an awareness training course. So I would simply say that the way this is implemented might be critical, so that we don't lose prospectors in this province, for one thing. I would suggest that perhaps some of the prospectors who have been prospecting a long time might be grandfathered, or that they come up with a method where—he suggested that you mail out the course or requirements to all of the prospectors and perhaps they can do a self-paced course.

I'm a pilot, and in flying you have to maintain currency. The Canadian Owners and Pilots' Association mails out to people the required re-currency training course, which you can complete in your own time and then keep in your logbook to show that you've done the currency training. Perhaps that would be a way of getting compliance for the prospectors out there.

The new section of the bill to do with surface rights—it was just expressed to me from the prospector. They don't like it, but it's not too big a deal for them. They do have concerns with cash in lieu of work, as I previously mentioned from the other prospector I was speaking with. On the map staking question, they actually had a vote amongst the prospector association and the majority of the prospectors voted that they preferred ground staking to map-staking. They're concerned about employment and want a level playing field, and there certainly are mixed feelings about that. They've brought up the director of exploration who's being proposed and simply said, "He'd better know his stuff."

Advanced exploration: They felt that it should be the government's responsibility to consult with First Nations and not the individual companies. It was pointed out to me that there is a model in Quebec where they actually have revenue resource sharing for First Nations based on mining activity. This actually incents the First Nations to want to have mining happening and encourages them to be involved and also encourages a time line, I guess you would say, through that model. It was pointed out to me from the prospector that if he's looking at doing something in a given area, there might be six different First Nations that he'd have to consult with and it's a very difficult process.

Those were some of the concerns expressed to me from a particular prospector. Sorry; to go on a little bit more—the powers of the inspector. They don't like the section where—and I will read this section:

"158(1) For the purpose of carrying out his or her powers and duties under this act, an inspector may, without warrant, at any reasonable time, gather information and make inspections and inquiries and, in the exercise of that authority, may,

"(a) enter into or onto any place, mining lands or other lands or premises connected or associated with any staking, exploration activity, mine, advanced exploration project, abandoned mine or mine hazard, other than a room or place actually used as a dwelling;

"(b) make such inspections, examinations, inquiries, tests or photographic or other record considered necessary in carrying out his or her duties...."

It's the "without warrant" part which I think they don't like. He did raise in conversation with me just the general attitude of government inspectors. I've certainly raised this—not just connected with the Mining Act—but how I feel that we in this province need to change the attitude of inspectors so they aren't so much just the police but they're actually assisting people and businesses to meet the regulations versus only being the police. I think we need to, as I've said in the past, make the rules clear, educate the people that they're going to affect and then have our inspectors actually provide some assistance to meet those rules versus the attitude of just coming down hard with a hammer and being the police.

On the far north planning section, where there is a plan in this act to have community-based land use planning, the concern expressed by the prospectors was that this may take many years. They're just concerned about timelines and how long it will take to actually be put in place.

Another noteworthy stakeholder: The Canadian Mining Journal's online poll gives an insight into other stakeholder reaction. Only 5% of poll participants wholeheartedly support the proposed changes to the Ontario Mining Act, 41% support a few of the changes, and 41% don't support the legislation at all.

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There's another group that is looking for changes on the other side of the spectrum and that is the Coalition for Balanced Mining Act Reform. Dave Gill, whom I spoke with the other day, sent me information which I—it looks like I should have time, hopefully, to get onto the record. I'll read what they're saying:

"The Act to Amend the Mining Act of Ontario, Ontario's Bill 173 to amend the Mining Act is both unbalanced and unjust.

"The proposals that Minister Michael Gravelle has made to change Ontario's Mining Act will not bring Ontario's Mining Act into balance with other policies and priorities; with other legislation of the province, and with the rights and needs of the citizens of the province. Bill 173 fails to respect even the most basic requirements of equality, fairness and justice, and it will not bring peace to the province on mining matters. The Coalition for Balanced Mining Act Reform ... is a broad coalition of citizens' groups, environmental authorities and municipal governments that has made three modest proposals to bring mining into balance with the rights and needs of Ontarians and with other priorities and policies of the province and its citizens.

"Those three modest proposals call on the government to overcome the serious negative effects that are caused by Ontario's overly permissive mining legislation by:

"(1) protecting all private landowners—equally;

"(2) allowing municipal planning procedures to determine where mining activities can take place with their local communities; and

“(3) requiring all mineral exploration activities to undergo a comprehensive impact analysis before the work is done, and to preclude mining activities if that analysis shows that the work will damage the environment or the economy or harm the rights, the health, the investments, or the jobs of other citizens of the province.

“Not one of those essential requirements is met by Bill 173.

“Thus the bill would continue to allow mining activities to cause immense damage: it would not bring mining into balance; and it would not stop the conflicts caused by mining legislation that is overwhelmingly biased towards the interests of mining firms. Instead, the bill proposes to make a few trivial changes, for example by requiring some consultation with some groups, by preventing claim staking on some private lands, and by requiring prospectors to take some ‘awareness training’ before they can enter onto public and private land, lay claim to the minerals, and proceed with invasive exploration activities including cutting the trees, and doing exploratory trenching and drilling.”

He goes on, but obviously those three provisions are the key ones that the Coalition for Balanced Mining Act Reform are concerned about. To demonstrate why there is not unanimous support for the bill and for the process we go through, it will be important that they too get a chance to come to committee and make their suggestions known about this bill.

In the limited time I have left: It’s obvious in the bill that the regulations are going to be critical. I would just like to go through a few more aspects of it.

Certainly, as it was pointed out, there was a lot of consultation in the drafting of the bill. I give the government credit for that. They had 1,000 people participate in public and stakeholder consultations and 200 written responses, and the feedback I have is that that was positive. But as I mentioned, so many of the details are going to be in the regulations that it’s very important that that process continues.

Just to highlight some aspects of the bill: There’s going to be map staking introduced; I’ve already talked about that. There’s going to be a graduated regulatory approach for exploration activity. There’s recognition of aboriginal treaty rights. There’s a dispute resolution process as it regards to aboriginal concerns. Although, when I was being briefed on the bill and I asked specifically about the distribute resolution process, asking how it was going to work, I was more or less told, “We’re not quite sure yet. We’re going to figure that out over the next couple of years.” That’s a pretty significant part of the bill that needs to be worked out, and that’s why I keep coming back to regulations.

The bill deals with a mainly southern Ontario problem or situation: the conflict of private right interests relating to mining development and mineral rights versus surface rights. It also changes land use planning in Ontario’s far north so that community-based land use planning will be required.

Maybe I’ll go to the surface rights versus mining rights part of it. It’s interesting that in this bill there are

going to be different rules for southern Ontario versus northern Ontario. The boundaries of the south versus the north that are being used for this particular legislation are the French River, Lake Nipissing and Mattawa River. North of that is northern Ontario and south of that is southern Ontario. It’s interesting that, speaking for my own riding’s sake, Parry Sound is in the north for most northern programs but it isn’t in the north in terms of the new Mining Act.

This relates mainly to the conflict of private surface rights versus crown mineral rights, because in the south the conflict has been, particularly in eastern Ontario, where cottage owners, for example, think they own all the property, including mineral rights, but discover after a claim is being staked that they actually don’t. So in this bill, in southern Ontario the mining rights that are owned by the crown would be withdrawn from mineral staking automatically. That is in the case where there is not an existing claim, or if a claim lapses, then it will be withdrawn automatically. In northern Ontario, it’s kind of the reverse of that. In northern Ontario, owners would be able to apply to the minister for an order to withdraw the mining rights from staking. I think that will be positively looked at by those people caught in the situation in southern Ontario where they didn’t realize that they don’t own the mineral rights and where they find that they’re in the midst of a mining claim. It’s not so much an issue in northern Ontario where there’s just a lot less development.

The far north land use planning that’s going to be required in this bill: I view that positively from the perspective of what the McGuinty government has said, that they’re not going to allow any development in the boreal forest. They will allow mining in the far north if there’s land use planning going forward, and I assume community land use planning. I assume that the First Nations will be the drivers of that community land use planning, and I view that as a positive way for the communities to benefit from economic development and the possibility of a mine being created, and them having some say over it as well. I think that is positive as long as, in all this, the process that’s being put in with the permits etc.—as long as there are significant timelines so that it doesn’t just become a very, very long process which will create uncertainty in development. I think community land use planning can be a positive thing. It can be positive for those far north communities.

I know there are other provisions and I’m going to take some time to try to talk about them also. Another provision of this bill, and I know it was raised by Chris Hodgson, the president of the Ontario Mining Association, is the fact that the penalties for non-compliance have changed significantly, so there’s now actually a part of it which is an imprisonment clause for a couple of violations of the act. It was stated to me that that would certainly get the company’s attention and that they would want to be in compliance with the laws so that they are not obviously faced with that prospect of prison time. That is another significant change in the bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: The minister was saying something I didn't quite catch.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to be able to comment—

Mr. Norm Miller: He wants to be able to comment. Okay. Well, I look forward to that, because I'm just about out of time.

I will wrap up, then. There are some other specific, smaller details that I did want to mention, but I'll give the minister an opportunity to comment. I would simply reiterate that regulations are going to be key to this. It could be a disaster or it could be positive, depending on how those regulations are implemented. Full consultation on that going forward will be important and we look forward to significant committee hearings travelling around the province, particularly in the north, and real input from those committee hearings.

With that, I will conclude my comments.

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

Mr^{me} France Gélinas: It was most interesting to listen this morning to comments on the changes to the Mining Amendment Act. Certainly the member was able to touch on some of the core and key issues of what the bill is trying to do. The bill is trying to bring a level of certainty when dealing with exploration, or any other mining activity, on traditional First Nations land.

His reading into the record of the letter that Chief Beardy from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation sent, following the release of the bill, speaks volumes. The First Nations want to see amendments to the act. They want to see certainty for them for revenue sharing when there is mining exploration and mining activity going on in their territories. They also want to see land use planning. The bill does not go into any certainty on those critical aspects for First Nations.

He also talked about another area of the bill that is very contentious, which is this great south-north divide, where a different set of rules will apply to land use in southern Ontario versus northern Ontario. For him especially, it's sort of interesting that he's not in the north anymore and is now part of the south. So certainly this is something that I will be going into in further detail when it's my turn to talk about the bill.

Generally, there is a consensus out there that the Mining Act needs to be revamped. The actors have been identified. Not all of them are happy.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I do want to compliment the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, the critic for our ministry. Certainly he put a lot of effort into the comments, and I appreciate them.

But I do think, when you look at the large extent of his remarks in terms of outlining some of the concerns expressed by various stakeholders and interested people, it only shows us what a challenge it is to find the balance. That's what it really does reflect, in a very clear way. So

indeed, I appreciate it, and I will follow up specifically on some of the cases or issues he mentioned, because I think we can clarify those rather quickly.

But you're certainly right about the drafting of the regulations. They are going to be a lot of work, and they are very significant. I must say that we don't anticipate them taking nearly the amount of time that you suggested they will. We also believe that as we go through certain aspects of it, they will become part of the act immediately. In other words, we'll do it in sections. But our goal is to move forward on this in a good way.

And may I say we are very committed to having the process of drafting of regulations be a consultation process as well. We've made a very clear commitment—in fact, a written commitment—to our aboriginal stakeholders, that they indeed will be part of that process. I was speaking earlier this morning at a mining industry breakfast and made the same comments and commitment to them.

I think that the important thing is that we are now, generally speaking, on a very positive track. Despite some of the concerns—I wish I had more time to talk about the map-staking issue, because I think that there are some very positive ways of looking at the process as we move forward.

Thank you very much. I appreciate your comments, as I do those from all the members. We're going to work very closely and together on this as we move forward in the process of drafting the regulations. I recognize how important it is. Again, I look forward to working with all my colleagues in the House.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to, and in fact I had to leave the room and watch, the remarks by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. It's reassuring to see that both the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the parliamentary assistant are here this morning to take note of the comments and observations made by Mr. Miller, because I know that he also takes the time to try and find that balance.

We, on the one side, are completely in support not just of modernizing and improving, if you will, the relationship component of this legislation, with all the stakeholders, but also of getting it right. We remain very concerned, as Mr. Miller pointed out, about the regulations. The devil is in the details, and this is where we're troubled. The history here, working not with this particular minister but with other ministries—I think of the Ministry of the Environment in the regulations with respect to the cosmetic pesticide act, which was sort of bumping up against the federal PMRA, the pesticide management regulatory authority. So we have the province, on the one hand, making up these fancy regulations which really don't work, from my understanding, in many cases, with the federal agency which regulates what comes into and out of the country and between jurisdictions. So we want to get the regulations proper and correct.

But I always think of the simple things in terms of that challenging of the balance. I think the comments made with respect to the stability are also important. When there's heavy investment—and we know the case of the Attawapiskat diamond mine and changing the rules in the middle of the game, adding a new tax or some regulatory burden or secondary oversight—I remain concerned that this does not provide the stable framework that a long-term investment relationship requires to, again, bring Ontario from 10th back to first place.

That's what we're looking for: the right rules at the right time in the right place, to make Ontario the best place to do business and create jobs and wealth.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I was interested to hear my colleague from the Conservative Party, and I was particularly interested to hear him read from the statements of NAN First Nations and point out that while the government was patting itself on the back when it held its press conference here at Queen's Park and when it introduced the legislation here at Queen's Park, it was very clear that where the majority of mining exploration is taking place in Ontario and where the majority of mining interests in Ontario exist, the very people who live there, NAN First Nations and their political representatives, were not at the press conference. In fact, they issued a statement to the media indicating their dissatisfaction, indicating their disappointment.

I think that's a very salient point that my colleague from the Conservative Party has pointed out for the government, because I think we need to be clear: The mining interest isn't in Toronto; the mining interest isn't in Hamilton; the mining interest isn't in London. The mining interest is north of the 51st parallel in northern Ontario. The mining interest is in a part of Ontario where the vast majority of people who live there belong to the NAN First Nations. I think it is very telling that not only did the legislation that has been presented not satisfy NAN First Nations; it very much disappointed NAN First Nations. I'll have more to say on that in a moment.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the members from Nickel Belt, Kenora–Rainy River and Durham for their comments.

I would like to, in my couple of minutes here—one aspect of the bill I didn't really talk about too much is that they're bringing in a graduated regulatory approach for exploration so that plans will be required for low-impact exploration, and permits for higher-impact exploration. I say, as with other aspects of the bill, this could be a good thing if it's done in a reasonable timeline and adds certainty, or it could be a negative thing if it becomes mired in bureaucracy and is a very slow process. So that's another example of how the regulations will be so important.

The point the member from Kenora–Rainy River makes certainly is important, that two thirds of the land mass of the province is under the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Grand Chief Stan Beardy, who have an interest in it, certainly. They are not completely in favour of the proposed changes, so that's obviously an important consideration.

Although the member from Kenora–Rainy River said mining is very important to the north—and obviously it is—as I pointed out in my speech, it's also very important for southern Ontario, where so much of the equipment is manufactured to be used in the mines that are created from the exploration. So mining is very important for all of Ontario, and that's why it's so important that this bill be done in a positive fashion and be good legislation that does work so that that healthy mining industry can go forward and be successful in the province.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1020 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like to introduce the family of page Timothy Swampillai. They're in the east gallery: his dad, Bruno; his mom, Jenita; his sister, Preyanka; and his brother, Jason.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce, visiting from Thunder Bay and the GTA for page Emily Sellner from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan: her mother, Lori Marshall; grandparents Joanne and Bob Boyce; and Mary, Dirk and David Becker, aunt, uncle and cousin, along with Andy Griggs, their uncle, sitting up in the Speaker's gallery.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery from the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham we have Mohan Pandit.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure for me today to introduce the parents of Cameron Tomlinson in the west gallery: Scott, Christine and Madison. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to introduce Dominic Pasqualino, who is here from Thunder Bay in the east members' gallery.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my great pleasure to introduce Albert and Eileen Schwartz from the riding of Willowdale—very distinguished citizens in Willowdale. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'd like to introduce William Hennessy and Shawn Boudreau, two students from Trent University completing their Bachelor of Education program this week.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Today I'm delighted to have with us Wilma Jeffray, who's the chair of Ontario Pork and an Ontario pork producer. Along with her is Mary-Ann Hendrikx, who is the vice-chair of Ontario Pork. They are here today because they are hosting a

luncheon. It's entitled "Put Ontario Pork on Your Fork" and it's to raise consumer awareness about the safe and high-quality pork products we have here in Ontario. All members of the assembly are invited to room 247 today from 11:30 till 1:30 for a pork luncheon.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the pleasure to introduce to you the director of the North America division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, Mrs. Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, and the consul general, Mr. Jorge Soberón.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thank you for this opportunity on a point of order. I'm very happy to present to the Premier of Ontario the jersey of the Windsor Spitfires, the Ontario Hockey League champs. On behalf of Dwight Duncan and myself, both representing this great riding and this great team, the Ontario champs—they're headed to Rimouski for the Memorial Cup and a very special presentation of the Premier of Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to welcome, from Ontario Health Food Awareness Day, three people I spoke with: Franco Salituro, as well as John Ferris and David Freeman, who are with us today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome a co-op student from Unionville High School, Sin Logaranthan, to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to welcome students from Regina Mundi secondary school in my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London who will be in the Speaker's gallery later this morning.

ANNIVERSARY OF LEGISLATIVE STAFF

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I also would like to take this opportunity to ask all members of the House to congratulate Gloria Richards, the Speaker's apartment coordinator, who today celebrates her 35th anniversary of service to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Congratulations, Gloria.

This is a reminder to all members that today at 12:30, in rooms 228 and 230, there will be a members' pension information session. I would encourage all members to be in attendance.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the 2008 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. Premier, an FOI request which was filed by the

official opposition reveals that between 2003 and 2008, the Smart Systems for Health Agency spent at least 26 million tax dollars on consultants' fees. This is the agency the Premier quietly reorganized, I guess, last year, after it had wasted 647 million tax dollars, the agency the Premier apparently doesn't want the Auditor General to investigate.

Premier, can you explain why the Smart Systems for Health Agency relied so heavily on consultants despite the fact that, according to a Toronto Sun article, it had 166 staffers earning over \$100,000 a year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question, because our government is committed to modernizing Ontario's health system by harnessing the power of information technology to improve safety, quality and access to care. E-health requires expertise from some very highly technical individuals to develop and implement these kinds of projects and objectives. There is, I acknowledge, a high cost to attract the kind of talent that we need to make these projects a reality.

I just want to put it into some context for the member opposite. President Obama and the US government have identified a sum of some \$50 billion over the course of the next five years to be able to deliver electronic health records for all citizens in the United States. When you put it in that context and you look at the investments that we're making and at the results that we've achieved—I disagree, by the way, with the premise of many of the elements of the—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, I don't know about you, but I didn't hear anything in that response that related to my question with respect to waste. In the 2007 election campaign, when the Premier was asked about reducing taxes, he responded, "No, I need that money." I think maybe the actions of this agency that your government has had the responsibility for, for—what?—six years now, is a pretty clear indicator of why you always need more taxpayers' dollars: to feed your inept oversight of agencies and ministries within this government. This is an agency that spent \$373,000 on lavish catering and \$1.7 million on travel.

Minister, this morning in a scrum, your Premier said that we need to ensure "that we get value for money." That's exactly what we're asking you to do. If you and your colleagues truly believe that and you support what your Premier said in the scrum today, why will you not call in the Auditor General?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, my predecessor did even better and ordered an operational review of Smart Systems for Health, which yielded important information. In fact, I took very quick action to ensure that we have a new agency, led by president and CEO Sarah Kramer and chaired by Dr. Alan Hudson, that is very much on track and on target to deliver, as we have indicated, an electronic health record for all diabetic patients within the province of Ontario by 2012.

Just yesterday, I had the opportunity to be at the University Health Network to talk about the next move as far as an e-prescribing system for the province of Ontario. We have two pilot projects, one in Collingwood and one in Sault Ste. Marie, working incredibly well, yielding good information in their first few weeks alone.

As well, the member says that nothing was yielded, but 7,000 secured network sites: all hospital sites, public health units, satellite offices, family health teams and other physicians, continuing care agencies—

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

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Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, I guess we can't assume anything with this government. The minister should be aware that in his health Results-based Plan Briefing Book it says, "Ontarians are entitled to know what they are getting for their money.... The government will not spend where measurable results are not evident." That's on page 2, if you care to look it up. Your Premier preaches transparency, but as in so many other areas, his actions are quite different from the words. He's refusing, and you're refusing, to open the books on this agency to the Auditor General. I think taxpayers have a right to be concerned with respect to millions of their hard-earned dollars still being spent on fees, flights, food and hotels for consultants—an organization that already has a staff with 166 of them making over \$100,000 a year.

Minister, I ask you once again: Do you have a fundamental problem with opening this agency up for review by the Auditor General, to let the taxpayers know where their money is being spent?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the information that the member presents to this House, some of which is correct and some of which is not, was the result of a freedom-of-information request by the official opposition. Of course that information is public, and we do want Ontarians to know the hard work that this agency is doing in order to deliver electronic health records—a transformative strategy to be able to link physicians, pharmacists, nurses, dietitians and many other health professionals with consumers themselves, to be able to manage their health care, to be able to transform health care.

Ask a mother in Sioux Lookout if she sees the value in being able to get advice from a specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children without having to travel to Toronto. Ask a doctor in London in an emergency department if she sees the value of being able to look up the medication list of a confused or elderly patient who can't tell her what drugs she's taking. Ask the librarian with failing sight in Ottawa if she sees the value in wait times information—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier. As you know, and we all know, the Victoria Day weekend is almost upon us—the unofficial launch of vacation

season. It's intended to be a weekend of relaxation and fun for Ontario families: camping, cottaging, boating and fishing with friends and family, and relaxing at home. I suspect that most families in this province are unaware, as the Premier suggested a week or two ago, of the heavy costs lying ahead for them when they plan future vacations. The government has been anxious to hide the real reach and extent of damage of the new McGuinty sales tax grab coming into effect July 1 of next year. We know it's going to cost Ontarians more money for an unending list of things they'll be using and doing on future Victoria Day weekends.

I ask the Premier, if you're so certain that increasing taxes on Ontarians is the right thing to do, why are you so committed to withholding the truth about the reach and cost of this massive tax hike?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, Ontario needs a tax transformation that includes major tax cuts for families, businesses and small businesses. We're working with the tourism industry, providing additional funds as we transition to the new single sales tax. The times call on us to take bold measures, balanced measures that reduce the overall tax burden for all Ontarians. We are confident this is the right course of action to take. It will help Ontario get through this downturn, and when we get through it, our economy will grow faster and become bigger and stronger than when we went into it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Since this is clearly a day of rest for the Premier, he won't need a long weekend. I'll go back to the minister. The Premier and his minister want to keep the facts hidden from view, and I'll just go over a few of the long weekend vacation items that will be hit with your new 8% massive McGuinty tax: rest stops for coffee and doughnuts, gasoline, campsites, firewood, boat rentals, dock slip rentals, boat launching, fishing licences and fishing charters, golf fees, air travel, train fares, boat cruises, even postage stamps for our grandparents who want to send a postcard home—all taxed by Dalton McGuinty. Minister, try to fill us in on what I've missed. Do you or any of your colleagues have any appreciation of just how damaging your new sales tax will be to struggling Ontario families who want to take a break from the stress on a long weekend?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What the member missed is a large personal tax cut, he missed a large corporate tax cut, and he missed a large small business tax cut, all of which will mean that when the entire tax reform package is implemented, Ontario will have a more competitive tax system and 93% of Ontarians will pay less in overall taxes. We'll have a more efficient tax system, one that will help this economy grow in the future.

I say to the member opposite, if he and his party feel that strongly, are they going to undo all of this in two years' time, in spite of what they've said up until now?

This is a tax reform package that benefits all Ontarians and will create jobs in the long term.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, I don't know about you, but that sounded like an admission of defeat. We're ready to take over right now and deal with this issue.

A couple of organizations: Camping in Ontario is a group representing 67,000 campsites in the province. It says that the new McGuinty sales tax "would see most camping-related fees increase by 8%," and that "our members could potentially see a decrease in business as consumers decide they can't afford an 8% increase in their camping costs."

From the Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario website: "The move to a harmonized tax will result in a significant tax increase to our guests."

Minister, you're ignoring the concerns of groups who know the tourism industry and the importance of advocating for consumers. Your new massive tax grab is putting jobs at risk in a tough economy and punishing vacationing families. Once again, I ask you, why have you—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Businesses will save costs as a result of a single sales tax, and I have confidence that those businesses will pass those savings on to consumers.

What I find particularly interesting—the member opposite said just a month ago, speaking of a harmonized sales tax, "In principle, we think it's something that should occur." That's Bob Runciman on March 25, 2009.

The next day—he had 24 hours to think about it—he said, "We've supported the principle of harmonization." That's Bob Runciman, again.

The times call for decisive action. The times call for a plan that will make the Ontario economy more competitive. We've offered that plan. It's the right plan. It will create jobs, improve the economy and help Ontario grow to become bigger—

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

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's to the Premier. As this government asks auto workers to make unprecedented sacrifices to keep companies like GM and Chrysler alive, as this government asks taxpayers to fork over their hard-earned tax dollars to prop up some of the world's largest corporations, New Democrats believe that the senior executives at these corporations must be required to make some sacrifices as well. That's why I introduced yesterday the Capping Executive Compensation Act, a bill that would place a ceiling of \$400,000 on compensation packages for senior executives at large corporations receiving government bailouts. My question is a simple one: Will this government support my bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the effort made by my honourable colleague and the sentiment that in-

forms the bill that she's presented. But, no, I can't support it, and I'll tell you why. I think, ultimately, our responsibility is to find ways to enter into partnerships with businesses that serve the public interest—a partnership that serves the public interest. What we want to do is find ways, through these partnerships, to strengthen the economy and create jobs. If we are achieving that aim, if our partnerships strengthen the economy, if it creates more jobs, then we are satisfied. I'm not looking for a kind of incidental or collateral benefit, so to speak, to reach in and interfere with salaries awarded to executives.

Again, our objective is to achieve more jobs in a stronger economy, and if the partnerships achieve that, I think that's what the public wants us to do.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm trying to understand the choices that this Premier is making. He introduces legislation that removes its obligation to the pension benefits guarantee fund, he forces auto workers to reopen their collective agreements as a condition of their employers receiving provincial aid, and he asks taxpayers to fork over billions of dollars to some of the world's largest corporations. When will he realize that high-flying executives at corporations on the public dole also have a role to play, and it starts with a limitation on their pay and on their perks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I do agree that executives have a responsibility to lead by example, but I don't enthusiastically, on the part of our government, embrace interference in the private sector through our partnerships. What I do embrace and what I sense the responsibility to do is to find ways to enter into partnerships that serve the public interest. Again, that's all about creating jobs. It's about finding ways to strengthen the economy. It's about giving our families more reasons to be hopeful for themselves and their children. Those are the criteria that we apply, and I think that's what families want us to continue to do, and that's what we will do.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The public interest is served when everyone shares in the pain, I would submit to this Premier. In fact, President Obama recognized that with his financial services bailout, where he capped corporations' executive salaries at \$500,000. It's something this Premier could do as well. Plain and simple, it's about fairness. Hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs, and the pensions of tens of thousands more are in danger. These workers and pensioners are making tremendous sacrifices. Corporate executives must start making sacrifices too, with a cap on their pay and with a cap on their perks. Why doesn't this Premier agree?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we will do what is necessary to ensure that when we do enter into these partnerships, they serve the public interest, create jobs, strengthen the economy, give our families reason to be hopeful.

There will be some cases where it's appropriate for us to introduce the kind of capping that my honourable colleague talks about. In fact, we did that in the Chrysler deal. There is a cap in place on executive pay. In some cases, it will be appropriate and it will be possible; in others, it will not. But we will not be motivated by a sense of some kind of class warfare that sometimes inspires my colleagues opposite in the New Democratic Party. We will try to be fair to people on all sides, regardless of their income levels.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Ontario's eHealth system is shamefully lagging behind other provinces and jurisdictions, yet the price tag keeps growing and growing. This morning, the Toronto Star is reporting that Ontario's eHealth agency has spent more than \$67 million on consulting fees just during the past two years. This comes hot on the heels of a recent revelation that eHealth Ontario wasted hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. Why is this agency being allowed to burn through taxpayers' dollars like there's no tomorrow?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I again repeat for the member, and I hope she understands, that this is an important, transformational and expensive undertaking. Connecting 280 hospital sites, 69 public health units and satellites, over 1,600 family health teams and other physicians, almost 1,500 continuing care agencies, over 3,000 pharmacies, and of course Cancer Care Ontario, Cardiac Care Network, Trillium Gift of Life, air ambulance operation—50,000 health care professionals linked together and using the system. The member, I would hope, would want to understand the importance of this kind of work and the value that it delivers.

The member in her very first question talked about President Obama and the efforts south of the border—\$50 billion that he has earmarked. Here in this province, we've earmarked \$2 billion. We think that's an important investment—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government is not only wasting precious health care dollars, but it's creating an eHealth system that simply doesn't do the job. The earliest we will see a province-wide system of electronic health records is 2015, and even then the province's public health electronic records system, Panorama, will not be compatible with the system currently used by physicians. There won't be something as simple as coordinated vaccination records. This could have grave implications if a pandemic were to break out. Why are Ontarians being forced to wait so long and spend so much for a system that won't even meet our basic health needs?

Hon. David Caplan: Unfortunately, the member is quite incorrect and I don't think she knows what she's talking about. The electronic Child Health Network has

been in place for many years, where all pediatricians and physicians are linked together. In fact, we will have a diabetes registry for people living with diabetes in Ontario by 2012 and an ePrescribing system by 2012. Yes, we have talked to Ontarians and have set an end date of 2015 for electronic health records, but I do believe that we can accelerate that timeline.

As far as having all of that information, I can tell you that if you ask a physician in Belleville who checked best practice guidelines online if our investments and technology have value to him, that physician would say, "Absolutely." What has happened in Ontario has led to that transformation.

I disagree with the member opposite. I don't think she understands what she's talking about, and I think she should speak to medical—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I just would caution the honourable member. Yes, there is room for healthy debate here, but not for making comments in the manner that he has been making those comments.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know what? There is a growing crisis in health care. Hospitals are regularly running at full capacity, nurses are being laid off and patient care is suffering. And what does this government do? Pour hundreds of millions of dollars down the eHealth drain and into the pockets of private corporations, with very little to show for it. How much health care money will this Premier waste before he pulls the plug and admits his eHealth experiment has been a spectacular and expensive flop?

Hon. David Caplan: The only thing that's been a flop is the rhetoric of the member opposite.

We're hiring nurses in Ontario. If you go to the Workopolis site today, you'll find that in the last two months, 400 positions have been listed for Ontario nurses. If you look at the record of this government, you'll see a 45% increase in health spending in the province of Ontario.

Quite frankly, I'm not surprised that the member doesn't understand the importance of eHealth in transforming our health care system, since there were no steps taken under NDP governments. We're seeing others around Canada which point to similar kinds of experiences. I believe, and medical experts are telling us, that these are some of the most critical investments that we can make in order to fuel the transformation in health care.

I know that around the world—if you look, as I say, south of the border, President Obama has earmarked \$50 billion over the course of the next five years. I think he understands, as this—

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

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier, and it has to do with some comments he made a week or so ago related to the failure of the Minister of

Labour and the Minister of Education to respond to the concerns of two women who worked as caregivers for a Liberal member of Parliament and her family. You said at the time that the perception was bad; it didn't look good. You tried to slough it off by saying that apparently the ministers had a tin ear. That would clearly suggest to any objective observer that you felt they should have acted, that they should have responded to the stories of abuse from two vulnerable women, that the fact that the allegations involved a powerful and prominent Liberal reinforced the bad perception. So despite your fine words, Premier, about defending the downtrodden, when push comes to shove, protecting a Liberal, the queen of mean, takes priority—

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

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure what the question was in there, but it is an opportunity for me to speak to this issue again. I think that both ministers acted responsibly and honourably in the circumstances. They made themselves available. I think pretty well in each and every instance for all those women, it was their very first opportunity for them to meet with persons in positions of authority. They had an opportunity to tell their stories, and those stories were listened to. My colleagues did not interfere with due process. They provided information to the women who were present there.

It's now an opportunity on their part to follow up with that. I think that was the appropriate thing to do. I think it was the honourable thing to do. I think it was the right thing to do in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The question was related to the comments the Premier made to the media. He said this does look bad—this does look bad; there's no question about it—but then he comes into the House and starts defending the ministers for something that looks bad.

Even Jim Coyle in the Toronto Star, not friends of the Conservative Party for most of their history, described the conduct of your ministers as a shameful act—a shameful act. Most Ontarians who are viewing these proceedings and wondering about the meaning and sincerity of the words of you and your colleagues have to share that perspective.

Under the Employment Standards Act, the Minister of Labour has the ability to exercise a power and perform a duty even if he or she has delegated to a person under this section. He failed in that responsibility.

I have to ask you, Premier: What happened to the principles you proudly stood for when you were in this chair, when you were in this seat? What happened? Why did they—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would like to think that those principles remain intact. I understand where my colleague comes from on this particular score. He sees an opportunity here and he seeks to exploit that. You might

even argue that's his responsibility, Speaker, but I see things differently on the right side of your chair.

I think our responsibility is to ensure that we're being fair, in particular being fair to the people of Ontario, and in particular, being fair to the women who were present that evening. I think fairness also extends to any allegations and accusations made against ministers of our government. I think they behaved appropriately in the circumstances. I think they acted fairly. In fact, we heard yesterday in testimony on Parliament Hill that the two women complainants in question took advantage of the hotline that we had put in place. I think the process is working. I think we have a shared responsibility to follow due—

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

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Did the Minister of Labour actually ask his employment standards investigators to examine the 30 cases of allegations of abuse made by nannies on April 25?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I failed to hear the last part of that question from the member, but what I can tell you, as the Premier has just said, is that when we have reached out to the community, as we continue to do, we have heard stories from these caregivers. We've done it in a dignified and respectful manner but also in a professional and fair manner, where we have provided information to them.

As you also heard from the Premier and the testimonies by these two live-in caregivers yesterday at the standing committee in Ottawa, those individuals did avail themselves of the 1-800 hotline and are receiving professional help from our ministry officials. That's the right approach. We will continue to move forward with that type of approach because that's one that is—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the Minister of Labour: What he says is that these women used the 1-800 number. He certainly didn't respond to their call. In fact, the only reason the public is now aware of the abuses around caregivers in the province is because of the bravery of Magdalene Gordo and Richelyn Tongson to tell the stories to reporters and a federal committee. That is the only reason we know of them. Telling their story to the current labour minister got them absolutely nowhere.

Why won't the Premier do the right thing and replace this labour minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can say to that member is that all of the individuals who have participated in the round tables, and in that one in particular, were very thankful—very thankful—to have that forum to be able to speak to elected officials, receive support, and let them know what we're doing as a province and what control we have. What we're doing is, we're going to be banning those fees.

But to that member, I have to say, who has been challenged with her own labour issues, I will not take any lectures or lessons from that member.

SPORTS AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, we've heard lately a lot about various funding for infrastructure from both budgets, provincial and federal. Also, my riding of London–Fanshawe is especially interested in the announcement you made on Monday about the new Recreational Infrastructure Canada program in Ontario and the Ontario Recreation program with Minister Clement and also my colleague the member from Mississauga–Brampton South.

Can you tell us, Minister, what this announcement means to Ontarians about creating jobs, stimulating the economy and also supporting communities?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want thank the member from London–Fanshawe for his question, and I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South for participating in our announcement the other day, with Minister Tony Clement from the government of Canada, of a new program that will allow us to renew our recreation infrastructure here in the province of Ontario.

In the government's budget, presented by my colleague the Minister of Finance, the government of Ontario is committing \$32.5 billion—unprecedented—to infrastructure in the next two years, \$5 billion of that from the government of Canada. This program will allow us to address needs at hockey rinks, swimming pools and other recreational community sites throughout Ontario; \$195 million from the province of Ontario, starting with \$68 million from the government of Canada. This will allow the two governments to provide \$1 million each, with a matching one third for projects that come from local communities.

I'll be happy in the supplementary to talk about more of the criteria that will allow communities to rebuild their recreation infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's important for the city of London because we have a lot of facilities that belong to the city, whether they are hockey arenas or soccer fields etc. But so many different communities support facilities, like the Marconi Club, the Portuguese Club and also the Boys' and Girls' Club. They are wondering if they are eligible for those supports and funding. If they are, can you tell us how they can apply and benefit from this infrastructure?

Hon. George Smitherman: It is an excellent question, as I think that the member's question allows us to highlight one thing about this program which is particularly noteworthy. Most of the infrastructure programs that we've been speaking about over the last month or two have been focused on municipal applicants only, but in this case a broader array of communities, like First

Nations communities and also not-for-profit organizations, will have an opportunity to apply. We'll be looking forward to working with the Ministry of Health Promotion in helping to evaluate these processes, keeping in mind that the focus is on the renewal of recreational facilities.

In addition, the program is open for receiving applications. Applications will close by May 29, and we want to encourage people to take a look at the program. It's a joint-intake application process for these funds. There are no limits to the number of applications that people can make, and the commitments are that these projects would be substantially completed by March 31, 2011, therefore providing important—

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, there appears to be little support for your reverse Reaganism amongst economists: "I have no faith in the Ontario government's ability to conduct this kind of industrial policy. It hasn't worked in the past, and the world has not gotten any simpler or easier to predict since then." That's a quote from William Robson, CEO of the C.D. Howe Institute.

Also, "I freely admit that we are living in unusual circumstances, but that doesn't mean we should throw out decades and decades of what we've learned in one fell swoop": That's from Doug Porter, the deputy chief economist of the Bank of Montreal. And the list goes on.

Minister, it seems that the economic community is lining up against you. Can you provide any examples of economists who agree with your plan? Can you please indicate any recent instances where a state-run economy has succeeded?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Let me talk about a success, a company called Roxul. I know that the company is in the member's riding, and I know when I asked him yesterday in estimates whether or not he supported the investment in Roxul, I didn't get a yes out of it. It is surprising that the member would not support an investment in his riding.

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But here's what's happening: With the support of this \$10-million loan from the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, Roxul was able to not only increase the number of employees from the original 135 employees, but it has recently gone from 200 employees to 300 employees. It is because of the investment made by the government—a loan that was repaid—that this great Halton company could expand, that more people have work in that member's riding—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I didn't hear one economist who supports your proposal. I don't believe in state subsidies in my riding and I don't believe in state subsidies in Ontario. I think that you're headed down the wrong path.

There are a few problems with the minister's theory. First, it's theoretical. He cannot point to a shining city on the hill, because there isn't one. Secondly, businesses will spend more time on applications and lobbying and less time on innovations and production. Thirdly, it begins a vicious cycle: More and more companies will expect handouts. Fourthly, it forces non-subsidized companies to pay their competitors with their tax dollars.

There's another and better way to partner with businesses, Minister: lower taxes, reduce red tape, train a skilled workforce and maintain a fair marketplace. Healthy competition naturally leads to the success of the best companies.

Given your government's track record, Minister, how can we be sure that your choices will be—

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'll tell you something: If this government has a choice between walking with the workers or riding with the economists, we're going to be walking with the workers.

As a result of the investment that this government has made in companies in that member's riding, jobs have grown. As a result of the investment that this government has made in companies, hundreds of millions of dollars—in fact, over \$1 billion has been leveraged. We—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I think I hit a nerve over there.

How about this economist: "I understand the need to partner with industry and to leverage investment, and I value GM as an important Ontario employer"—Mr. Ted Chudleigh, the member who just asked the question.

I stand with Mr. Chudleigh and the workers. Mr. Chudleigh and I will continue to make investments in Ontario on behalf of those workers, to leverage those jobs, to grow that economy—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. If this government is supportive of public transit, as it claims to be, why is the Premier refusing to fulfill his government's one-third share of the funding for the Toronto Transit Commission's new Bombardier streetcars?

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

Hon. George Smitherman: It would be appropriate for me, in the presence of the mayor of Thunder Bay, to welcome her to this Legislature. We had a chance to meet on this and other subjects today.

The first thing is to do the necessary work here, which is to remind the honourable member that her party is on record as having opposed the expansion of public transit, ridiculing an \$800-million investment in a new transit line in the city of Toronto as going to the "unpopulated" York region. These are the comments by a past leader of that party.

No one over here on this side quarrels with the necessity of finding a way to work with the city of Toronto and to support the acquisition of additional streetcars, but we do think it's important that people have the necessary support in place before such announcements are made. At present we're evaluating a stimulus application on the part of the city of Toronto for eligibility—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This streetcar contract represents new hope for Bombardier workers like Dominic Pasqualino, who's here in the House today, and hundreds of Thunder Bay workers just like him. It will make it easier for commuters to get around Toronto, it will get more people out of their cars and on to transit, and it will help Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think some people are very anxious to have a long weekend. The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I'd appreciate if you would listen to the question from the honourable member.

Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, it will help Ontario meet our climate change objectives. The McGuinty government either supports public transit or it doesn't. When will the Premier stop playing political games and pony up the cash so we can get the streetcars on the rails?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member says you either support public transit or you don't. Why did that party stand in this Legislature and criticize the advance of a subway line to York region, calling York region sparsely populated? The same applies to the honourable member. And wasn't it this Premier, not two weeks before the story about streetcars, who stood with the mayor of the city of Toronto and committed an unprecedented \$9 billion in the greater Toronto area towards the Metrolinx projects? Did the honourable member notice that on that day, this Premier committed the province of Ontario not to one-third funding for those lines, not to 50% or the historic 75%, but to the new, history-making situation in the province of Ontario where the province steps up to the plate and commits to fund 100% of the Metrolinx projects in this city?

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. As many members of this Legislature are aware, language proficiency is an important skill needed to succeed in Canadian society. Peel region is the second-largest region in Ontario and the place where newcomers frequently choose to settle. These newcomers rely on language training services such as adult non-credit English- and French-as-a-second-language training to access work opportunities in Canada. These language programs provide newcomers with the tools they need to integrate socially and economically.

Can the minister share with us what our government is doing to support these valuable programs?

Hon. Michael Chan: Every year, close to 250,000 newcomers come to Canada, and half of them choose Ontario as their home. Newcomers come from 160 countries, speaking more than 200 languages. This foreign-language capacity gives Ontario a competitive edge in the global market. However, English- and French-as-a-second-language training is the foundation of success here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government is proud of its record in welcoming newcomers to Ontario. This is why, since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested over \$600 million in settlement services, and in particular \$60 million annually in language training.

Language proficiency in French or English is key to newcomer integration here in Ontario. We in the government know—

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

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: The region of Peel is expected to exceed 1.5 million people in the next 25 years. When I meet with newcomers in my riding of Brampton–Springdale, I often hear about the importance of these programs and how vital it is to access high-quality language training programs in order to better integrate and find success in their new communities.

Would the minister share with the members of this Legislature how the government is ensuring that these important language programs are meeting the labour market needs of today, as well as addressing the labour needs of tomorrow's newcomer?

1120

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I also want to thank her for her hard work for newcomers while serving as parliamentary assistant to my ministry.

I'm so pleased that on April 23 this government announced a redesign of the adult English- and French-as-a-second-language programs. These reforms will make the programs more results-based and learner-focused, and will increase access and address a broad spectrum of adult language training needs. Included in the reforms is a funding increase of \$4.5 million for 2009-10. These changes will prepare Ontario's newcomers for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

The McGuinty government understands newcomers are vital to a strong and vibrant economy, because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Minister of Education: I would like you to listen to your education policy in the cold light of day: "If a student misses a test (whether they skip class or are sick) or if they cheat then the evaluation is not valid and they must not be given a zero. The

student must have an opportunity to be re-evaluated on the material.

"Assignments can have a due date but if the student does not hand it in on the due date a zero cannot be assigned. The student must be allowed to hand in the assignment late without being penalized."

Minister, how do you expect to prepare our students for employment in the business world, an environment that does not tolerate this kind of behaviour, when you refuse to enforce any discipline in our schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The current evaluation and assessment policy has been in place since 2000. We're in the process of actually consulting on that policy and looking at how it might change.

But the real point of this issue is, do we believe that our schools should be sorting mechanisms that say, "There are certain kids who are going to succeed and there are certain kids who aren't going to succeed, and we're just going to write those kids off"? Or should we change the culture in our schools and have a culture that says, "We are going to find a way to put programs in place that are going to help every student succeed, live up to his or her potential and be a part of this society and this economy"? That is what we're trying to do in this education system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Minister, certainly you of all people should understand the importance of creating clear consequences for actions or for failing to act for our students.

Over 5,000 parents, just to this point in time, have signed an online petition asking that you take this matter in hand and toughen up these policies. We cannot expect our students to succeed in a competitive global marketplace when you proceed to move them through school without any consequences for late assignments, cheating or skipping class. This is not preparing our students for the challenges of the real world.

Minister, will you take action to correct this policy now and ensure that our children have the life skills they need to be successful in the real world?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is exactly what we are doing to make sure that our students have opportunities to develop the skills they need to succeed.

In the real world—now, I challenge the notion that school is not the real world; I think it is the real world. But in the working world, when people make a mistake, employers work to help that person to achieve and succeed. It is in no one's interest, whether in school or out of school, to have what that party had, which were zero tolerance policies that don't give people a second chance, that don't help people learn from their mistakes, that don't help people learn the skills they need to get on.

What we have done is put in place programs so that there are consequences. There is no policy in our government manuals that says that there's no policy for consequences. There are consequences, but there are also programs that help kids to learn—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Finance.

I've been contacted by yet another small business person, Janice Bowden. Janice will be yet another victim of this government's wrong-headed tax grab, the HST. Janice is worried that her wilderness fishing resort in Haileybury will lose substantial business during its short season as a direct result of the tax grab. In her letter to me, she writes, "In July 2010, it will cost a family of five \$396 more to come to Red Pine."

The HST will hurt families and businesses alike. Why is this government making it harder for families to take a hard-earned break in Ontario's great outdoors by charging them an additional 8%?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again my colleague opposite doesn't paint the entire picture. He neglected to respond to his constituent that, in fact, Ontarians will be getting a personal tax cut, which will help them adjust to this new tax regime, which will create jobs and help this economy improve.

Every OECD country, save and except the United States, as well as four of our sister provinces have a single value-added tax. It is an efficient tax. It is the right way to tax consumption versus income. We're lowering his constituent's corporate taxes. We're lowering other constituents' personal income taxes. It's the right reform package that will help Ontario get through this very challenging time. When we come out of it, and we will, we will be bigger, we will be better and we will be stronger as a people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Quite the contrary. This tax grab will punish Ontario businesses and Ontario families alike. The HST will not create jobs. At Red Pine Wilderness Lodge, it will kill jobs. Janice Bowden's business is already feeling the effects of this recession. With guest numbers down for this summer, she says, "In 2007 and 2008, we employed eight summer students—this year we can only afford to hire three." The HST tax grab is bad for her business, bad for hard-working families and bad for students who desperately need summer jobs.

My question: Why won't this government listen to Ontarians like Janice Bowden who are fed up and scared for their future, and simply axe the tax?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite, in fact, makes the case for a bold policy that will help rebuild this economy as we come out of the downturn. The member opposite does not want to face the future. By the way, that member opposite and his party suggested increasing the PST by 1%, a billion-and-a-half-dollar tax grab.

We brought forward a package of tax changes that will assist small business; that ensure that 93% of Ontarians pay less tax; that we have a fairer tax system that taxes consumption, not income. That's why a range of business organizations, individuals and others have come to support this and see that it is the best way to build this economy, to get new jobs, to make our exports more

competitive. It's time that member and his party joined the 21st century.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a question for the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Minister, you've said on a number of occasions that transit is really a high priority for this government, and indeed we've seen announcement after announcement on funding to improve public transit in the greater Toronto area, in Hamilton, across the province. We've seen shovels in the ground already on projects like the Toronto-York subway expansion and improvements on various transit stations.

My question today is about one of the more controversial improvements GO Transit is currently undertaking. As you know, work is being done at the west Toronto diamond to separate the current Canadian National railroad and Canadian Pacific railroad tracks. I realize that this is important work for GO Transit, since the current criss-crossing of the lines affects the on-time reliability for those who travel along the Georgetown corridor. That being said, I have heard from a great number of constituents in my riding about the effects of this construction on the local residents. Minister, can you share with this House, please, what you're going to do to ensure that this—

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

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've heard from the member for Davenport on numerous occasions on this issue, as well as other provincial and federal members. I appreciate that the work being done on the Toronto west diamond is certainly disruptive to some of the residents in the area. I also understand that it's very important work needed to increase and improve service for thousands of commuters. The work being done there is one of the most critical pieces of track infrastructure that GO needs to build.

It is important to note that there will be long-term benefits to the local community, including the elimination of scheduling conflicts between freight trains and GO trains. This means less idling, less pollution from stopped trains, and less noise. Currently when trains pass over the diamond, every car's wheel set makes a loud pounding noise; these are frequent noises comparable to the sound of piledriving. When the work is complete, those noises will be eliminated.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you very much, Minister, for clarifying how crucial this work really is in the west Toronto diamond, both to our neighbours on the tracks and for those who take the GO train every day.

I'm fully supportive of getting people out of their cars and onto public transit. However, I'm still hearing from constituents about the noise that the current piledriving machines are making. I understand that the goal of this government is to reduce congestion and get people out of

their personal vehicles and onto public transit. However, I'm worried that this may be at the expense of the local residents' quality of life. Those living in the area are wondering if there is anything else that can be done to reduce the noise and just how long this will continue.

Can the Minister of Transportation share with this House what improvements have been planned or already made with respect to the work being done at this diamond? I want to be able to tell my constituents that we're listening and we're doing our best to find solutions to reduce this noise.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've spoken to GO Transit about this matter and conveyed these views to them. I know they understand and are sympathetic to the concerns of the local residents. They have taken significant steps in addressing the noise and vibration issues raised and are working actively to test new alternatives which they hope will make a noticeable difference in the community. GO Transit has a community liaison who is on the site every day. This individual has been working directly with residents and businesses to address their concerns. I understand that GO recently sent out a newsletter to the community updating them on the project. The focus of GO now is in three areas: evaluating ways to redesign and accelerate work so the piledriving finishes sooner—GO is already ahead of schedule, I should note; muffling the hammering noise; and exploring other technologies. There is a genuine concern being expressed by the member and the residents of the area, and GO is making efforts—

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

CITY OF VAUGHAN

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, you'd be well aware of the articles recently in the media with respect to the community of Vaughan and the taxpayers there reeling under the \$750,000 of legal and audit fees on the taxpayers' backs in the municipality. The article quoted from the report that was presented to the city of Vaughan. The minister would be aware of the controversy surrounding it.

I would like to ask the minister directly: What actions are you prepared to take to remove this uncertainty in the community of Vaughan? Are you doing anything about it?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to thank the honourable member; he's my critic and this is his first question to me, so I very much appreciate that.

I do thank the honourable member because the situation in Vaughan is troublesome for all of us. Our staff have been to meet with officials from Vaughan. They're going back again, I believe within the next two weeks, to see what we can do at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to help with some of the challenges that Vaughan council is facing. On any of the legal issues that are before the courts, whether it's the Municipal Elections Act or other matters, obviously I can't comment on

those particular situations. But I certainly am concerned about the situation and would urge all members of Vaughan council and the mayor to work together for the betterment of the people of Vaughan. That's the role and responsibility of all local officials, and I would urge them to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: In a sort of trivial way, yes, I haven't asked you questions because you actually haven't done anything. But in a more serious state—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The best way to avoid making mistakes is, don't do anything.

However, in all seriousness, this is a serious issue, and you're ignoring it. That's the problem. Citizens of Vaughan have written to you, petitioned you and asked you for help. They're spending taxpayers' money at an unsavoury rate and you're sitting by, doing nothing. In fact, the article in the *Globe and Mail* was specific. It said, "The Municipal Elections Act is just not up to the job." Perhaps you designed it.

Clearly, you have done nothing. What are you going to commit to do for the city of Vaughan instead of twiddling your thumbs?

Hon. Jim Watson: I don't even know where to begin with that question. I should correct the record: The Municipal Elections Act changes were brought in by your government when you were in office, point number one.

Secondly, I'm very proud of our track record in municipal affairs and housing. Let me just give you a couple of examples of some of the investments that this government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has brought to the people of Vaughan: Investing in Ontario, \$8.6 million; the MIII infrastructure fund, \$975,000; roads and bridges, \$2.9 million; and gas tax for York region, of which Vaughan is a part, \$14.1 million.

We're proud of the work that we've done in partnership with the good people of Vaughan, but we do ask the members of Vaughan council and the mayor to continue to work out their differences, because at the end of the day this is all about public service and serving the public. We want to make sure that the elected officials of Vaughan are doing their job.

With respect to the election—

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

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of the Environment: The Ontario Drinking Water Advisory Council's report on acceptable levels of radioactive tritium in drinking water is almost a year overdue. Apparently the report is in your office. Is the government delaying the release of the report because it shows that radioactive tritium standards are too lax in Ontario, and that the government's plan to build nuclear reactors at Darlington will further compromise the safety of Lake Ontario-sourced drinking water?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I thank the member for the question. We are not delaying the release of the report at all. We are studying the report and we will be making our comments on it in due course.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

The leader of the third party on a point of order.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I just want to rise on a point of order to correct my record. In question two this morning, I inadvertently used the words “Toronto Star” instead of “Toronto Sun.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would remind the members that there’s a lunch of the pension committee today. After you have lunch with the pork producers, you can stop by. It’s an information session.

And I know the Speaker wants to introduce a high school from his riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, it’s the Speaker’s prerogative. Once again, I just want to take this opportunity to welcome the students from Regina Mundi to Queen’s Park today. Have a great day here in Toronto. Welcome.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce, in the west gallery, Ingrid Atyeo, from Princess Margaret, ONA Local 97; Beverly Belfon and Carolyn Edgar, both from North York General Hospital, ONA Local 6; Patti Lalla, who’s from Mount Sinai Hospital, ONA Local 82; Ray Prystanski, who’s from the University Health Network, ONA Local 97; and Lawrence Walter, who’s with the Ontario Nurses’ Association. All of these people are nurses serving the people of Ontario.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today, MPPs from all parties enjoyed a great lunch of Ontario pork. I want to thank Wilma Jeffray and everyone from Ontario Pork for bringing it to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You should be thanking the pigs.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: He gave his life.

While it was an enjoyable lunch, there was a serious message: that Ontario pork is of the highest quality, safe and nutritious. The international scientific community, including the World Health Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health, agrees that H1N1 influenza A is not a food safety issue. We want to assure

Ontario consumers and our international trading partners that Ontario pork is safe.

We understand the contributions that pork farmers make to our province and our economy. This industry has a GDP of over \$800 million in Canada as a whole. With pork prices dropping, farmers are now losing \$30 a hog. Our 2,800 pork producers and their families need the support of Ontario consumers and the Ontario government. We know that many beginning farmers were already struggling because they were missed by the government’s Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture program. That’s why last week, in this Legislature, we offered to work with the government to promote Ontario pork and to design a program that will support all of our pork producers.

There’s one step that we can all take today to help our farmers: Shop local and buy Ontario pork. I encourage everyone in this Legislature and at home to support our pork farmers and put Ontario pork on your fork.

NURSING WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’m really pleased to rise today to recognize Nursing Week in Ontario. This is a week to celebrate and thank the nurses of Ontario. It is also a week to listen to nurses and to reflect on the contribution these health care professionals make in every community across this province, every single day of the year. Nurses are found in every part of our health care system, from home care to public health, from primary care to long-term care, from health promotion to, of course, hospitals.

It is also a week where we would be wise to assess the progress we have made in the past year: whether we are any closer to providing the support and resources our nursing professionals need in order to deliver the care relied on by Ontarians. The sad fact is that we’re lagging behind when it comes to supporting our nursing professionals. Nurses are facing tougher working conditions and we are seeing cuts to experienced nurses in an overburdened health care system.

New Democrats renew our commitment this week to the immediate hiring of the promised 9,000 nurses. We reassert our commitment to ensuring a healthy and safe workplace for all nurses, free from harassment, bullying and work-related disease and injuries. We are recommitting ourselves to supporting our hard-working nurse professionals in doing the world-class jobs that they do.

Nurses are the heart and soul of the health care system. Let’s not forget that cuts to nurses mean cuts to care. Happy Nursing Week.

TOWN OF MILLBROOK

Mr. Rick Johnson: I’m pleased to rise in the House today to speak about an event I attended on May 7 in the town of Millbrook, which is in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I was representing the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We announced that the province was investing \$97,000 in the expansion

of the Millbrook and District Medical Centre. This project will: increase the size of the medical centre by almost 50%; create better patient consultation space, accessible washrooms and a secure records management area; allow new medical staff to be hired; and help to entice new business and families to the area.

I made a commitment to the people in my riding that, as MPP, I would work diligently to bring improved facilities to our communities. I am proud that my constituents have a partner in this government, a partner that is demonstrably committed to improving health care for rural communities.

I was pleased to make the announcement with Reeve Neal Cathcart and Ross Gillis, chair of the Millbrook and District Medical Centre board of directors.

I congratulate the local community for their fundraising efforts that have helped make this project a reality.

Those who cherish heritage life will find in Millbrook a legacy to Ontario and small-town life.

Millbrook is host to the award-winning 4th Line Theatre, an outdoor summer theatre that will be presenting two world premier productions this summer: *The Right Road to Pontypool*—my hometown—by Alex Poch-Goldin, and *Welcome Death*, by Robert Winslow.

I am proud to speak to the House about the work we're doing to support health services for the citizens and community in the town of Millbrook, in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

All of this arts and heritage is just a 90-minute drive from Toronto.

UXBRIDGE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank, first, Pina Martino for allowing me to have this statement today celebrating the anniversary of the Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House.

I'm pleased to recognize the 200th anniversary of the Quaker Meeting House in Uxbridge.

Quakers came to Uxbridge in 1805 from Pennsylvania, by way of Yonge Street and Newmarket, to build their original log meeting house in 1809. Today's meeting house dates back to 1820.

The 200th anniversary will be celebrated on Sunday, June 14, with special events that include a short Quaker service, a concert and a display of Quaker artifacts.

Congratulations to the chair of the Friends' Meeting House, Ronald Gould, as well as trustees and board members. They include: Bob and Mary Hartrick, Elva Kerry, Joyce Huntington, Lorraine LeGrand, James Ball, Arlene Heywood, Sharon Tait-Longhurst, Ian Fowlie, Donald James, Russell Gould, and Bruce and Betty Ball from Bowmanville. All are descendants of Quaker families.

We will also celebrate the publication of a book by board member Lloyd Ball on the Quaker history in Uxbridge. His book is entitled *The History of the Friends' Meeting House of Quaker Hill*.

It's my understanding, as well, that Ontario's Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley, is scheduled to attend.

We continue to honour the values of simplicity, integrity, equality, peace and justice exemplified in the Quaker community.

Best wishes to all who have participated in their capacity to celebrate this bicentennial.

TOURISM

Mr. Kuldip Kular: As we approach the summer season, I encourage my constituents and all Ontarians to rediscover our great province this summer.

Ontario is home to countless attractions, from cultural centres and festivals to natural parks and monuments. Vibrant communities, shopping, great food and tourist attractions abound. Our community centres offer fun and programs for people of all interests and ages.

Whether it is to be the family vacation to remember, or a trip on a budget, there is plenty to do right here at home in Ontario. And what better way to support our local economy than to explore Ontario this summer?

My own stomping ground, Brampton, is home to a heritage complex, butterfly conservatory and several museums, to name just a few sights worth seeing. We have galleries, sports venues, shopping centres, restaurants, entertainment and hotels for visitors—everything one could need to relax and enjoy the season.

I urge Ontarians and my colleagues to help local businesses by taking the time to rediscover Ontario and their own communities. Visit your local tourism association; even easier, the official Ontario tourism site, at ontariotravel.net, to begin a memorable summer.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thousands gathered outside Queen's Park last week to honour and remember fallen police officers at the 10th annual Ontario Police Memorial ceremony of remembrance. This is Police Week, and this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Ontario Provincial Police.

1510

This wall of honour includes the names of all 236 officers killed in the line of duty since 1804. Two names were added this year: Constables Jeffrey Armstrong and Frank Hare. Constable Hare died in 1951. He was struck by a train during the pursuit of a speeding car in my hometown of Port Dover. He was 44 years old.

Our publisher and editor of the Port Dover Maple Leaf provides a bit of background: "On Saturday, June 2, 1951, Constable Frank Hare and Police Chief Ivan Irwin were patrolling in the Port Dover police department GMC van. The ... van had just been purchased by the Port Dover Lions Club. Constable Hare was driving.

"They saw a speeding car and took chase. The two vehicles approached the Lake Erie and Northern Railway's Main Street crossing just as the train was arriving from Simcoe.

“The officers were broadsided.

“The popular police officer was killed and Chief Irwin suffered injuries.”

I ask members of the House to take a few minutes and visit the wall of honour and recognize those who have given their lives on our behalf. Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise to discuss one of the most talked about items in the McGuinty government's recent budget: taxes. The McGuinty government understands the trying times Ontarians are facing, resulting from a mortgage and banking crisis that originated in the United States. The whole world was affected by this. Ontarians need government more than ever to be on their side to help them weather the difficult economic storm in our midst.

The government has taken up this cry and delivered, in the form of tax relief that will put more money into people's pockets so they can continue to do the things working families need to do, such as put food on the table, save for their children's post-secondary education and meet the other responsibilities demanded of them.

The McGuinty government's tax relief measures seek, first and foremost, to help Ontario's middle class by delivering a 16.5% tax cut on the first \$36,848 of taxable income by reducing the tax rate from the 6.05% to a proposed 5.05%, effective next year.

Understanding that small and medium-sized businesses are the engine of Ontario's economy, the McGuinty government has also decided to lighten their tax bill by cutting corporate tax rates across the board for small businesses by 18% through the implementation of a twofold reduction to the general corporate tax rate, commencing in two phases: a 14.7% reduction immediately and a further reduction thereafter of 16.7% in total.

Ontario needs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Members' statements.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Today, I want to encourage my colleagues and, for that matter, all the people in Ontario to do similar to what my friend from Bramalea–Gore–Malton said; that is, tour Ontario. But specifically, I would like you to come and visit southwestern Ontario, and take what is called the southwestern Ontario wine route. We have 14 great wineries in southwestern Ontario, mainly in the Chatham–Kent–Essex area. We think it makes a lovely day to tour these wineries, see the products they have and, of course, take some home from time to time.

If you feel inclined, you can take a leisurely trip to Pelee Island, visit the Pelee Island Winery, spend the day there and cook your own lunch while having a glass of wine. It's a day's event, or you can take a couple of days and do this. I encourage everyone to come to the north

shore of Lake Erie, to the southwestern Ontario wine route. If you would like more information, you can contact the Southwestern Ontario Vintners at www.swovintners.com. Please come, have a good time and enjoy the summer.

PORK INDUSTRY

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I want to take time to welcome to the Legislature today many of the partners of the Ontario pork sector, including hog farmers as well as representatives from the processing industry.

My riding of Kitchener–Conestoga is over 40% rural, with hog farmers in all three townships of Wilmot, Woolwich and Wellesley. This afternoon I was present, as were many members of the House from all parties, at a lunch celebrating Ontario pork. I want to thank all members and staff who were able to attend and to show their support.

Ontario pork is safe to eat. I'm proud of the steps our industry takes each and every day to ensure that Ontarians can enjoy safe, nutritious pork. Our producers employ strict biosecurity protocols, and all animals are inspected prior to slaughter.

The pork sector is extremely important to our economy, with 2,800 hog producers and 33,000 Ontarians employed in this industry. The pork sector contributed \$4.7 billion to the Ontario economy in 2008, and affects my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga directly. We acknowledge the confusion over the H1N1 flu virus has been challenging for Ontario's hog industry. I hope all members join me in talking to their constituents and encouraging them to buy pork on their next trip to the local grocery store and, please, in reaffirming the safety of this great Ontario product.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

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

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

Report adopted.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

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

Report adopted.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ORDRE DES MÉTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET L'APPRENTISSAGE

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades / Projet de loi 183, Loi visant à réviser et à moderniser le droit relatif à la formation en apprentissage et aux qualifications professionnelles et à créer l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario.

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. John Milloy: During ministerial statements, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SKILLED TRADES MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased today to introduce some important legislation for Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system, legislation that would establish the Ontario College of Trades, an independent regulatory college for the skilled trades.

The proposed Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act represents a significant step forward to promote careers in skilled trades and modernize the province's apprenticeship and skilled trades system. The skilled trades sector plays an important part in Ontario's economic prosperity, and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the many, many representatives of the sector who were able to join us today—far too many to single out, but we have a cross-section from across the province, and I think I speak on behalf of all members when I welcome you here today.

1520

The college of trades would put this sector more in charge of its own business. It would help the apprenticeship and skilled trades system better serve consumers, employers, apprentices and skilled tradespeople, and it would raise the status of our skilled tradespeople, putting them on a similar footing with teachers, doctors and nurses, who all have their own professional regulatory colleges.

This proposed legislation would retain important elements but replace the existing Apprenticeship and Certification Act and the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, standardizing governance for the sector.

L'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario que nous proposons représente une approche équilibrée, une institution de gouvernance conçue pour faire passer l'intérêt public avant tout, tout en prenant en compte les intérêts de tous les groupes évoluant dans le milieu des métiers spécialisés et de l'apprentissage.

Ce projet de loi représente la concrétisation, au moment prévu, d'un engagement que nous avons pris l'année dernière, un engagement que nous avons pris après avoir reçu des conseils experts, un engagement important pour notre gouvernement. C'est pourquoi nous souhaitons nous assurer de bien faire les choses.

Creating the Ontario College of Trades would fill a need, identified nearly a year ago, to ensure that industry has a more prominent role in recruitment, governance, certification and apprenticeship training.

We know that times are hard for many of our skilled workers. That's why we've increased retraining support for laid-off workers. Many of those workers are training for careers in the skilled trades, and that's why we have improved incentives to make it easier for employers to hire apprentices.

But as Ontario moves toward economic recovery—and make no mistake, Ontario will recover—it's especially important that we prepare to succeed in a more competitive economic future. Governing the skilled trades through an independent regulatory college is an approach unique to Ontario that would fully recognize the sector's expertise.

We've come up with this model after careful consideration. In August 2007, we asked Mr. Tim Armstrong, a respected public policy adviser, lawyer, author and recipient of the Order of Ontario, to review compulsory certification in the skilled trades. He was asked to study

the possible implications of expanding compulsory certification to health and safety for consumers and for the economy.

Tim Armstrong brought extensive public policy experience in apprenticeship, trades and labour relations to the task. Among many career highlights, he practised law in Toronto for 16 years, specializing in labour and other administrative law litigation, and served in the Ontario government for 18 years, including terms as deputy minister of the Ministry of Labour and of the former Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology.

When he reported back to us last May, following extensive public consultations and research, he suggested that we could not adequately address compulsory certification without looking at other aspects of the system, and he made several recommendations to that end.

A key recommendation was to establish a college of trades: an independent, all trades governance institution. Our government accepted Mr. Armstrong's recommendation, and in September we indicated that we would move forward with the college.

To do this, we appointed Mr. Kevin Whitaker, chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, as implementation adviser. He was asked to provide advice and recommendations regarding the college's proposed governance structure, scope and mandate.

Both Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Whitaker are with us here today, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge many officials who are here from TCU, who have also worked very, very hard through the public consultations and the preparation that led to the introduction of today's legislation, and thank them for their hard work.

Mr. Whitaker has extensive experience in labour arbitration and mediation in both the private and public sectors and across a wide variety of professions. He was well qualified to work with the sector to create a model that could effectively serve a balance of interests. He made recommendations after consulting broadly with employers, skilled tradespeople and training providers through submissions, meetings and regional public consultations. These recommendations are reflected in the legislation we are introducing today.

If this legislation is passed, the college of trades would be phased in over time and be fully implemented by 2012. The college of trades would work with all skilled trades partners, including employers and skilled tradespeople, apprentices and training providers, and other sector experts. The college would work with these interests to serve the public interest.

It would have a mandate to seek ways of attracting more people to the trades, especially youth and underrepresented groups. It would help make it easier for internationally trained workers to get certified and find work in the trades in Ontario. It would be responsible for setting training and certification standards to serve the skilled trades sector and Ontarians who use their services. It would be responsible for conducting research to make

sure Ontario has the right workers for the future. It would give the sector ownership of critical decisions on issues such as compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios, using objective criteria to make balanced decisions across the trades.

Our ministry would retain some responsibilities, including approving and funding training providers. The ministry would also continue to perform operational duties, such as registering training agreements for apprentices and conducting certification exams. The government would also continue to administer programs such as the Ontario youth apprenticeship program and the apprenticeship training tax credit.

Our government is committed to bringing Ontario into the skills and knowledge economy. We know that encouraging apprenticeship is essential to Ontario's future prosperity. Ontario's labour force growth is projected to decline as greater numbers of workers prepare to retire and fewer young people enter the workforce.

Ontarians recognize this is a challenge that we have to face head-on, and they support encouraging youth towards careers in the skilled trades. We have already taken significant steps to ensure Ontario has the skilled workers it needs for the future. We are attracting youth and underrepresented groups, such as women, aboriginal Ontarians and persons with disabilities, to apprenticeship through innovative programs. We're encouraging employers to hire apprentices through incentives, and we're increasing these incentives to help weather the economic downturn. We're helping Ontario's training providers with infrastructure investments.

These actions have produced results. Today there are 120,000 active apprentices learning a trade in Ontario, over 60,000 more than in 2003. New annual apprenticeship registrations have increased from 17,100 in 2003 to more than 28,000 in 2008.

But it is time to do more. It is important for our economy. The proposed Ontario College of Trades would build on our success by giving the sector a more active and a more significant role. Our government believes that modernizing our skilled trades and apprenticeship sector is vital. We believe that establishing the Ontario College of Trades would advance the public interest and better serve our skilled trades and apprenticeship sector. It's just one more step toward transforming Ontario's economy so our businesses and our families can take advantage of the next generation of growth.

POLICE WEEK

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise in the House today and remind my fellow members that Sunday, May 10, was the launch of Police Week in the province of Ontario.

For almost 30 years, Police Week has been observed in May to coincide with the international Peace Officers Memorial Day on May 15. International Peace Officers Memorial Day is a day to pay tribute to law enforcement officers and to honour the memories of those who died in the line of duty.

1530

His Excellency Lieutenant Governor David C. Onley and Premier Dalton McGuinty paid tribute to Ontario's fallen officers at the Ontario Police Memorial on May 3—a very moving ceremony that takes place every year on the first Sunday in May. I'm certain all members are familiar with one of Sir Robert Peel's most famous quotations: "The police are the public, and the public are the police." I believe that Police Week brings life to his words.

Police Week is intended to strengthen the link between the police and our communities by focusing on a particular social issue or crime-related topic that police and communities can work to resolve together.

This year's theme for Police Week, "Policing Possibilities: Inspiration for the Future," will help to build on public support. This theme was developed with the help of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and I would like to thank interim president Chief Dan Parkinson and the OACP for, once again, rising to the challenge. It speaks of bringing the police and public closer together and exploring new possibilities for maintaining the peace while helping to build tomorrow's communities, and it inspires a new generation of Ontarians to consider the rewards and unlimited potential of policing when charting their own path for the future.

Between now and Saturday, May 16, police services and their boards across Ontario will be commemorating this special week with a variety of public activities recognizing the dedication of all police personnel and the contribution they make to our communities.

The McGuinty government values our police, the professional work they do and the sacrifices they are making on our behalf. We support a police service that reflects the diversity of our province and applaud recruiting efforts that move us closer to that goal.

Police Week is a time for communities across Ontario to connect with their police services. It's a time to pause and thank those brave men and women who have served and honour those who serve us still.

I hope all members will show their support for our police officers by participating in their local Police Week activities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities' announcement today.

Self-regulation is a plan that has demonstrated itself to be a useful way of standardizing rules in many fields, from architects to accountants and chiropractors to dietitians and lawyers to midwives, but there's a back story to this new government scheme. I don't need to tell anyone in this House, save for the Liberals, about the potential dangers of a self-regulating organization like the Ontario College of Trades that has been stacked with special interests.

Red flags should go off when you look to what this government did with the College of Teachers after they were first elected. They took the proven idea of self-regulation, which has been used successfully in many fields, and perverted it for their own personal ends. The College of Teachers is now a union-led tool for promoting union interests, regardless of the impact on teachers, students or taxpayers.

I think we can all look at the McGuinty record and confidently predict that he will do the exact same thing with the college of trades, and there's evidence to suggest this. In an effort to maintain Ontario's artificially high apprentice-to-journeyman ratios, the minister used provincial advisory committees, groups that he appoints under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, to justify his unreasonably high ratios. As I've said in this House before, the minister stacked those committees with his buddies, who have a vested interest in keeping those ratios high, without consideration for the broader public interest.

Take the boilermakers' PAC: It's heavily stacked with representatives from the boilermakers' union, Local 128. It's the same with the drywallers, acoustic and lathing applicator PAC. This is stacked with members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, with only token business interests.

We can only assume that the government will use the college of trades just like they used their PACs and the College of Teachers and pervert this for their own political ends by handing control over the trades to special interests instead of the government protecting the public interest, which is its job.

Let there be no mistake about it: The driving force behind this legislation comes from members of the Working Families Coalition, who are intimate friends of this government and who have worked with the Liberals to carefully craft rules and programs to exclude anyone who is not in their club. For them, it's not about fairness or safety or jobs for people; it's about whether or not you play ball with the government and their friends. If you do, the sky's the limit, and if you don't, welcome to the brick wall.

So I and my colleagues in the PC caucus will be taking time to review this legislation very cautiously. If passed, we certainly will be watching for the implementation of the college and making sure that it's done in a fair way to all of those concerned, especially our young apprentices who are locked out of jobs right now because of this government's stubbornness on the apprenticeship ratios.

POLICE WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond today, on behalf of our caucus, to the minister's comments on Police Week. I have to begin by thanking the minister for not attacking the federal government today. Usually when you stand up it's always about the \$156 million.

The minister made an announcement last week. It was up in Rama, at Mnjikaning First Nation police service. I

got a copy of it, which I'm going to send over. The clippings you've probably already seen. But it was funny that he made it at that place, because it's probably the most luxurious police service detachment or precinct that we could find anywhere in the world, let alone just here in Ontario. I know he didn't really bring a lot of attention to it, but it was federal money he announced for the 40 new officers for police services across the province.

I would like to also briefly mention, because it is Police Week—it's amazing that today, with the demonstration outside, we do see a number of officers from different police services around Ontario protecting the building here, and keeping law and order outside with this peaceful demonstration out there. I want to thank those police officers as well.

I want to also say that in my riding—and I would encourage other ridings to do the same—I work with my federal member. At the end of May of each year—this year it'll be on Sunday, May 31—we hold a protective services appreciation barbecue in the riding of Simcoe North. It's for all police officers and their families, firemen, paramedics and those involved with the military. I would encourage other members to do that as well. It works out very well because these officers from all these different organizations don't often get to meet each other. The reality, though, is that they do appreciate when they get together. They compare notes and are appreciative of the fact that some of their politicians do recognize their work.

So I want to say, on behalf of our caucus, thank you very much to all the police officers who, day in and day out, put their life on the line so we can live in a wonderful province like Ontario.

POLICE WEEK

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats join in celebrating our police officers: women and men across this province who serve their communities, protecting property and protecting lives. I say policing has never been more demanding. In many respects, it's never been more dangerous. The standard of training of police officers in this province has never been greater, and we are blessed to have police officers who are very skilled in all facets of their demanding jobs.

But let's use this occasion to note that increasingly communities live in fear of gunfire. Just recently, in west Toronto, a 14-year-old boy was gunned down, shot dead. In that west Toronto community people are fleeing, literally selling homes, because they want to escape the violence being imposed on their neighbourhoods by, in many cases, younger people. All these are not youth who have gone astray; these are full-blown sociopaths who will take a life in the snap of a finger.

I believe that if we truly want to celebrate the work that our police officers do, we want to make sure our cops have the tools and the resources they need—including the staffing—to track down those who would use firearms in the commission of crimes and those who

would shoot others, including innocent bystanders; to ensure that sufficient evidence is obtained to prosecute them; and then to ensure, along with adequate components of crown attorneys and court staff, that these people are prosecuted and that, by God, they're given the stiffest sentences that anybody could ever be given. Again, we're not talking wayward youth; we're talking about gangsters, thugs, hoodlums who are taking lives indiscriminately, and I believe it's time for us to become incredibly angry and regard this with the repugnance that it deserves and, in the course of doing that, make sure that the cops have the support of the community in tracking these offenders down and dealing with them severely.

1540

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats welcome the debate on the college of trades. We won't be able to do justice to this debate in a couple of minutes, but we will have time in the course of second reading debate and also committee hearings to be able to look more closely to what is contained in the bill, which we just received about half an hour ago, and we look forward to that.

The Auditor General has raised a number of questions that the ministry has not, in my view, dealt adequately with, and maybe the college of trades will do it. He says that the ministry increased apprenticeship opportunities and registrations, but was less successful in ensuring apprentices complete training. Expenditures increased 25% since 2002 and the number of registered apprentices more than doubled to 109,000, but the ministry lacked information on completion, employment rates and reasons why a high percentage of apprentices fail to complete training. By the way, that's fewer than half completing and becoming certified.

The auditor also says that staff say there's too much emphasis on registration over certification. Training consultants at the field offices were concerned over their inability to conduct program monitoring visits. The priority was meeting apprenticeship registration targets.

He also said that there's lack of strategies to increase registration in high-demand skilled trades. Most registration increase has been in the expanding service sector—and, by way of an aside, the third-highest number of people registering in the trades are hair stylists, who may be in high demand, I have no doubt. But in terms of those manufacturing sectors that are desperately looking for high-skilled workers, I don't know how we're filling that demand. And there's lack of coordination in safety enforcement efforts.

Tim Armstrong, who is here today, said in his report from 2008 that the requirements for compulsory certification will not be fully effective unless there are comprehensive enforcement mechanisms with meaningful sanctions to deter widespread contraventions. We hope that the college of trades will do that.

I have to end by saying that when the minister says that if this legislation is passed, the college of trades

would be phased in over time and fully implemented by 2012, I don't consider that leadership. Why is it that we can't do it today? Why do we have to wait until the government is unelected in 2011 and wait for 2012 for this to happen? Why can't we have leadership and make this happen immediately?

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

"Whereas, if accepted, that recommendation would increase the demand on emergency room services in Sarnia; and ...

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

"Whereas Petrolia's retirement and nursing home communities are dependent on easy access to the CEE hospital;

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

I agree with this petition, affix my name and will send it with Eric.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of residents from Ottawa, and it reads as follows:

"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 clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Gordon and Carolyn Pitt of Collingwood for sending this petition to me.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) 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, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, for house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowploughing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, veterinarian bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: "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 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 will sign my name to this, as I agree with this petition, and will be giving it to Cameron.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

“Whereas the Ottawa Catholic school board’s capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions where school boards are not in debt and where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board’s educational development charges bylaw;

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

“To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic school board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans.”

I will send this up with Grace.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario’s history;” but still cut health care services and nurses, “and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again” on Canada Day 2010 “with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% combined sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, and arena ice and soccer field rentals,” Internet fees, theatre admissions, funerals, courier fees, fast food sold for \$4, bus fares, golf green fees, gym fees, snowploughing, bicycles, taxi fares, train fares, domestic air travel, accountant services and real estate commissions;

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

“That Dalton McGuinty wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

As I agree with it and support the petition, I affix my name thereto.

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;

“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 will sign it and provide it to Lindsay.

1550

EDUCATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he would increase high school graduation rates to 85% and increase test scores in reading, writing and math, he is doing so by:

“Allowing a student to miss a test (whether they skip class or are sick) and they must not be given a zero;

“Allowing a student to cheat on a test or hand in plagiarized work, resulting in the evaluation not being valid, and they must not be given zero;

“Allowing students to ignore deadlines on assignments knowing that they cannot be penalized for late work;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government amend their present policy on assessment and evaluation and allow students to learn about time management, importance of honesty, hard work and responsibility.”

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it and give it to Eric.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s 2009 budget aims to pull Ontario out of difficult economic times by investing in people through various forms of job creation and tax relief measures;

“Whereas this budget demonstrates compassion for Ontario’s poor, traditionally the hardest hit constituent during difficult economic times, by pursuing programs that increase the minimum wage, provide needed tax relief and fast-forward the Ontario child tax credit by implementing this one year ahead of schedule;

“Whereas the opposition parties have failed to appreciate the difficulty of these economic times by failing to

provide constructive and meaningful ideas in lieu of criticism for the sake of criticism;

“Whereas partisanship has reached an all-time high and is overshadowing real concerns that are affecting Ontarians in a meaningful and significant way;

“We, the undersigned, therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario improve the level of debate and decorum by focusing on issues that affect Ontarians.”

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

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

As I am in complete agreement, I’ve affixed my signature to this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Peter Kormos: “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 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.”

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I especially want to thank Sharmin Thaver of Dalebrook Crescent in Streetsville for having sent it to me and for being one of those who signed it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and ask page Rabeb to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the” dreaded “health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario’s history;” but he still cuts health care services and nurses; “and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again” on Canada Day 2010 “with his new 13% combined sales tax at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% combined sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as”—there’s a very long list here, but it’s worth repeating—“coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pump, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals,” Internet service, theatre admissions, funerals—imagine that—real estate commissions, accounting services—at this time of year with people doing their income tax—domestic air travel, train fare, taxi fare, bicycles, snowplowing, grass cutting, green fees, golf fees, bus fares, fast food for \$4, courier fees—the list goes on;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign this in support and present it to Lindsay, one of the pages who will be leaving in two days.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have 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 this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerk's table.

1600

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 12, 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.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to third reading of Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. From the beginning, the members of our caucus have had some serious concerns with this bill. The first is we know that costs for consumers will certainly increase. We also believe that this is an intrusive piece of legislation that is nothing more than a new tax on families and businesses in Ontario.

This bill will directly increase the cost of doing business in Ontario. This government doesn't seem to worry about increasing the costs of doing business in Ontario. They have never met a regulation they didn't like. Bill 150 will increase bureaucracy and red tape in Ontario, which will further stifle business and activity.

Our caucus recommended an economic impact study on the Green Energy Act to be done by London Economics International. What London Economics International found was that as a result of the Green Energy Act, costs to each household in Ontario will increase between \$247 and \$631 on average per year between 2010 and 2025. This means the costs could increase by as much as \$1,200 per household in 2025. This is the equivalent of between two and six additional monthly electricity bills. The government refuses to accept that. Of course, they have not done any kind of study that would show the economic impact of the Green Energy Act. All they say is, "Trust us. It will all work out."

One thing the government says, but can't seem to back up, is that the Green Energy Act will create 50,000 jobs. They don't say where or how much these jobs will pay. I'd also like to remind the listeners that 38,000, at a max., were employed in the energy industry as a whole in Ontario in 2007-08. Also, 35,000 were employed in the auto sector and related industries: suppliers etc. Those are industries that are 80 and 100 years old and took all those years to employ those numbers, yet the government would have us believe that with this Green Energy Act, they're going to employ 50,000. So I'll leave that to the listeners and my fellow members who are here today to ponder and see if they really believe that those 50,000 jobs will be created.

We have done a bit of work on that and found out that 40% of those jobs will be in construction of new transmission and distribution lines and updates. In other words, these are short-term, temporary jobs. Important as they are, they are not long-term and sustaining.

There are other jobs that are going to be created. These will be inspectors armed with sweeping powers to monitor your energy efficiency. I have referred to them more than once as the toaster police. They would be monitoring the types of appliances used in people's homes. If they found out you were using something that wasn't up to code, they would have powers to enter and seize. Aunt Molly would be cooking her English muffin in the so-called microwave or toaster oven, and if it

didn't meet the code, they'd be able to come in, yank the plug out and take it away on her: unwarranted entry.

Dalton McGuinty helped create this economic crisis that we're in and now he wants us to believe that this bill will help solve it. I don't think anything could be further from the truth. This bill will put up the price of energy, making it more expensive for households. This is done to fund more expensive energy and to fund pet projects of the Premier and the energy minister.

Through the committee process, we heard from many different stakeholders who are all concerned about wind turbines and the troubles that they can cause. Many people raised very legitimate concerns about the health effects of living near wind turbines. Our health critic, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, asked for mandatory health impact studies to be done in areas around potential wind farms, and the government refused.

We don't think that that is responsible. You also have to look at the viability of wind turbines. According to an article I read in yesterday's National Post, most wind turbines run at, at best, 25% of rated capacity. That means they need backup capacity for 70% of the time they're not running. If you are paying all this money for green electricity and only getting it 20% of the time, I think you are wasting valuable resources.

The cost of wind power is two and a half times the cost of other forms of electricity. That's according to the Royal Academy of Engineering in the United Kingdom. Under the Green Energy Act, the proposed feed-in tariff for wind power projects is twice the prevailing electricity rate. So we would be no better off here. Our consumers, at the end of the day, will pay more.

Of course, in Sarnia–Lambton we are living with other foolishness of this government's energy policy. In my riding, we have the Lambton generating station, which employs upwards of 400 people directly and another 600 indirectly from time to time. Under this government's current electricity scheme, this plant will be closed entirely by 2014. This would contribute to an impact on the local economy in the range of \$300 million a year in losses of payroll, downstream jobs and infrastructure and also to the local economies.

This decision to close the Lambton generating station has had implications as well for St. Clair township, the host municipality of the generating station. You see, since the government has said that in 2014 this plant will close, MPAC has therefore slashed the assessed value of the generating station by over 50%, which has caused the revenues for the St. Clair township to drop dramatically—upwards of \$2 million, which is paid into the local economy through the property tax.

It's bad enough that my riding is losing a lot of jobs, but this has an impact for all over Ontario. Right now, this generating station produces some of the cheapest and cleanest electricity possible. When the Lambton generating station goes offline, the government has not been able to assure anyone that they will have built enough generating capacity to make up for this lost generation. We can conserve so much, but in the end generation

needs to be replaced, and no one seems to have a plan in place to generate that needed electricity.

Another article that I was reading yesterday was called "The Myth of the Danish Green Energy 'Miracle.'

"Data from the International Energy Agency shows that the cost of residential electricity in Denmark in 2007 was 34 cents US per kilowatt hour—the highest in Europe. All comparisons include taxes.... We also know that the proposed feed-in-tariff for wind power in Ontario is twice the prevailing electricity rate and will cost consumers hundreds of dollars more...." This same Royal Academy, according to the author of this article, "estimated that the cost of wind power is two and a half times" to three times "the cost of other ... electricity."

They've also talked about wind generation: "This statement is totally disingenuous. Most wind turbines run at 25% of rated capacity.... And because of their unpredictability, they require spinning reserves all the time, while conventional forms of electricity generation typically run at 75% to 95% of capacity utilization...."

"Transposing the Danish experience to an Ontario context, in 2008, 75% of Ontario's electricity generation output was produced by carbon-free hydro and nuclear generation ... and about 15% by coal-fired generation...."

Those who say they believe in the wind "should ask themselves: If wind power has no significant impact on the problem we are trying to solve (i.e., CO2 emissions); if wind power costs two to three times as much as conventional sources of energy; if wind power kills twice as many jobs as it creates through its higher costs ... then why would any right-minded person accept this invitation? We should also ask our politicians this question."

Another gentleman, by the name of Michael Trebilcock, a professor of law and economics at the University of Toronto, points to Denmark, saying that the European leader in wind development has also had problems with this. Spiegel Online argued the point that wind, despite all the hype, is failing Europe. The headline of the article reads, "Wind Turbines in Europe Do Nothing for Emissions-Reduction Goals...."

"Wind turbines don't operate all the time, so you've to back them up with natural gas" plants, "says ... an activist with Wind Concerns Ontario and a professional engineer who used to work for" OPG.

"Wind critics routinely claim that a megawatt of back-up generation based on natural gas is required for every one-megawatt wind turbine that's connected to the grid. The idea is that when the wind does stop blowing, the natural gas plant can be fired up quickly to compensate.

"Without a costly, 100% back-up system, the grid" that is so important to Ontario "becomes dangerously unreliable...."

There will be "a penalty for using natural gas this way. Akin to stop-and-start traffic reducing car mileage, constantly increasing and decreasing the output of a natural gas plant affects its efficiency, meaning more gas is burned for the megawatt-hours that are produced...."

"There's no doubt that over time, wind generation will represent ... a large part of the power mix" in Ontario, but

backup generation will also eventually be required to meet that.

1610

The one main point that I want to speak about is the cost: Is capturing wind today worth the price we pay? “Those opposed to the development of industrial wind farms argue that wind is simply uncompetitive without massive subsidies, and that taxpayers shouldn’t be saddled with the cost.

“In Ontario, the power authority has been directed to pay 13.5 cents for every kilowatt-hour of wind energy generated under a standard 20-year contract.... This excludes any cost of additional transmission and backup generation that’s required.”

This author has called wind generation “a good example of what can go wrong when governments pick winners.” We all know where that was spoken about earlier last week.

“But comparing the price paid for wind power today against the price paid for electricity generated largely from investments made 25 to 100 years ago ignores the fact that wind or no wind, the cost of power generation in the years to come is going up—no matter what technology we choose”....

Today, nobody knows the true cost of a nuclear plant, “but best estimates today place it at \$7,000 per megawatt of installed capacity. That works out to” approximately “\$21 billion for a 3,000-megawatt plant....” Wind capacity would cost about \$18 billion, and the gas plants that would be there to back it up would be about \$3 billion, so the capital costs would be roughly the same.

Now to go back to where I was before, as far as the Lambton generating station, which is important to my riding, there are many options that we could look at there—biomass, and they’re doing studies of that, I know, around Ontario; and the OPG has even authorized some of these at Lambton. They’re looking at various crops that they could use to take the place of coal or a mix of coal. I can’t think of the name of it right now. They should be running pilot projects that use biomass instead of coal to generate this electricity.

Recently, the Minister of Energy came to the area, to my adjacent riding, and accused me of being a bad listener because I was standing up for the Lambton generating station and local jobs in my riding. I would say quite clearly to the minister that I’m going to keep listening to the people who sent me here and who think that the Lambton generating station can play a part in the Ontario electrical industry. I also invited the minister back again any time, because I got some of the greatest press coverage I have had for a long time. I was hoping he could come back again any time and comment on my behaviour.

Everyone wants to support green energy. We all want carbon dioxide emissions reduced, but I like to look at some facts. In 2008, 75% of Ontario’s electricity generation was produced by carbon-free hydro and nuclear, and about 15% by coal generation. Under the Green Energy Act, it is entirely possible that wind power or other forms of green energy will displace that lower-cost,

carbon-free generation, or it will be produced in addition to it and sold at a loss to our American neighbours—this, all according to today’s National Post.

At committee, the government at least listened to us and took out the preposterous idea of mandatory home energy audits. That would have added costs to people buying and selling homes and would have been a direct drag and imposition on the real estate market. Of course, the Dalton sales tax will put a drag on the real estate market anyway, so maybe the government will see the light on this as well if we keep up the fight and point out the error of their ways.

When it comes to Bill 150, it’s not just the direct costs that have my party concerned. There are other items as well that this legislation has direct input costs on. One of the indirect costs which I am particularly concerned about is the loss of local control when it comes to the siting of new generators. Under Bill 150, the government of Ontario has grabbed power from some of the municipalities to override planning decisions made locally when it comes to the siting of new power generators. Our local municipalities, which are the closest to the voters who have put them there, are best positioned to decide where these facilities are located. They don’t need people from Toronto or the urban-centric communities telling them where to put the generating sites. Many citizens will feel the loss of control and won’t want to surrender that control.

Some facts about the Green Energy Act as I wrap up: An initial transmission investment of \$5 billion, paid by 4.2 million consumers, works out to approximately \$1,200 per consumer, which would be a 100% increase in their electricity bill. Spread over the years, that’s probably about a 30% increase.

The bill intrudes into private real estate sales and creates draconian powers in the appliance business that I spoke about earlier. The bill adds yet another bureaucracy to the energy mix, and also takes away the rights of municipalities to represent their constituents and decide when and where the generation would be located, which I spoke about earlier.

In wrapping up, I would like to say, again, that everyone wants to be green. As our member for Durham said yesterday, we support cleaning up the environment, we support the green energy aspect of that, but there are many issues in this bill that we spoke about in committee, which we’ve presented petitions on and spoke about in the House, that we do not support. I just hope that as we implement this bill, we’re able to make changes to it as time goes on and it won’t drastically impact the economy of Ontario.

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

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I’ll take a few minutes to speak directly to some of the issues raised by my colleague opposite.

First of all, with respect to jobs, about one quarter of the 50,000 jobs anticipated to be created will be in construction, while another quarter is estimated to be in manufacturing and engineering.

A reference with respect to enforcement positions certainly does not bear out in the current form of legislation, as the inspection and search provisions related to home energy audits and minimum efficiency standards have been eliminated from the draft of the bill we are currently debating.

I want to speak directly to the issue with respect to the importance of examining European jurisdictions and the reality that has transpired in those jurisdictions, in particular, referencing countries such as Denmark and their use of wind power. I would commend the reading of an article by Tyler Hamilton, the energy reporter for the Toronto Star, which was published on May 12, 2009. In this article, a number of pieces of information that were advanced at committee, and have continued to be advanced throughout the debate, are rebuffed; in particular, that wind energy fails to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Here's a comment from Poul Erik Morthorst, a senior energy researcher at the National Laboratory for Sustainable Energy at the Technical University of Denmark:

"In recent years, we have seen quite a number of old plants being decommissioned, and this can partly be seen as a consequence of increased wind power capacity'....

"In 2007, for example, electricity generated from coal and natural gas fell 19 per cent and 26.6 per cent, respectively.... Renewable power, about 67 per cent of it from wind, increased 11.1 per cent."

The reality that has been advanced is not what is bearing out in Denmark, and we look forward to a green—

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

Member for Sarnia-Lambton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for those comments. I would also like to quote from the National Post, from Michael Trebilcock. That's where I got some of my other comments. I didn't pick the same ones the honourable member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore picked; I picked the ones that supported my side of the argument—I think that's the way we do things here, right?

Mr. Trebilcock said, "It is important to understand why the Danish government," which commissioned the study, "is sensitive to critiques of the Danish experience with wind power. Denmark is home to Vestas, the world's largest wind turbine manufacturer, with 20,000 employees and a market share of between 20% and 25%. As the market for its turbines in Denmark and other European countries becomes saturated, it seeks to export the Danish experience worldwide. To this end, it recently ran a multi-million dollar global ad campaign with the slogan, 'Believe in the wind'...."

It's all about marketing. That's what I say. We know we need to move toward green energy in this province. We're doing that. Many people are doing that. What I'm saying is, let's not sacrifice those jobs in my riding and, I know, in many other ridings in north. We need to work at maintaining those. Whether we look at other crops—miscanthus was a crop they were experimenting with at

the Lambton generating station; they hope to have great advances with that. It's a bamboo-type crop, and I understand it could be grown on some of the poorer land in Ontario. It wouldn't take place in class 1, 2, 3 or 4 land; it could be grown on some of our poorer land. It would take a lot of acres—600,000 acres—I understand, to replace that coal, but it can be done. It's used in England and in other parts of Europe. I have seen some information on that as well.

1620

I appreciate the honourable member's comments, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I wanted to rise in the House today to address the flaws in Bill 150, the so-called Green Energy Act.

The government issued a news release on April 24 that said, "Ontarians have made hundreds of constructive suggestions to make the proposed Green Energy Act even more effective...." I want to congratulate the spin doctors in the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, because that's a really nice way of saying the government has received hundreds of complaints about the bill that they introduced. Perhaps the same spin doctors came up with the name of the bill, because it's a great name.

I want to start off by saying that I support the idea of green energy. We need to continue to look for more environmentally friendly and sustainable ways of doing things, but the key word here is "sustainable."

The title of the bill sounds great, but in spite of the name, it really isn't a sustainable plan for green energy in Ontario. Perhaps the minister should have spent a little bit more time on policy and development and a little less time on communications.

We believe it's important for the people of Ontario to understand, first of all, the full cost of Bill 150 before it's passed, and that the cost we have is backed up by research and data, not just a made-up number as we presently have. That's why the PC caucus commissioned London Economics International to research and prepare a report that looked at the cost impact of the bill.

I just wanted to touch on a couple of items in that report.

The first one is—this is in the summary of the report—"Analysis suggests that the Green Energy Act could cost each household between \$247 to \$631, on average, per year between 2010 and 2025." This means that the costs could increase by as much as \$1,200 a year per household by 2025. "This is equivalent to between approximately two and six additional monthly electricity bills, or an increase of over 15% in some years." That, to me, is an unacceptable cost for the people of the province of Ontario.

In addition to the cost that London Economics International identified, Ontarians are going to be hit with an 8% increase in electricity costs when the Dalton sales tax goes into effect.

The people of Ontario have been clear that they cannot afford to keep on paying all these extra costs.

I want to quote from an e-mail that I received along with many other e-mails regarding different parts of the bill. This one was particularly related to the cost. It says:

“Dear Mr. Hardeman:

“I am alarmed by the content of Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. If this flawed piece of legislation passes it will drive up the cost of electricity and destroy the economy of this province.”

It was sent by a constituent in Tillsonburg.

There are many more people who have written in about the costs and who are concerned about what impact this will have on their cost of living and their ability to pay the bills, particularly as the economy is the way it is and money is becoming hard to find.

Beyond the costs, we've received a lot of comments about the health issues, and stray voltage is the one that I want to talk a little bit about. During second reading of this bill, I did speak somewhat of the stray voltage. I talked about the negative impact of stray voltage and said that it was one of the health issues that needed to be publicly addressed before this bill was passed. Many of the rural members have heard stories about the impacts of stray voltage on livestock over the years. We've had the government take some action: Hydro One must clean up the stray voltage when it's reported over a certain period of time. It was all derived from a bill introduced by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex in the previous Parliament. She talked about the stray voltage problems and so forth. That bill was passed by this Legislature but was never called back for third reading. After I finished my presentation during second reading debate, the member spoke to it in questions or comments. She said, “I think the member from Oxford should understand that wind turbines do not create stray voltage.” I'm very pleased to once again, today, have the opportunity to raise this issue and to correct the record.

One of the Green Energy Act Alliance documents says: “Stray voltage mainly occurs with improper grounding or a change in current patterns.” I don't know about the wind in the Liberal ridings, but in my riding, it's somewhat unpredictable and inconsistent, so I can assure you that there will be considerable change in the velocity of the wind, and so a risk of stray voltage being derived from the turbines.

In fact, stray current is an issue for wind turbine manufacturers, such as the ability to minimize—and this is in an advertisement for a turbine—to minimize damage from stray voltage to the rotors and bearings on a wind turbine. They're talking about their product being better, because they can better deal with stray voltage. They're not eliminating it; they're just dealing better with it. The Liberty turbine even uses the reduction of stray voltage as part of their promotional campaign.

In order to address some of the negative e-mails that they have received, the minister has committed to have the Ontario Energy Board manage and address issues relating to stray voltage.

One member of the government side says there's no stray voltage coming from the turbine, and now we have the minister saying that they're going to have the energy

board look at it. When you know that there's a health risk, it doesn't make any sense to say, “We're going to charge ahead with creating the problem. But don't worry, folks, we have someone in charge of managing the problem when it happens.”

I'm not going to pretend to be an engineer, but it seems to me that if you know there are concerns with stray voltage, they should be addressed publicly before the bill is passed, not later and behind closed doors, after there is a problem.

I received a letter from one of my constituents who is in the process of being involved with the public hearings on the creation of a wind farm in my riding. He writes, “Stray voltage”—one of his concerns is stray voltage—“in regard to wind turbines, not only from the transmission of the inverted power (Kinetics report)”—this is a report that deals with this—“but also stray voltage from the actual generator going into the ground. I brought some documentation from a manufacturer in regard to this.

“I explained to you my concerns about stray voltage coming through the ground to our home and barn, and how the Ontario Energy Board's stray voltage investigation procedure will only investigate stray voltage from transmission lines. The report that Van Bommel referred to”—which is the one that was mentioned in the House earlier—“does not deal with stray voltage from wind turbine generator that is of synchronous design.

“I also expressed my concerns that the report that Van Bommel referred to does not have a time frame for investigation of stray voltage ... and ... does not cover who is liable for any damages” from the stray voltage. Again, it points out that no one has done the work to deal with the stray voltage problem, and I think that's very, very important.

Now, there's an article that was in the Kincardine paper, the Kincardine Independent. It's a group of people who live close to the wind farm. It deals with the health issues that come from having wind turbines too close, and just deals with the setback distances. Again, in the bill, they're left open; the setback distances are not there yet. But it appears that for the ones that they're having the discussions on, the proposals would have the setbacks too short in order to deal with the recommendations from the manufacturers of the turbines that the setback distance would not be far enough to bring down the noise—and the stray voltage issues—to the level that's acceptable according to the MOE, and not have to go beyond the distance that the ministry is talking about for the setbacks. That was a major concern for my constituents.

Stray voltage is a health concern. These are issues that should be addressed publicly. I want to make this clear: I don't think it's good enough to put in the bill that the minister can, after the fact, set up regulations that would deal with all these problems. Who is he going to talk to? He said, “We're going to have broad consultations.” The truth is that if you're going to have broad consultations, that should have been done as this legislation was being processed.

1630

Mr. John Yakabuski: He talks to the ones who already agree with him.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes, but even then he's never going to talk to anyone, even the ones who agree with him, when it comes to the regulations; he's going to go into his office, he's going to write the regulation that he thinks is the appropriate one, he's going to take that into cabinet, and the Lieutenant Governor is going to sign it. That's going to be the law of the land, and all the people who have been involved in the process thus far are no longer going to be heard from.

I think that's one of the main issues that the people I represent have concern over, that presently they are going through a process to see whether it's an appropriate activity adjacent to their community, and when this bill passes, that will be taken away from them. They will no longer be asked. They will just be told what's going to happen to them in their community.

That brings me to the point that I find very important, the part that takes a lot of that authority away. It's an addition to the amendments; it's the municipal authority. Presently, when a wind facility is being sited, one of the first things that the proponent must do is prepare reports to justify the rezoning of the land to allow the wind turbines to be there. Land use planning is a municipal function—at least it is for everything except the things that this bill applies to, because this bill takes away the municipal authority for land use planning as it relates to renewable energy. From now on, the proponent will not be putting forward their proposal to the local people in the local municipalities; they will prepare an application as they see fit, they will send it off to Toronto, and the minister and his staff, in their office, will decide whether they think this is a good project and whether there are enough lines to take the power away, and then they will build it. I'm not sure whether the act—I'd have to check it really close—would require that he notify the people that they were going to have this facility in their backyard before the building permit was issued or after the facility was built, and no one would be notified about that until after the fact. Even then, there's nothing they can do about it anyway.

There's one glitch in there. There may be something they can do because the minister, according to the bill, is not going to check the standards that are required until after the fact. As I said about my constituent having a concern about the setback, the challenge we face is that if the setback he puts in place is not enough to bring the sound at the end of the setback down to the level that the Ministry of the Environment says is an acceptable level of noise, then these facilities can't operate, unless one of the two changes their standard, and the only one that can change the standard at that point—you can't move the turbine after that, so they would just lower the standard of the Ministry of the Environment that says how much noise people have to put up with.

If we already have problems today with the health risks of the noise and the vibration from these facilities, I

find it hard to understand why the minister would put something in place that says, "We will build it, and then we will figure out whether it's appropriate to operate." I think that really needs to be addressed as we speak.

Another thing, and it has to do somewhat with the issue of land use planning, is the issue of farmland. At the beginning of the speech, I said I believed in protecting our environment. I believe that's very important, and so do our farmers. They depend on their land to earn a living and to provide for their families. They are careful stewards of the land and want it to be protected. I want to make that very clear: There's no one more concerned about protecting good farmland than farmers. One of the requests we heard during the committee hearings on this bill was to protect our highest-quality farmland to ensure the future of our agriculture industry.

In a recent commentary, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "The OFA does not support solar farms that would take agricultural land out of food production." That's forward thinking. There is a lot of land right now, I suppose, where they could say, "Well, we would sooner put in solar farms, because obviously government is going to pay us a great return on that. Growing crops is not going to present nearly that much return." The Ontario Federation of Agriculture isn't looking at that. As they say, the future says that they don't make any more good agricultural land. We've got to protect that which we have.

If you're going to build solar farms, the sun will shine other places where you can't grow crops. Let's not put the solar farms on the best cropland we have. In their presentation to the standing committee, the association of municipalities—not just farmers—said that ground-mount solar projects should not be permitted on class 1, 2 or 3 agricultural lands.

We believe in the importance of the future of our agriculture industry. That's why the PC caucus tabled an amendment to Bill 150 that restricts or prevents the installation of solar farms on agricultural land in category 1, 2, 3 or 4. Before that amendment was voted on, I came into this Legislature and asked the members of the government party to demonstrate their commitment to Ontario's agriculture by supporting our amendment, but the government members still voted the other way. They voted it down, along with all the other amendments that my good friend Mr. Yakabuski introduced at the public hearing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Every one.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Every one where suggestions were made to do a better job of what was being done, they voted it down. Again, this wasn't just because the farmers wanted it protected. This was the farmers who produce our food, the farmers who have a great interest in protecting agricultural land, and it was the municipalities who represent our rural communities—who represent all communities, for that matter; they represent our communities and the people who live in them to make sure that they are protected and that they have some involvement in where these facilities are sited.

I was at a conference where the Minister of Energy was asked about the issue of taking away the municipal planning authority, and I guess the minister has a different view of what municipalities do on our behalf. The minister said, “Yes, we are lifting that burden of making those decisions off your shoulders. We’re going to make them on your behalf.” I was a municipal politician for many years. I was involved with the association of municipalities. I was chair of the rural municipal association. And I can tell you that we didn’t look at land use planning as a burden to municipalities; we saw that as an opportunity to help our communities grow in the proper way, in an environmentally sound way, in a sustainable way, and in a livable way for the people in our communities. So when the minister says, “We’re going to take that away from you. We’re going to lift that burden from your shoulders,” we don’t see that as a plus. I think that was a great sign that he not only did not understand everything in his bill, but he understood absolutely nothing about land use planning, particularly in rural Ontario. I have to say I was very disappointed in the minister’s comment.

I do have, as my time is running close, a couple of things here from some of the people who wrote. They deal with the issues of the noise and the setbacks. I just want to read a couple of paragraphs into the record.

This is from a farmer. It’s actually from the farmer’s wife—Mr. and Mrs. Farmer, shall we say. “We are on noise study #3 now. There is still no resolution to the extreme vibration and humming we experience on many nights, not to mention the noise from what seems like the general working of the turbines, that has reached over the MOE guidelines. We are suffering severe sleep deprivation and mental stress, and my husband is also experiencing ringing in the ears, tinnitus, on a mostly regular basis now. Even our dog has been affected.”

It’s hard to believe that with comments like that, the government can say, “We’re going to proceed, and we’ll do some health studies sometime in the future. Maybe and maybe not we will let the turbines run.” I don’t think the people who are investing in building the turbines can build them under those conditions, but even more importantly, I don’t believe government and the people living around them can accept that type of an approach, to say, “Build them and then we’ll see if you can use them.” That letter is a perfect example of that, that they haven’t done their homework and they’re going to do it after the fact. Until we’re ready and able to tell people where they are going to be built, I think we should not have this bill complete third reading, at least until we can know that once they are built, they can be operated and provide the electricity that the minister says he wants them to provide.

So I don’t think the government is ready for this bill to be passed, and I would advise that they vote it down as it comes to third reading so we can start again and actually prepare one that makes it safe for all Ontarians not only to benefit from green energy, but to live safely next to green energy.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this today.

1640

Mr. John O’Toole: I just wanted to get up and respectfully comment on the member from Oxford, who I think, as he outlined in his remarks about the work he has done in municipal affairs at a very high level—he’s dead-on in terms of the overriding authority it gives the minister to locate these, what they call renewable energy projects.

The ambivalence coming from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is quite surprising as well. There will be winners and losers in this, but they’re only speaking to the winners: the people with biomass or biogas or wind or solar who may benefit from it. He addressed that in his remarks.

Also, it overrides the Municipal Act and the municipal Planning Act on conservation land. My riding—and the member from Oxford brings it up—is crossed completely, from one end to the other, with the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine. I don’t want to see these wind turbines like they are in California, all down the Simi Valley. This is unseemly. On top of that, I can’t help but think that some of these turbines are actually a bit of a landscape eyesore.

I think this needs to be clarified, where they’re going to override—the greenbelt legislation says that you can’t so much as build a garage or a birdhouse on the greenbelt. Now, all of a sudden, they’re going to override that and be able to put—these wind turbines aren’t going to stand alone. There has to be a service road; there has to be a building with the tools in it to service it in the event that it fails; there’s got to be a transformer involved; there’s got to be a road built for maintenance vehicles getting to the site—all of this on pristine countryside like the Oak Ridges moraine.

I don’t believe that what they’re doing here makes good sense. The concerns he raised are valid, and the government should listen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Oxford, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Durham for his kind comments.

In my two minutes, I just want to read another paragraph into the record that I got from a constituent who has been very involved with this. We had a long talk in my office, and then he wrote me a letter with some of the items that we discussed. I think this one is very helpful, as I talked about the setback distance.

“We talked about the professional engineer Martin Ince who is doing the environmental assessment on the proposed Gunn’s Hill wind project. I showed you the documentation which shows that at 527 metres, in his own project, the sound exceeded the 40-decibel limit set by the MOE. I informed you that in the proposed Gunn’s Hill project, the developer Prowind has proposed a 500-metre setback. This distance was also proposed by Prowind (and recorded in the minutes) at the township of Norwich public meeting on August 12, 2008. I expressed

my concerns that if this government were to establish a 500-metre setback then it appeared obvious to me that they are driving these industrial machines into areas knowing full well that they would very likely be going to be violating the present MOE noise guidelines and causing harm to people. The Merlin wind farm documents that you were holding showed that at 800 metres, this project was just below the MOE guidelines.”

I think this points out how important it is to have a clear definition and a clear regulation today, or have it in the bill, as to what the setback will be, to make sure that what we are building is not going to be inoperable because of the MOE guidelines for noise and other attributes that are coming from these wind turbines. So I hope that they take this into consideration and actually come up with a plan that protects our people before we build something—I think years ago they used to call it building white elephants—that can’t be operated for the purpose for which it was designed.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to Pina Martino for giving me the opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill 150. When she informed me that I still had another chance to speak to this, I was really excited and looking forward to that chance to speak to Bill 150. She does a great job helping us organize our speeches, and I just want to thank her again for that opportunity.

Given the fact that I only had 24 hours, though, to prepare—I wish I had had more time, but I have followed this debate with some considerable degree of interest, and I was also given the opportunity to be the first speaker for our party at second reading.

You will recall that this bill was introduced on February 23, and we commenced second reading debate the very next day. From this side of the House, we asked about the unseemly rush that seemed to exist on the part of the minister. We asked that the bill, because it was so significant and important, be referred to a standing committee immediately after first reading, consistent, I believe, with what the government had done with Bill 100 a few years ago, when Dwight Duncan was Minister of Energy, to allow for public hearings before the lines were drawn hard and fast. Certainly, that’s something we wish had happened, but unfortunately the government proceeded the way they had initially planned.

As it turned out, there were some limited public hearings. We had some opportunity to participate in those. Our member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who does a great job on our behalf as our party’s energy critic, participated in those hearings and brought forward significant amendments, I understand, many of which the government voted down, unfortunately.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Every one.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Every single one.

Let’s get back to this bill. We call it the power grab act; I think that’s a more appropriate term. The Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, through Bill 150, is seeking significant new powers so that he can have his will with

respect to taking over the energy system of the province of Ontario.

I think it’s important to point out a few facts that our caucus continues to bring forward. Fact number one is that costs for consumers will certainly increase. The government has made a statement with respect to cost increases that I think is grossly understated and intended to misinform the public about the true cost of this bill. The initial transmission investment of \$5 billion, paid by 4.2 million metered electricity consumers, is about \$1,200 per consumer, or 100% of their electricity bill. Spread over the years, that’s a 30% increase, considerably higher than what the minister has said the hydro bills will go up.

More than 40% of the 50,000 jobs that the minister has talked about will be in construction of new transmission and distribution lines, and these are, of course, short-term temporary jobs that won’t be long-lasting.

This bill intrudes into private real estate sales and creates draconian powers in the appliance business. We know that that’s a significant concern in the province of Ontario right now.

This bill creates sweeping new directives and regulatory powers in the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure—I alluded to that in my opening comments.

This bill adds yet another new bureaucracy to the energy mix, and this bill takes away rights from municipal governments, who are directly affected by projects.

I think it’s also important to point out, despite what the Premier and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure would have us believe, that this bill is absolutely no panacea to the economic crisis in Ontario. Certainly, that was the government’s emphasis when the Premier started the debate on this bill. Initially, when he talked about it publicly, he said he had hit the sweet spot, using a tennis analogy, as if bringing in this bill would create 50,000 jobs. Certainly, we’ve shown that to be exaggerated.

Ontarians are going to end up paying the price for more expensive energy and for the pet conservation projects of the government—we know that to be true and a fact. The job numbers that the Premier and the minister cite are exaggerated in the extreme. The only jobs this bill is certain to create are more inspectors with sweeping powers to monitor energy efficiency.

We know that the competitive business in energy generation, which our government tried to create as a positive reform in the province of Ontario, is over as a result of Bill 150 and the anticipated passage of Bill 150. The bill gives sweeping power to the minister to direct power acquisition and transmission distribution expansion in Ontario, plus there is zero guarantee that this plan will attract sufficient new and replacement generation to meet our energy demands.

I would add an additional point: The fact is, the last time the Liberal government overhauled the energy system, they brought in Bill 100, as I said before. That plan didn’t work, so they replaced it with Bill 150, an energy bill that’s 50% higher than the last one.

Those are some of the concerns that our caucus has consistently brought forward with respect to this bill. I

know that members are aware that our caucus engaged a company called London Economics International LLC, which is a credible electricity-economics consulting firm, one of the best in the world. Their independent analysis shows that the Green Energy Act, Bill 150, may cost each household between \$247 and \$631, on average, per year between 2010, which is when it starts to be implemented, and 2025. This means that the cost increase could be as much as \$1,200 per household in 2025, which really isn't that far away, thinking in terms of this year being 2009. This is an equivalent to between approximately two and six additional monthly electricity bills or an increase of some 15% in some years.

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We also know that the estimated total cost of the Green Energy Act is the summation of five key elements: the cost of generation under the FIT, which stands for the feed-in tariff; the interconnection of feed-in tariff facilities; smart grid implementation; incremental conservation and demand management initiatives; and the establishment of the renewable energy facilitation office. Again, this report is something that I recommend to all members. I realize most government members perhaps haven't had the opportunity to read it, but it is available on the website of our party, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, or it is—

Mr. John Yakabuski: London Economics?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The London Economics report is available on the web and I would recommend it to everyone.

I would also want, in reference to this debate, to talk about the fact that my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills are very concerned about the cost of hydro. They're also well informed about the need for security of supply. They know that if the lights are to come on when they flip the switch, there needs to be sufficient electricity capacity at the very moment to meet the demands of all the consumers in Ontario. They know that if the lights are to come on, there has to be a distribution network that has sufficient capacity to transport those electrons into their home.

I'm cognizant of the time that is winding down rapidly. I had hoped to speak longer about this subject. Certainly, I want to bring again to the attention of this House the fact that a significant number of my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills are being dramatically and negatively impacted by the Bruce-to-Milton transmission reinforcement project. This is germane to the discussion on Bill 150 because part of the need for this reinforcement project, this new transmission line through my riding, is as a result of the implementation of Bill 150.

I just want to read very briefly what I received from one of my constituents—actually a couple, Pat and Steve Crouse from Halton Hills. It reads as follows: “Steve retired due to closure of Boeing Canada” a few years ago. “We secured private sale of property” in January of 2007; \$529,000. “We secured a lot in a 55-plus retirement community February 2007 and made selection of floor plan for construction.” Then there was an announcement

in March of 2007 that the new hydro line would be constructed on the east side of the existing line. It says here, “Our requirement of disclosure for construction of line to buyers” was made. They basically had their house sold, but then the line was announced. The “purchaser issued a letter of withdrawal of purchase on the home due to line construction, unknown effect on health and future effect on property value for resale of home,” so even though they had their house tentatively sold, the tentative purchaser walked away because of the uncertainty about the line.

Now they've been unable to sell their home. The price of the homes in our area has gone down, but this house has gone down dramatically, I believe almost 50%. They run a home business out of their residence as well, an accounting business, and their business has been affected by this.

Then Hydro One changed their plans to move the line to the west side instead of the east side. As it stands, the Crouses and a number of their neighbours, the Jenkins and Cindi Krauth and Rob Barlow, as well as Anne Clifford—there are a number of these neighbours who have been negatively affected. Again, I would call upon the Minister of Energy, as well as Hydro One, to be fair with all of the people who are affected by this proposal in terms of compensation. I would ask them to review the compensation plans

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

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I just want to take a brief moment to respond to comments made with respect to the London Economics institute report. I want to highlight that the London Economics institute report really ignores some \$900 million in investment that will be made in conservation strategies over the next three years that will help families use less electricity if the proposed Green Energy Act is passed.

They also did not take into account in their calculations that these investments, in addition to additional spending anticipated on conservation, will help the typical family reduce their energy consumption by 15% to 20% over the next 15 years. These are major absences of information contained in the London Economics report.

The Green Energy Act initiatives are projected to increase electricity bills by an estimated average of 1.3% per annum over the next 15 years. Everyone who watches and works in this sector will tell you that if we do nothing, fossil fuel costs will increase and bills will go up, but the Green Energy Act provides people with an opportunity to reduce their energy consumption, it rebuilds our grid, our transmission lines, and it helps us protect the planet at the same time.

The last point I want to make about the London Economics report is that the report pads their cost projections by adding, for example, \$48 million in costs for the Renewable Energy Facilitation Office. When I read information like that that has no basis in reality, I do question the premise or motives of the researchers in putting forward such a document, certainly at the request

of the party opposite. So I think we have to take the information in the London Economics study with a grain of salt, and I certainly do.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments of the member for Wellington–Halton Hills and the great work that he has done on this and so many other pieces of legislation.

I want to speak to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore as well and her comments, and how she stands here in this House and wants to discredit the London Economics International report. As I have said to the minister, to the parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the Premier, don't come in and say, "Piecemeal this" and, "This isn't exactly right" or, "That's not quite right"; produce a report. That report she's talking about, \$48 million for some kind of a management office there—and this report indicates that the cost of this act could be as high as \$46 billion. That would be 1,000 times as much. So stop talking about, "This is wrong," or that you don't think they did this right; produce the report.

This was a 67-page document that used data from the OPA, the IESO, the OEB and other forecasters and planners in the electricity sector. They didn't take these numbers out of the air. This government wants to take numbers out of the air or say, "This is wrong," but what evidence have they produced to say that anything they're saying is something that we should believe or trust? Produce a report. Don't expect people in the province of Ontario to just say, "Oh. George Smitherman and Dalton McGuinty have said it; therefore, it must be so." In fact, they've grown to distrust most of what those folks say because their record indicates that they're not good at keeping their word. So I would say, produce a report or forever hold your peace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions or comments? The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to Bill 150, but I wish I had more time because I want to read more of the statements from my constituents who live along the Bruce-to-Milton transmission reinforcement. Once again, this project is a twinning of a big hydro tower line through my riding. I would again suggest to this House and hopefully to the ministry staff who might be monitoring this debate that there are a huge number of my constituents and others along the line who are not being treated fairly when it comes to compensation.

Again, I would briefly read from John and Julia Jenkins, who told me, "In March 2007 our property, after being advised by Hydro One we were a mandatory buyout and would be expropriated due to the twinning of power lines from Bruce to Milton, lost its tranquility.

"A year and a half later we were told expropriation would not be the case as the lines would be moved to the west side of the existing lines. This news, following the stress of waiting on the expropriation process, only to

learn the reassessed value of our property had decreased by \$231,000 (more than half of our purchase price) due to the effects of twinning of the towers and mild decline in the market, was devastating to my family. Hydro One has left us with a property that has been deemed 'condemned' by the real estate industry, leaving us in a position for over two (2) years unable to sell. We were co-operative with Hydro One through the whole process, expecting to be expropriated due to the 'mandatory buyout' we were told we were by Hydro One representative George McDonald. We expected the same treatment as the Vales, northeast of us on Highway 7, and that we would be in a position to relocate our young family within Halton Hills. This now 'condemned' property leaves us unable to sell and taking a tremendous loss on the one (1) asset we had hoped to leave our children one day. And although not substantiated with regards to the health effects of living next to power lines, we had no intention to raise our children next to two (2) high-powered lines, not knowing if there are possible health risks over long-term exposure.

"Simply put"—

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

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. I just wanted to check with the table, because I would have thought you maybe had debated on the third reading.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. On a point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I just thought that it's barely 5 o'clock, and we wouldn't want to shut this place down until 6, so I thought maybe we could keep going.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order. It is one person's opinion, but it's not a point of order.

Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have been provided with the appropriate documentation that would indicate that the recorded vote will take place at deferred votes on Thursday, May 14.

Third reading vote deferred.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, May 14.

The House adjourned at 1702.

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Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
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Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
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